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NEW INSIGHTS INTO THE HISTORY OF HARAR

Amélie Chekroun, Vanessa Pedrotti, Héloïse Mercier, Sana Mirza, Muna Abubeker,
Thomas Osmond

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ANNALES D'ÉTHIOPIE

Volume
34-2022

Special Issue

**New insights
into the history of Harar**



Centre français des études éthiopiennes-Éditions de Boccard

SPECIAL ISSUE/NUMÉRO SPÉCIAL
NEW INSIGHTS
INTO THE HISTORY OF HARAR
NOUVEAUX ÉCLAIRAGES
SUR L'HISTOIRE DE HARAR

Introduction to the special issue
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*Harar as the capital city of the Barr Sa^cd ad-Dīn
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résultats d'enquête*
Héloïse Mercier

*Mawlūd Tradition, Reformist Dynamics and
State Policies in East Ethiopia.
The Controversial Celebrations of Prophet
Muḥammad in Harar and among Its Oromo
Neighbours*
Thomas Osmond

*En couverture : Postcard published by the French Catholic missionaries in 1908-1910 of the two minarets of the great
mosque of Harar (Private collection).*

Carte postale éditée par les missionnaires catholiques français en 1908-1910 des deux minarets de la grande
mosquée de Harar (Collection privée).

VARIA

*A survey of three manuscripts from Təgray
(Ethiopia)*

Martina Ambu, Anaïs Lamesa, Hailay Atsba

*Yohannəs Müṭməq (Saint-Jean Baptiste) de
Gazen (Təgray) : l'église et son baptistère.
Nouvelles hypothèses*

**Catherine Jolivet-Lévy,
Nicole Lemaigre Demesnil**

*Églises rupestres du Təgray oriental et central.
Résultats de prospections et hypothèses techniques
et socio-économiques*

**Anaïs Lamesa, Hailay Atsba,
Bertrand Saint-Bézar**

*In Richard Pankhurst's Footsteps. Survey of
rock-hewn sites in the Upper Awash Basin*
Anaïs Lamesa, Manon Routhiau

*On how to obtain guns for Ethiopia. The
attempts by the botanist Georg Wilhelm
Schimper in the 1840s and early 1850s*
Dorothea McEwan

*Francisco Maria Esteves Pereira (1854-1924) :
un éthiopisant solitaire au Portugal*
Hervé Pennec

BOOK REVIEWS/COMPTE RENDUS
DE LECTURE

*DREWES Abraham J., 2019, Recueil des
inscriptions de l'Éthiopie des périodes pré-
axoumite et axoumite, Tome III- Traductions et
commentaires. B. Les inscriptions sémitiques*
Jean-François Breton

*OOSTHUIZEN Ann, 2020, Land to the Tiller. An
Interview with Zegeye Asfaw*
Mehdi Labzaé

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Fondée en 1955 par la Section d'archéologie du gouvernement éthiopien, les *Annales d'Éthiopie* ont d'abord été publiées jusqu'en 1990 comme la revue franco-éthiopienne d'archéologie et d'études classiques éthiopiennes. Relancée en 2000 dans la foulée de la création du CFEE, la revue a élargi son périmètre à tous les champs des sciences humaines et sociales en Éthiopie et dans les pays de la Corne de l'Afrique, tout en conservant une ouverture vers la paléontologie et les sciences de l'environnement.

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Après une riche collaboration entre le CFEE et les Éditions de Boccard, c'est avec peine que nous avons appris qu'elles ne seront plus en mesure de poursuivre l'édition et la publication des *Annales d'Éthiopie* et de ses *Hors-Séries*. Cette année 2022 marque donc la fin d'une aventure commune débutée en 2007-2008 à l'occasion de la publication du volume 23 de notre revue. Nous tenons à remercier chaleureusement toute l'équipe des Éditions de Boccard pour leur investissement et leur grand professionnalisme dans le travail que nous avons mené ensemble durant toutes ces années.

Les lecteurs des *Annales d'Éthiopie* pourront retrouver l'ensemble des numéros précédents (1-33) sur la plateforme en ligne *Persée*. Nous invitons également nos lecteurs à suivre désormais l'ensemble de nos publications, que ce soit notre revue les *Annales d'Éthiopie* ou nos collections, sur *OpenEdition*.

After a rich collaboration between the CFEE and the Éditions de Boccard, it is with sorrow that we have learned that they will no longer be able to continue the editing and publication of the Annales d'Éthiopie and its Hors-Séries. This year 2022 thus marks the end of a common adventure that began in 2007-2008 with the publication of volume 23 of our journal. We would like to warmly thank all the team of the Éditions de Boccard for their investment and their great professionalism in the work that we have carried out together during all these years.

Readers of the Annales d'Éthiopie will be able to find all the previous issues (1-33) on the online platform Persée. We invite our readers to follow all of our publications, both our journal Annales d'Éthiopie and our collections, on OpenEdition.

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Sommaire/*Contents*

SPECIAL ISSUE/ <i>NUMÉRO SPÉCIAL</i>	
NEW INSIGHTS INTO THE HISTORY OF HARAR/ NOUVEAUX ÉCLAIRAGES SUR L'HISTOIRE DE HARAR	
9	
AMÉLIE CHEKROUN, VANESSA PEDROTTI	
Introduction to the special issue	11
AMÉLIE CHEKROUN	
Harar as the capital city of the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn (first half of the 16 th century): from its emergence to its fortification.....	23
HÉLOÏSE MERCIER	
Writing and rewriting history from Harar to Awsa: a reappraisal of the <i>Ta'riḫ al-mulūk</i>	45
SANA MIRZA	
A Red Sea Style? The Early Eighteenth Century Qur'an Manuscripts of Harar.....	73
MUNA ABUBEKER	
The Description of the Divorce Cases of the Court Documents of 19 th century Harar.....	99
VANESSA PEDROTTI	
When a quest for modernization meets French imperialist aspiration: The circumstances surrounding the establishment of the St. Anthony Leprosarium and the Ras Māk ^w ännən Hospital in Harar (1901-1906)	121
HÉLOÏSE MERCIER	
Le <i>Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī</i> et la compilation des listes d'émirs de Harar : premiers résultats d'enquête.....	153
THOMAS OSMOND	
<i>Mawlūd</i> Tradition, Reformist Dynamics and State Policies in East Ethiopia. The Controversial Celebrations of Prophet Muḥammad in Harar and among Its Oromo Neighbours	167
VARIA	197
MARTINA AMBU, ANAÏS LAMESA, HAILAY ATCSBA	
A survey of three manuscripts from Təgray (Ethiopia).....	199

CATHERINE JOLIVET-LÉVY, NICOLE LEMAIGRE DEMESNIL Yohannəs Mätməq (Saint-Jean Baptiste) de Gazen (Təgray) : l'église et son baptistère. Nouvelles hypothèses	213
ANAÏS LAMESA, HAILAY ATsBA, BERTRAND SAINT-BÉZAR Églises rupestres du Təgray oriental et central. Résultats de prospections et hypothèses techniques et socio-économiques	245
ANAÏS LAMESA, MANON ROUTHIAU In Richard Pankhurst's Footsteps. Survey of rock-hewn sites in the Upper Awash Basin	297
DOROTHEA McEWAN On how to obtain guns for Ethiopia. The attempts by the botanist Georg Wilhelm Schimper in the 1840s and early 1850s.....	323
HERVÉ PENNEC Francisco Maria Esteves Pereira (1854-1924) : un éthiopisant solitaire au Portugal	353
BOOK REVIEWS/COMPTEs RENDUS DE LECTURE.....	385
JEAN-FRANÇOIS BRETON DREWES Abraham J., 2019, <i>Recueil des inscriptions de l'Éthiopie des périodes pré-axoumite et axoumite, Tome III- Traductions et commentaires. B. Les inscriptions sémitiques</i> . Texte révisé et adapté par Manfred Kropp, édité par Manfred Kropp et Henri Stroomer	387
MEHDI LABZAÉ OOSTHUIZEN Ann, 2020, <i>Land to the Tiller. An Interview with Zegeye Asfaw</i>	391

Special issue/*Numéro spécial*

New insights into the history of Harar

*Nouveaux éclairages sur l'histoire
de Harar*

Amélie Chekroun*, Vanessa Pedrotti**

Introduction to the special issue

This special issue of the *Annales d'Éthiopie* is the proceedings of a workshop scheduled for April 2020 at the Institute for Ethiopian Studies of Addis Ababa University. This workshop was unfortunately postponed due to the global pandemic. Currently, there is a great deal of academic research in and around the city of Harar, and this increased interest motivated the idea of the original workshop. Over the last ten years, there has been a profound renewal of research on Harar from philological, archaeological, historical, and anthropological points of view. Over the past five years, no less than six Ethiopian and international researchers in diverse fields have devoted their PhD thesis to a part of the city's history and all studies bring new and innovative elements to our understanding of the history of Harar. In addition to these recent academic works, there are also studies by more established researchers who are just as innovative and who challenge the fixed narrative of the 20th century, explored below. The proposed participants in the April 2020 postponed workshop, in alphabetic order, were Dr. Muna Abubaker, Dr. Nureddin Aman, Mr. Nebil Bekri, Dr. Amélie Chekroun, Pr. Alessandro Gori, Dr. Ahmed Hassan Omer, Pr. Timothy Insoll, Mrs. Héloïse Mercier, Dr. Sana Mirza, Dr. Vanessa Pedrotti, Dr. Thomas Osmond, Dr. Lindsay Randall, Mr. Ahmed Zakaria.¹ Several of them were unfortunately unable to participate in this publication.

In the 20th century, a substantial amount of academic literature was published on the history of the city. This is evidenced by Ewald Wagner's 2003 publication, *Harar: annotierte Bibliographie zum Schrifttum über die Stadt und den Islam in Südostäthiopien*, which presents an exhaustive annotated bibliography on Harar inclusive of all disciplines. However, although it has been the subject of numerous writings, including some historiographical "pet subjects" (such as the figure of the poet Arthur Rimbaud amongst the French community in Ethiopia), the history of the city seems to have been fixed upon an unavoidable official narrative. This narrative was constructed by both

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¹ Even if the workshop has been postponed, we would like to warmly thank all those researchers for their enthusiasm in this project, as well as Dr. Takele Merid, head of the Institute for Ethiopian Studies, for having accepted to host it in his institution, and Dr. Ahmed Hassan Omer, former head of the IES, and Dr. Marie Bridonneau, director of the French Center for Ethiopian Studies, for their support.

Western orientalist and by Harari scholars as well as by local and international political authorities (such as the Harari People's National Regional State and UNESCO) throughout the 20th century. From the Western perspective, the first and foremost contribution was from Enrico Cerulli who in the 1930s identified and studied the first, and until very recently, only historical texts about Harar in Arabic. The contributions, backgrounds, and positions of the Harari scholars who also augmented these works are only just beginning to be studied. This prevailing history focuses mainly upon a few dates, a few cultural features, and a few texts composed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (such as the *Fath madīnat Harar*). The dates upon which it focuses are as follows: the mid-16th century construction of the walls surrounding Harar, the 1647 foundation of the Emirat of Harar by 'Alī b. Dā'ūd, the 1875-1885 Egyptian occupation of the city, and finally the pre-1887 brief restoration of the Emirate after the Egyptian departure and before the conquest of the city and its integration into Ethiopia by Menelik's troops. Nevertheless, the history of Harar is essentially based on oral tradition for the period occurring before the 19th century, and nothing is really known about the social, political, economic organization of the city and the area from the 16th century to the middle of the 20th century due to a lack of documentation. Moreover, these narratives date the foundation of the city sometimes to the 16th but also often to the 13th or even the 10th centuries. Another characteristic feature of this historical discourse is a classification that often opposes the "civilized" population of Harar, known as Harari or Adari, to the "barbaric" population living outside the city walls, the Oromo, pejoratively referred to as "Galla." Moreover, Harar is considered, likely with just cause, to be the heart of Islam in the Horn of Africa due to its importance for Qur'anic training, production of religious manuscripts, and its number of holy places. Still, there have not been any considerable studies on the ancient periods to substantiate this claim of Harar's Islamic centrality.

The Harari culture is very evident in the city, especially in terms of architecture and craftsmanship when compared to the Oromo or Somali cultures. Indeed, since 1991 and the institutional recognition of Ethiopian "nationalities," Harari culture has received special attention to highlight its particularity. The importance of past conservation in the city is illustrated by the registration of the old city on the World Heritage Sites' list by UNESCO in 2006. In 2010, the geographer Dr. Pauline Bosredon completed a PhD thesis about the world heritage listing of the old towns of Harar and of Alep in Syria, entitled *Habiter et aménager les centres anciens: les reconfigurations du rapport des acteurs à la vieille ville par le classement au patrimoine mondial, une comparaison entre Harar en Ethiopie et Alep en Syrie* (Bosredon, 2010; see also 2008). For the proposed 2020 workshop, the Heritage Directorate Director of Harar, Nebil Bekri, was to give a presentation titled "An Assessment of Conservation and Management practice of World Heritage Site. Harar City." Additionally, in

her PhD thesis in anthropology, *Tolerance in the City of Peace: History and Belonging in Harar (Gêy), Ethiopia*, defended at the University of Edinburgh in 2022, Dr. Lindsay Randall breaks away from the anthropological themes traditionally studied by anthropologists who resided in Harar before her. She questions the 2006 UNESCO Peace Prize and the 2003 UNESCO moniker of “The City of Peace” and “examines how notions of history and heritage emerge and are contested within Harari discourses of identity and belonging and how these understandings blend with the physical city of Harar to underpin Harari religiosity and kinship” (Randall, 2022).

The time is no longer ripe for idealizing the past or for fixing heritage discourses. As this dossier shows, access to new sources has not only led to the emergence of new issues but has also made it possible to rethink existing sources. Most significantly, the analysis of new Arabic manuscripts and archives from the 19th-20th century has generated this renewal of the documentary corpus.

1. New insights into the Arabic manuscripts

Knowledge about the tradition of Islamic manuscripts in the Horn of Ethiopia, and in Harar in particular, is scarce. Harar, as a major center of Islamic learning in the Horn of Africa, holds a central place in the production of Arabic manuscripts in the region (see for example Banti, 2005; Osmond, 2012). In recent years, studies and approaches to these manuscripts have multiplied, and this has allowed for an in-depth renewal of the documentary corpus. The philological renewal of Islamic manuscript studies is mainly marked by the project “Islam in the Horn of Africa: A Comparative Literary Approach,” which was led by Pr. Alessandro Gori (European Research Council, Advanced Grant n° 322849 for the period 2013-2018, <http://www.islhornafr.eu>). As a specialist of Islamic literary traditions in the Horn of Africa, Pr. Alessandro Gori, along with his team, made the first extensive cataloguing of Ethiopian Islamic manuscripts – mostly from Harar. The catalogue of the Arabic manuscripts, which is housed in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, lists more than 300 codex (Gori, 2014). In 2015, the publication of a catalogue of about 500 Arabic manuscripts of the Abdullahi Sharif Museum in Harar was announced (see <https://cfec.hypotheses.org/677>). The masterpiece of the Islhornafr project is the XML-encoded relational database (<https://islhornafr.tors.ku.dk/>), which contains not only some of the manuscripts of these two Ethiopian institutions, but also those of many others in Ethiopia, in Europe and the USA. As Pr. Gori notes, “the research into this newly available material will certainly increase our knowledge of Islam in Ethiopia in general, and of the manuscript

tradition in particular”² (Gori, 2016: 157). Four of the articles published in this special issue confirm Gori’s assertion. Their authors have dedicated or are dedicating their PhD theses to the history of Harar through the study of Arabic manuscripts. Their work opens new fields of research and new perspectives on how to study the history of the city. They also show the contemporary dynamism around these questions.

Dr. Sana Mirza defended her PhD thesis, which specializes in Islamic art, in 2021 from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. Her dissertation, titled *An African Scriptorium? The Qur’an of Harar and their Globalizing Milieu*, explores a corpus of Qur’an manuscripts produced between the 17th and 19th centuries in the city of Harar and their Red Sea and Indian Ocean milieu. Her contribution in the present volume provides access to a number of her PhD results, such as the aesthetic connections and exchanges in the Red Sea and their role in the formation of a regional Red Sea style of manuscripts. Her work marks a turning point in the study of Arabic manuscripts from the Horn of Africa. Art history and codicological analysis of Harari Islamic manuscripts in a wider regional context, which were previously almost non-existent, emerge within Dr. Sana Mirza’s article in all their richness and potential. We hope that her dissertation will soon be fully published and accessible.

In her analysis of the divorce cases in the Harari qadis registers between 1827 and 1871 A.D., Dr. Muna Abubeker also emphasizes how this precious material increases our knowledge, not only on religious issues or manuscript traditions, but also on societal aspects that until now could not be discussed. The 19th century qadis registers are incredibly precious. They provide information about divorces, but also marriages, inheritances, land transactions, and all legal cases presented to the qadi who was in charge of law enforcement in Harar when the city was under the Emir’s control (see Dr. Muna’s philological PhD dissertation *Text Edition and Translation of a 19th century Court (Diwan) Manuscript of Harar*, completed in 2017 at Addis Ababa University). These registers make it possible to address questions of legal history, organization of society and family, questions of succession, authority, etc. For the first time, by studying the different types of divorces that appear in these registers, Dr. Muna’s article also addresses the place of women in the 19th century’s Harari society.

By identifying new manuscript copies of historical Arabic texts in European libraries (Paris, Rome, Berlin) and at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies library at Addis Ababa University, Héloïse Mercier succeeded in surpassing the work of Enrico Cerulli, which had dominated the study of historical texts about Harar for nearly a century. In a series of articles published in the 1930s, the

² In the framework of the ERC project, Dr. Anne Regourd published the first papyrological remarks on Harari and Islamic Ethiopian Manuscripts (Regourd, 2018a & 2018b).

Italian scholar edited, translated, and analyzed several short texts in Arabic that dealt with the history of Harar (Cerulli, 1931, 1936 & 1942). In her contribution, which is based on her MA thesis defended in 2020 at Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne University, Héroïse Mercier analyzes the *Ta'riḫ al-mulūk* and its rewritings. She attempts to understand the reasons behind the transfer of power from Harar to the Awsa Oasis at the end of the 16th century. The identification of those late 16th century texts complicates Cerulli's discourse.

Amongst the Arabic manuscripts being rediscovered and that allow us to see the history of the city in a new light, we must mention the historical texts written in the 20th century by Ethiopian scholars, which hold an important place in the way we view the history of the city today. In the framework of her PhD thesis about the writing and rewriting of Harar's history in the 19th and 20th century, Héroïse Mercier received a field grant from the CFEE in 2021 and studied some Arabic Manuscripts at the Institute for Ethiopian Studies library. Her fieldnote in this volume presents her first remarks on the mid-20th century *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī*, which is an annotated list of the rulers of Harar since the Middle Ages. She expands upon its position in the historiography of Harar by demonstrating that, whereas previous lists only began in the 17th century, the *Jadwal* enforced a "metanarrative" that gave the city a linear, exhaustive, and over-ten-centuries-long past.

We must also mention the PhD thesis, *Manuscripts of Oromo History recounted by Shayḫ Abū-Baḳer 'Othmān: Text edition, analysis and Annotated translation* by Dr. Nuraddin Aman, which was defended in 2020 at Addis Ababa University, Department of Linguistics and Philology. He edited and translated two historiographical texts written in Arabic in the middle of the 20th century by Shayḫ Abū Baker 'Othmān, the Oromo Muslim intellectual from Hararghe. His work is based on many historical documents and traditions and demonstrates the historiographical position of a 20th century Oromo author on the history of Harar and its region.

The identification and/or study of new Arabic manuscripts from Harar, regardless of their origin of production, also leads to rethinking and reconsidering existing sources or data. The history of the city is most often linked to a very distant past. For example, in its website on world heritage sites, UNESCO notes that "the walls surrounding this sacred Muslim city were built between the 13th and 16th centuries. Harar Jugol, said to be the fourth holiest city of Islam, numbers 82 mosques, three of which date from the 10th century, and 102 shrines" (<https://whc.unesco.org/fr/list/1189/>). The Millennium of the Harar, which was celebrated in July 2007, is another example (Bridonneau, Duroyaume & Bosredon, 2012: 167). In her article, Dr. Amélie Chekroun analyses the few mentions of Harar in the documentation of the 16th century. She shows that, building from the archaeological data and interpretation proposed by Pr. Timothy Insoll in 2017, Harar did not become an urban,

economic, and religious center before the early 16th century when the city became the new capital of the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn sultanate. Some of this data has already been analyzed in her 2013 PhD thesis about the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn and the war waged by the armies of this sultanate, which were led by Imām Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm against the Christian kingdom in the years 1530-1540. In general, the study of manuscripts and sources, as well as the archaeological data obtained during several surveys in the old city by Pr. Insoll, go against the oral tradition and the discourses repeated in many academic publications of the 20th century that avow Harar's very ancient past and its centrality as the main religious and political center of the eastern Horn of Africa. Future research should bring profound change to our understanding of the history of the walled city of Harar before it was integrated into Ethiopia at the end of the 19th century.

2. New insights into the 19th and 20th centuries archives of Harar

One of the current dynamics in research on Harar also concerns the history of the city since its integration into Ethiopia after its Egyptian occupation from 1875 to 1885 and its conquest by Menelik in 1887. Over the past fifteen years, researchers have also been rediscovering the numerous and rich archives produced about Harar by foreign institutions at the end of the 19th and the 20th centuries. In addition, we hope that the future opening of the Ethiopian imperial archives of the Gebi in Addis Ababa will bring much more to add to our understanding of the history of the region.

The study of Harari society from the end of the 19th century to the present day is a field that is still little explored, but the current historical and anthropological research shows its potential. This is evidenced by Dr. Avishai Ben Dror's book, *Emirate, Egyptian, Ethiopian: colonial experiences in late nineteenth-century Harar* (2018), which highlights the little-known period of the Egyptian occupation of Harar (1875-1885). In his book, which was developed from his PhD thesis, he paves the way for new approaches to Harari history by highlighting the importance of colonial and missionary archives (Egyptian, French, English, Italian) and the importance of bringing them into dialogue. Dr. Ahmed Hassan Omer contributes similarly in his own book, *Aleyyu Amba: l'Ifat et ses réseaux politiques, religieux et commerciaux au XIX^e siècle* (2020), which was based on his 2007 PhD thesis from the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. His research focuses on Ifat and the trade city of Aleyyu Amba. However, thanks to its economic and strategic importance in regional and international trade, Harar has a prominent place in his work. The numerous sources and archives he used show the value and potential of these archives, which are still little studied.

The fact that the history of Harar at the turn of the 20th century is still largely unwritten and the utility of little-explored archives (colonial, diplomatic,

missionary, etc.) is also demonstrated by Dr. Pedrotti in her contribution to this special issue. She describes, through examination of the French archives, the circumstances surrounding the establishment of the Ras Mäk^wännən Hospital and the St. Anthony Leprosarium in the first years of 20th century. More broadly, her 2022 PhD thesis from Aix-Marseille University, *La léproserie St-Antoine à Harar : au croisement de l'histoire missionnaire, médicale et politique de l'Éthiopie (1901-1936)*, shows that the leprosarium, founded by the French Capuchins in 1901, is not simply an isolated and autonomous proselytized institution. On the contrary, it developed in relation to several other social, medical, and political formations within and outside Ethiopia. In addition to serving the interests of its personnel, it appears to have been both a tool for French influence in Ethiopia as well as for the Ethiopian state's policy of 'modernity'. To reveal this, Dr. Vanessa Pedrotti compares French missionary and diplomatic sources. Besides, she analyses more than fifty accounts by European travelers. This work is based on the literary production, both medical and pastoral, published in newspapers between the years 1850 and 1936.

Overall, the archives of the French Capuchin mission based in Harar from 1881 to the end of the 20th century are today divided in two main locations. The first one remains in Harar at the head office of the diocese of Harar behind the Great Mosque, which is in the heart of the walled city. Pr. Shiferaw Bekele and Dr. Abba Daniel Assefa, with the support of the French Center for Ethiopian Studies, carried out an evaluation mission of the collection in December 2020. As the fieldnote written by Pr. Shiferaw (<https://cfec.hypotheses.org/>) shows, this collection is well preserved and organized, but largely unexplored. Most of the documents are in French, but they cover a multitude of subjects concerning the history of the city over nearly a century. As an example, he documents that in Folder 3c 1-12, there are annual reports of each mission station from 1899 to 1935 and that Series F are day-to-day notebooks of each station. Those archives are very precious, and provide not only information about the mission, but also about life and organization of the villages around Harar from the late 19th to the early 20th century. Most of the rest³ of the French Capuchin mission's archives are now in Rome at the library of the Collegio Internazionale San Lorenzo Da Brindisi (cf. Chekroun, 2011), under the number 2R "Vicariato Apostolico dei Galla." They were transferred to Rome in 1977 in a common move to gather all the archives produced within the Capuchin missions over the world in one place so that their preservation and accessibility could be ensured. Before arriving in Rome, they were kept in the OFMCA Provincial

³ Some archives could be found at the Bibliothèque franciscaine des Capucins, in Paris (France), numbers 2P, 1R-2R and G13.

Archives in Toulouse.⁴ These archives are quite precious. For example, in 2R11-2R16 are the personal diaries of Mgr. Taurin Cahagne, which he wrote between 1866 and 1891; in 2R121/2c, the correspondence of Mgr. Cahagne with Ras Makonnen between 1888 and 1892 and in 2R 121/2d with Menelik between 1891 and 1895; Mgr. Jarosseau's very abundant correspondence with the missionaries between 1900 and 1941 (2R140-2R179) and with Ras Tafari between 1910 and 1936 (2R190-2R201); etc. Researchers working on the history of Harar and its region should give special attention to these archives, mainly in French.

Historians and philologists are not the only ones to deal with literary corpus. Thomas Osmond, in his contribution, "Mawlūd Tradition, Reformist Dynamics and State Policies in East Ethiopia," takes an anthropological look at the Mawlūd/Mawlid manuscripts, which organize the celebrations of the Prophet Muḥammad in Harar by the Harari and also amongst Harar's Oromo neighbours. He reveals the heterogeneous nature of these ceremonial practices by showing that they draw on several theological and political legacies. The survey he conducted in the 2010s in Harar and the surrounding Oromiya Eastern Hararghe Zone allowed him to observe the uses of these texts in local and national identity debates. This led him to question the current Harari/Oromo cleavage often depicted within the Federation of Ethiopian "nationalities." His article echoes one he wrote in 2014 where he challenges the regional history of Harar that pitted the "civilized" Harari city dwellers against the "barbaric" Oromo peasants. Rather than just highlighting oppositions, it demonstrates, through a diachronic study of Harar's political history, more complex relationships of competition and cooperation between the Harari elites and the Oromo peasants of eastern Hararghe (Osmond, 2014).

The history of Harar is now a potent academic topic. By highlighting the discoveries, sources, and analyses of nearly fifteen researchers working on Harar using different disciplines (history, archaeology, philology, anthropology, geography, etc.), this issue provides an overview of the history of the city and its inhabitants. But it also opens up new perspectives. There are significant research opportunities for scholars interested in the history of Harar. In addition to the collection of the Arabic manuscripts, the French Capuchin mission's archives, or the European administrative archives, many other materials deserve to be explored, such as the Ethiopians archives that are kept at the Gebi in Addis Ababa. Moreover, like the written sources, the oral sources, which are just as rich, allow us to consider the history of the city from innovative angles, such as health, politics, urbanism, or religion. Henceforth,

⁴ The same is also true about the archives of the Somalia and Aden mission, which were also brought to Rome in 1977 and are now kept there under the number 1R "Sezione Somalia e Aden, già nell'Archivio OFM Cap. Di Toulouse, a dal 1977 nell'Archivio Generale OFM Cap. di Roma."

it is no longer a question of thinking of Harar as an immutable hegemonic center, but rather of bringing to light the multiple imbrications that occur there and that are anchored in logics which are not only local but also national and transnational. The advances that future research will provide from this documentation will not only allow us to consider the history of Harar in a new light but will also contribute more generally to the history of regional Islam as well as to the place of this region within the Horn of Africa and the dynamics of the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea. This special issue brings local history into a broader historiographic context alongside other research on the Horn of Africa that is increasingly focusing upon historical connections and exchanges and ends the consideration of this region as a place dislocated from and inactive with the rest of the world.

3. References

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Harar as the capital city of the Barr Sa‘d ad-Dīn (first half of the 16th century): from its emergence to its fortification

Abstract

This article traces the history of the city of Harar prior to the mid-16th century until the end of the Barr Sa‘d ad-Dīn Sultanate. The research for this article is based on the few mentions of the city that exist in the medieval literature and on recent archaeological data. It shows that, contrary to what has been proposed by oral traditions since the late 19th century and by the archaeological data and interpretation proposed by Insoll in 2017, Harar did not become an urban, economic, and religious center until the early 16th century when the city became the new capital of Barr Sa‘d ad-Dīn. Until then and since the establishment of the sultanate in the early 15th century, the sultans’ power was centered in Dakar. The reasons for relocating the capital of the sultanate in 1520 are not known, but instability in the sultanate in years prior may shed light on why Harar emerged as the new heart of the sultanate. Finally, this article provides further evidence for the construction of the city walls in the mid-16th century by Emir Nūr. Sources from this period tend to show that this fortification of the city was part of a general policy followed by the sultanate as they tried to defend themselves against attacks from the newly arrived Oromo populations in the region.

Keywords: Harar, History, Barr Sa‘d ad-Dīn, Written sources, Archaeology

Résumé

Cet article tente de retracer l’histoire de la ville de Harar avant le milieu du xvi^e siècle et la fin du sultanat du Barr Sa‘d ad-Dīn. L’étude s’appuie sur les rares mentions de la ville dans la documentation médiévale et sur les données archéologiques récentes. Elle montre que, contrairement

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à ce que proposent les traditions orales depuis la fin du xix^e siècle, Harar ne devient un centre urbain, économique et religieux qu'à partir du début du xvi^e siècle, lorsque la ville devient la nouvelle capitale du Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn, comme l'avancait Insoll à partir des données archéologiques en 2017. Jusqu'alors, depuis la fondation du sultanat au début du xv^e siècle, le siège du pouvoir des sultans se trouvait à Dakar. Les raisons du changement de capitale en 1520 ne sont pas connues, mais la situation instable au sein du sultanat au cours des années précédentes peut être une piste pour expliquer l'émergence de Harar comme nouveau cœur du sultanat. Enfin, cet article recontextualise la construction des murailles de la ville (*jugal*) au milieu du xvi^e siècle par l'émir Nūr : les sources de l'époque tendent à montrer que cette fortification de la ville s'inscrit dans une politique générale du sultanat qui tente de se défendre contre les attaques des nouvelles populations oromo de la région.

Mots-clés : Harar, histoire, Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn, sources écrites, archéologie

Introduction

Today, the old city of Harar, which is encompassed by a wall (*jugal* in Harari), is introduced to tourists as the fourth holiest city of Islam. This is in part due to the presence of a hundred mosques and as many shrines within a perimeter of 1.6 km² (<https://whc.unesco.org/fr/list/1189/>; Mohamud, Bianchini & Maimone, 2006: 5-6; Santelli, 2008). According to historical sources, the old town of Harar dates from the end of the medieval period (15th-16th centuries), but current oral tradition dates the establishment of Harar from the 13th or even as early as the 9th century (Mercier, 2022b). European travelers who visited Harar between the mid-19th and early 20th centuries often recorded the oral traditions that described the founding of the city, and these are linked to Emir Nūr, the Emir who initiated the construction of the city wall in the mid-16th century. In 1854, during his journey in Harar, Richard Burton recorded that the city, in its contemporary form, is credited to Emir Nūr “who reigned 316 years ago” (in 1538 AD) and that before him, “during the reign of Muhammad Gragne, the ‘left-handed’ Attila of Adel,” there was a “mere mass of Bedouin villages” that were perhaps founded by Arabs in the 7th century (Burton, 1855: 144; Burton, 1856: 309-310).¹ Some fifty years later, during his priesthood in

¹ Burton explains that the “province of Hadiyah,” whose capital was Harar, was part of the “Zayla’ empire,” founded by “Arab invaders” who, in the 7th century, conquered and colonized the lowlands between the Red Sea and the Highlands (Burton, 1856: 305). It is unclear whether the traditions Burton noted during his stay also trace the origins of Harar to the 7th century, even if Braukämper says so (2003: 36).

Harar, the French Capuchin Azaïs learned that it was Nūr “who, assisted by the famous chiefs Ahu Abādir and Ahu ‘Alī, undertook the construction of the ramparts, the immense work of which was not to be completed until about 1580” (Azaïs & Chambard, 1931: 4). In the current oral tradition, Emir Nūr remains strongly associated with the construction of the wall surrounding the city of Harar and with the shape of the city of Harar as it exists today.

However, since the end of the 19th century, oral tradition has evolved to date the foundation of Harar to a much earlier period. The figure of Abādir emerged and replaced that of Emir Nūr, and the shrine dedicated to Abādir is often referenced as the heart of the city’s foundation. With this shift of focus from Nūr to Abādir, oral traditions began to consider that the city was founded as early as the 12th and 13th centuries, and sometimes even as early as the 10th century. The book *Fatḥ madīnat Harar* (“The conquest of the town of Harar”) is deeply associated with the tracing of the city’s foundation from the 13th century and with the emergence of Abādir as a prominent figure in the city’s founding. This Arabic text is a legendary history of Harar in the 13th century, and contains anachronisms, such as the presence of Portuguese and Italians. The *Fatḥ madīnat Harar* tells of the arrival of Abādir ‘Umar ar-Riḍā in Harar in 1216 from Mecca. Upon his arrival, he is accompanied by 405 companions, who include figures of the Islamic tradition, such as the 10th century Iranian Muslim mystic Bāyazīd al-Biṣṭāmī. The exact date the book was authored is unknown, and its content is controversial. The editor and translator of the English version, Ewald Wagner (1978), posits that the author of this text “wanted to show that Harar’s supremacy over the surrounding tribes had old and religious origins” (Wagner, 2005a). It is fairly obvious that at least the popular and well-known version of this text is more contemporary because, for instance, the text concludes with a prophecy made by Abādir about the Italian conquest of Ethiopia. One of the few arguments that claim to confirm the age of the *Fatḥ madīnat Harar* and the antiquity of the city can be found within the historiography and in some lists of emirs in the region. Here, Emirs of Harar are listed as early as the late 9th century and some lists even include Abādir himself a listed Emir. Still, these lists are more contemporary compositions (see Mercier, 2022b) that merge disparate information, such as oral traditions and textual sources, and link dynasties that are quite distinct from one another. Indeed, some of these lists consider the rulers of the 14th century Awfāt Sultanate to be part of the same family as the Emirs of Harar who descended from ‘Alī b. Dā‘ūd in the 17th-19th centuries. Moreover, the *Fatḥ madīnat Harar* would not have become popular in Harar before the early 20th century when the city began to lose its autonomy after its integration to Ethiopia by Menelik from 1887 onwards. According to Thomas Osmond, “its production is probably part of the religious proselytizing impelled from

1875 onwards by the Egyptian-Ottoman administration” of the city (Osmond, 2014: 8).

We only know a fraction of the history of Harar before the city became more open to foreigners and outsiders during the Egyptian occupation. Before the 19th century, less than twenty textual fragments are available to aid in tracing nearly three centuries of history (Cerulli, 1971: 135-206; Wagner, 1974a; Tedeschi, 1974). Today, the history of the city is entirely dependent on the oral tradition, which transformed and crystallized since the second half of the 19th century. Héloïse Mercier’s ongoing PhD thesis on the history and writing of the region’s history between the 17th and 19th centuries should, however, add much to our understanding (cf. Mercier, 2022a). This article focuses on the period before the upheavals of the second half of the 16th century, and it tries to free itself from the pervasive mythologies present within current oral tradition. First, it demonstrates that the historical sources confirm the archaeological data and interpretation proposed by Insoll (2017: 210) in that Harar did not become an important urban center until it became the capital of the Barr Sa’d ad-Dīn Sultanate in the early 16th century. Second, this article attempts to identify the reasons why the sultans decided to change their capital in 1520 after almost a century of existence of the Barr Sa’d ad-Dīn. Finally, it recontextualizes the construction of Harar’s city wall by Emir Nūr as an undertaking unique to Harar as all of the main cities of the sultanate were repeatedly attacked and all were also equipped with similar city walls.

1. Harar, the new capital of the Barr Sa’d ad-Dīn

Although some oral traditions, as well as 19th century texts, consider that the foundation of Harar dates to the central Middle Ages (before the 13th century), the first mention of the toponym “Harar” in medieval documentation does not appear before the 15th century. This mention is within the story of King ‘Amda Šeyon’s wars against the Muslim communities in the south and east of the Christian kingdom. This Christian text, written in Ge‘ez, recounts the conflicts between the Christian king (r. 1314-1344) and the Islamic states of Ethiopia in the year between 1332 and 1333. It is considered one of the first historical texts composed in Ethiopia. Commentators on the text agree that it was written after the events it recounts, and most likely during the 15th century (cf. Kropp, 1983-1984 and 1994: xviii; Marrassini, 1993; Derat, 2002: 99-100 and 2013: 122). In a paper published in 2020, Bertrand Hirsch goes further and convincingly demonstrates that this text, which is of a profoundly epic nature, describes not the wars beginning in the 14th century, but the conflicts between King Dawit (r. 1380-1412) and then King Yeshäq (r. 1413-1430), against the rulers of the sultanate of Awfāt in the first half of the 15th century (Hirsch, 2020). This long conflict eventually led to the collapse of the sultanate whose territory was ultimately integrated into the Christian kingdom. This

conflict also engendered a profound reorganization of the eastern Horn of Africa Muslim territories (today eastern Ethiopia and northern Somaliland) as well as the foundation of a new sultanate called Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn in the 1410s and 1420s by a branch of the Walasma' dynasty who ruled Awfāt since the end of the 13th century (Chekroun, 2020).

The story of King 'Amda Şeyon's wars mentions several clashes with the Muslim communities before and after the collapse of the sultanate of Awfāt. Many Muslim communities, cities, and territories are mentioned on several occasions within this story, and these mentions reveal the main and dominant territories of the time. Harar is not one of them. The toponym "Ḥarar" appears only once and this is within the very long list of members of a Muslim coalition led by a man named *qāzi* (i.e. *qāḍī*, jurist) Sāleḥ. Ḥarar is also not listed as one of the main territories of this coalition, such those that provided "a king" like Adal, Ḥarlā, or Hubat. It is one of about 200 territories that provided a governor. Some provided 1, others 8, 12, or even 1,000. Ḥarar provided this coalition with "3 governors (*māk'w'ännən*)" (Marrassini, 1993: 105-106). The small number of *māk'w'ännən* provided by Ḥarar suggests that it was a territory of little importance at the time (cf. Cerulli, 1936: 16-17). In comparison, Adal, an Islamic region in eastern Ethiopia, provided 1 king and 99 *māk'w'ännən*; Zayla', the main port on the Red Sea, provided 1 king; and Dakar, the capital of the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn sultanate at the time, provided 1,000 *māk'w'ännən*. Thus, the 15th century, at the earliest, is the first mention in the sources of a place named Ḥarar under Islamic rule.

It is not until the early 16th century that a new mention of the toponym Ḥarar is identified in textual sources. Since the second quarter of the 15th century, the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn sultans controlled the eastern region of the Horn of Africa, which spanned from the eastern Rift massif to the shores of the Red Sea. Systematically called Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn (the "land of Sa'd ad-Dīn") in Arabic Muslim sources, this sultanate is better known by its Christian designation "Adal," which is incorrect. Adal, since the beginning of the 15th century, is only one of the territories under the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn sultanate authority (Chekroun & Hirsch, 2020a: 75). Moreover, some Christian authors in Ge'ez do not use "Adal" but "Bär Sä'adādin" to refer to the Islamized territory east of the Christian kingdom, and so does the author of the chronicle of the reign of King Galawdéwos in the mid-16th century (Solomon Gebreyes, 2019: 4-5, 27). The center of this sultanate's power was the city of Dakar, which is attested as early as 1422 within the *Kitāb al-Ilmām bi-akḥbār man bi-arḍ al-Ḥabasha min mulūḳ al-islām* ("Book of the Perfect Knowledge on the Histories of the Kings of Islam in the Land of the Ḥabasha") by the Egyptian author Taqīy ad-Dīn Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī (d. 1442). This booklet was completed in Cairo in 1438, and it is devoted to the history of the Ethiopian Muslims from the late 13th to the early 15th centuries (Muth, 2005). It ends with the words: "Sultan Badlāy

resided in the land of Dakar (*bilād D.ḳ.r.*) and his brother Khayr ad-Dīn in the land of Rakala (*bilād R.ḳ.l.a-t*)” (Maqrīzī, 1998: 244). Both Christian and Muslim sources from the 15th and early 16th centuries, such as King Eskender’s chronicle (r. 1478-1494) (Perruchon, 1894: 357), agree that Dakar was also the capital for the descendants of Sa’d ad-Dīn. The location of Dakar is not known. The only clue to its location is provided by ‘Arab Faqīh, the author of the *Futūḥ al-Ḥabasha*, a mid-16th century Arabic account of the attempted Islamic conquest of the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia by Imām Aḥmad during the 1530s. He implies that Dakar was located a short distance from Harar (‘Arab Faqīh, 2003: 17). Several hypotheses have since been proposed that suggest Dakar was located a few kilometers east of Harar (Cerulli, 1936: 26). I have discussed these hypotheses further in a previous article (Chekroun, 2015).

In 1520, Dakar was abandoned as the capital of the Barr Sa’d ad-Dīn Sultanate in favor of a new city: Harar. According to the *Ta’rīkh al-Walasma’*, the Arabic Annals of the Walasma’ dynasty from its establishment at the end of the 13th century until the year 1520, and the *Ta’rīkh al-mulūk* (“History of the Kings”), a brief Arabic text on the history of the Barr Sa’d ad-Dīn Sultanate in the 16th century, the capital of this sultanate was moved from Dakar to Harar in the month of *sha’bān* in the year 926 AH (July-August 1520 AD) (Cerulli 1931: 50 and 55). The *Futūḥ al-Ḥabasha* confirms this shift of capital. The author repeatedly recalls that at the time of this war, Harar was the city of the Sultan and of the Imām, that it was from Harar that they ruled the “country,” and that Harar was the heart of the sultanate (‘Arab Faqīh, 2003: 16, 17, 22, *s.q.*). It also states that under the *jarād*² Abūn, the predecessor of Imām Aḥmad, the city of Harar was already the capital, but that before him the capital was Dakar (‘Arab Faqīh, 2003: 19). This corroborates the two short Arabic texts mentioned above. On the contrary, no Ethiopian Christian text nor Portuguese source mentions the name Harar before the early modern period, whereas the former capital Dakar is named in some Christian texts, even after its desertion by the sultans (cf. Perruchon, 1894; Chekroun, 2015).

Contrary to the numerous oral traditions and texts from the late 19th until the early 20th century, archaeological research and radiocarbon dating by Timothy Insoll indicates that the city is no older than the late 15th century. This confirms the data quoted above from the 15th-16th century written sources. In 2014 and 2018, and for the first time ever, Timothy Insoll conducted archaeological research inside the city wall of Harar. He completed four archaeological test excavations, at Hamburti (the so-called “navel” of the city), at the Emir Nūr shrine, at Shagnila Toya, and at the Emir’s Palace. He also excavated six mosques in the city: Aw Abdal, Aw Abadir, Aw Meshad, Din Agobera, Fehkredin, and Jami mosque. He chose to archaeologically

² Title of a local chief within the organization of the sultanate.

investigate these mosques as they were recognized by the oral traditions as the earliest of the numerous mosques inside the walled city (Insoll & Zekaria, 2017: 83). As such, Aw Abadir Mosque is believed to date from the 12th or early 13th century and the Aw Abdel Mosque from the end of the 13th century (Zekaria, 1979: 27-28). Din Agobera Mosque was described as being built upon a rock “where the first conversion to Islam took place” in the city (Foucher, 1994: 71). The Jami Mosque is the biggest mosque in the city, and the oral tradition states that it was first built with one tower minaret in 1216. As Enrico Cerulli recalls, an inscription on the wooden minbar inside Jami Mosque is a chronogram of the foundation date of the mosque: 1175 AH (1761-1762 AD) (Cerulli, 1936: 53), and Chiari (2015: 128) estimates its date to 1763-4 AD. This mosque has since undergone many reconstructions and modifications. From the six radiocarbon dates obtained from these six mosques, Insoll argues that they date from “a varied chronology spanning the late 15th and early 20th centuries AD” (Insoll & Zekaria, 2019: 81). According to his analysis and the radiocarbon dates obtained from his test excavations, Insoll concludes that “based on the currently available evidence it appears that Harar was a late, possibly 16th century foundation. [...] Harar was not the earliest Islamic urban center in the region” (Insoll, 2017: 210) and “that all the Harari mosques investigated post-date the late 15th century and that the city also dates from this era and was linked with the establishment of Harar as the capital of [the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn]” (Insoll & Zekaria, 2019: 81).

The sources do not give any details about the shape of the city in this period apart from the fact that the local religious scholars resided there, which suggests the presence of mosques, and that the palace of the sultan was located there. It is possible that the oral tradition noted in the mid-19th century by Burton (1955: 144) that refers to Harar as a “mere mass of Bedouin villages” before the installation of the sultans of the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn is relatively representative of its historical reality, but it is also conceivable that it was already an important stop along the caravan route. Indeed, the location of this city has often been praised by observers for both its strategic position on the caravan route that linked the shores of the Red Sea to the heart of the Christian kingdom as well as for the richness of its immediate environment and especially its temperate climate. In his invaluable report on the political, economic, and social conditions of Harar following the Egyptian occupation in 1875-1876 (see Ben Dror, 2018: 60-65), the Egyptian officer Muḥammad Moktār remarked that:

[T]he latitude of this city could lead one to believe that one experiences very strong heat there. However, this is not the case, thanks to its altitude above sea level [...];

the temperature is also very moderate and rather cold than hot; moreover, the gardens and crops that surround it contribute to making the heat weaker by the great development of vegetation. (Moktar, 1876: 361)

In May 1887, the French explorer Jules Borelli noted that, “Harar, by its position, by its commercial importance and the wealth of its campaigns, would become, under a good administration, the most lucrative of the Amhara conquests” (Borelli, 1890: 238). Many other examples could be listed here, but let us content ourselves with the remark of a connoisseur of the city who lived in Harar for many years at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century: the French Capuchin Azaïs who was a missionary, archaeologist, and member of the Catholic mission based in Harar. Azaïs described Harar as, “a gray island, surrounded by a sea of greenery of all shades where nature indulges” (Azaïs & Chambard, 1931: 18). Moreover, as Raphaël Alessandri points out, “the choice of the location of what would become Jugol can be explained, among other things, by the proximity of numerous springs, and by the relief of the hill, an area on which the constructions were developed, and which allowed for easy evacuation of rainwater” (Alessandri, 2004: 55). These qualities could explain the establishment of an early settlement on the site as well as why Harar was chosen as the new capital of the sultanate.

2. A few hints that explain the Dakar-Harar transfer

If geographical, meteorological, and geological conditions demonstrate why Harar was favorable for the establishment of a settlement, how can we explain the decision in 1520 to transfer the sultanate’s center of power from Dakar to Harar? The precise reasons are unknown as this relocation of the Sultanate capital is barely documented by historical sources. However, the political and social context of the region and in particular of the Barr Sa’d ad-Dīn sultanate may provide some clues.

The Barr Sa’d ad-Dīn Sultanate was founded in the 1410-1420s by the sons of Sultan Sa’d ad-Dīn. After their father’s death in Zayla’ in either 1408 or 1409, they crossed the Gulf of Aden and took refuge at the court of the Rasulid sultan in Taizz in Yemen for a few years. With the support of this Yemeni ruler, they eventually returned to the African coast, but not via the port of Zayla’, which had fallen under Christian rule, but via the port of Siyāra, east of Berbera (Chekroun, 2020; Gonzalez-Ruibal et al., 2021: 6-16). They returned and waited “until God gave them the power to take back their country” (Maqrīzī, 1998: 240). After their return, they pursued a long period of reconquest of some former territories of the Awfāt Sultanate from the Christians. The Christians had taken advantage of the collapse of Awfāt and the escape of Sa’d ad-Dīn and his sons to impose their authority. The heart of the Awfāt sultanate, on the eastern escarpment of the Christian highlands,

fell under Christian rule (Fauvelle, Hirsch & Chekroun, 2017). Sa'd ad-Dīn's sons focused on an area much further east, roughly from the eastern high plateau of the Rift Valley to the port of Zayla'. They named this new area after their father, the "land of Sa'd ad-Dīn" or Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn. However, the first decades of this sultanate seemed troubled, though a proper study of this period has yet to be conducted. The second half of the 15th century seems to have been more peaceful, even though both Christian and Muslim border raids still occurred (Chekroun & Hirsch, 2020a).

The 15th century ends with the long reign, from 1488 until about 1515 or 1517, of Sultan Muḥammad b. Azḥar ad-Dīn b. 'Alī b. Abū Bakr b. Sa'd ad-Dīn. This reign is primarily documented by 'Arab Faqīh in the *Futūḥ al-Ḥabasha*. Although this text describes later events, 'Arab Faqīh refers many times to what happened "in the time of Sultan Muḥammad" one of the "*mujāhidūn* who ruled over the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn" ('Arab Faqīh, 2003: 37-38, 46, etc.). Several expeditions led by Sultan Muḥammad, in person or at his behest, are mentioned, especially during the story of "Simū, son of Wanāḥ Jān" ('Arab Faqīh, 2003: 120-122). According to this lengthy micro-narrative, two of the expeditions ordered by Sultan Muḥammad took place in Bāli and Dawāro during the reign of the Christian king Nā'od (r. 1495-1508):

The sultan Muḥammad b. Azar [ad-Dīn b. 'Alī]³ b. Abū Bakr b. Sa'd ad-Dīn ruled the country for thirty years during the ninth century. And after Sultan Muḥammad embarked on the *jihād* in the country of *al-Ḥabasha*, there was a clash between the Muslims and the infidels; with the infidels inflicting disaster upon the Muslims, killing a vast number of them. ('Arab Faqīh, 2003: 8)

The most well documented expedition conducted during the reign of Sultan Muḥammad is the one he led jointly with Emir Maḥfūz just before his death. According to several sources, including the account of the Portuguese Francisco Álvarez who was present at the Christian king's court in the 1520s and the chapter devoted to the reign of Lebna Dengel that opens the chronicle of the Christian king Śarḍa Dengel (r. 1563-1597), Maḥfūz's head was cut off and was killed in the course of this expedition, his troops were massacred, and the sultan fled (Álvares, 1961: 410-415; Kropp, 1988: 2). According to Álvarez, this battle took place in July 1517, according to Bruce (1790: 322) in July 1516, and according to the Christian chronicles, later quoted by Pedro Paez in his *Historia da Etiopia*, when Lebna Dengel was 20 years old, in 1516-1517 (Paez, 2011: 477). However, Álvarez and Bruce match this event with the burning of the port of Zayla' by Lopo Soarez, which they also date to 1514. In 1552, the Portuguese João de Barres dedicates a full chapter to this burning of Zayla' in his history of Portuguese actions in the east and confirms the role of Lopo

³ The sources give a different spelling: it is however the same Sultan Muḥammad.

Soarez in this event (De Barres, 1628: 13-14). The proposed date of 1514 by Álvarez is impossible insofar as in 1514, Lopo Soares de Albergaria was in Portugal and did not leave Europe until April 1515 as governor of Portuguese India when he transported on his ship, amongst others, Francisco Álvarez to Ethiopia. And it is indeed in 1517 that Lopo Soares was in the Red Sea, and thus had the ability to set fire to Zayla' (Ross, 1922: 275-276). Thus, the Christian victory, Maḥfūz's death, Sultan Muḥammad's flight, and Zayla's burning took place in 1517.

Just after his return from this expedition into Christian territory in 1517, Sultan Muḥammad is murdered. The sources describe the then turbulent times, which seemed to contribute to the relocation of the sultanate's capital from Dakar to Harar in 1520. In the *Futūḥ al-Ḥabasha*, 'Arab Faqīh lists no less than five men who ruled between Sultan Muḥammad b. Azar b. Sa'd ad-Dīn and his son Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Azar b. Sa'd ad-Dīn:

Returning to his country Sultan Muḥammad was murdered by his [son or brother] in-law Muḥammad b. Abū Bakr b. Maḥfūz, a prominent person in the country, who ruled the country after him for one year. Then Muḥammad b. Abū Bakr b. Maḥfūz was, in his turn, murdered. His killer was Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad, ruler of the country of Hubat, of the tribe of Balaw, a prominent person in the country who ruled the country after him for three months. Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad was killed in his turn. His murderer was Wasanī the slave of Garād Maḥfūz, a prominent person in the country who ruled the country for three months. He was arrested after this, and his captor was Maṣṣūr b. Muḥammad who sent him in shackles to Zayla' and he was murdered by one of the slaves of Yāfa' in Zayla'. In his stead ruled the emir Maṣṣūr b. Maḥfūz b. Muḥammad b. Garād Adash. Garād Maṣṣūr waged war against Garād Abūn for five months. After this Garād Abūn came against him, and ruled for seven years. [...] After this the sultan Abū Bakr, son of the sultan Muḥammad b. Azar from the stock of Sa'd ad-Dīn, stood up against Garād Abūn. [...] They fought against Garād Abūn and waged a bloody battle against him, killing Garād Abūn b. Adash [...]. The sultan Abū Bakr ruled the country after Garād Abūn. ('Arab Faqīh, 2003: 8-10)

This period is notably marked by the systematic murder of the reigning ruler by the next ruler, or by one of his relatives. None of these five rulers were descendants of Sa'd ad-Dīn and therefore none were members of the legitimate dynasty. They seem to have been regional rulers under the sultanate authority, Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad for example, who was the ruler of Hubat. During these few years, therefore, some regions – including Hubat, from which *jarād* Abūn and the Imām Aḥmad also originated – would have attempted to overrule the authority of the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn's sultans.

At about the same period of time, the author of the *Ta'rīkh al-Walasma'*, the annals of the legitimate dynasty descended from Umar Walasma' and then Sa'd ad-Dīn, notes:

Then reigned after him Sultan Muḥammad Aẓhar ad-Dīn b. 'Alī b. Abū Bakr b. Sa'd ad-Dīn in the year eight hundred and eighty-three of the Hegira. The duration of his reign was thirty-one years; some say it was thirty-two years; the duration of his reign was the longest among those of the line of the Walasma'. And after him reigned Sultan 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. Aẓhar ad-Dīn and Allah knows it. The duration of his reign was two years. And after him reigned Sultan Faḥr ad-Dīn one year and half a year. And after that reigned our lord Abū Bakr b. our lord Muḥammad b. Aẓhar ad-Dīn. (Cerulli, 1931: 49)

The five men listed by 'Arab Faqīh do not appear in this legitimate list, which is probably precisely because they are not legitimate. However, these few years seem troubled, if only because of the reigns' brevity. Second, Faḥr ad-Dīn, who reigned between Muḥammad's two sons, does not seem to have been a Sa'd ad-Dīn descendant and he would therefore have been a usurper. That said, the author gives him the title of sultan and thus credits him a certain legitimacy. Indeed, this same author does not provide the title of sultan to another usurper who reigned before Sultan Muḥammad, a man named "Ibrāhīm b. *qāt* Naṣr ad-Dīn," who reigned for only 10 months before being murdered and replaced by Muḥammad. Third, these few reigns mark a narrative break within the *Ta'rīkh al-Walasma'*. Unlike previous reigns since Sa'd ad-Dīn for which precise dates are systematically given, only vague reign lengths are noted for Sultan Muḥammad's reign. This is quite surprising as they are the last reigns mentioned, and they are also the closest to the writing period. There is no reason why the author should know the precise reign dates of the 15th century sultans and not those of the sultans he most likely knew personally. Is this vagueness an expression of the troubled period that appears in 'Arab Faqīh's text?

Another indication that the shift of the capital occurred during troubled times is the discrepancy between the sources on this matter. Two texts explicitly mention this shift: the *Ta'rīkh al-Walasma'* and the *Ta'rīkh al-mulūk*. The *Ta'rīkh al-Walasma'* notes:

And after that reigned our lord Abū Bakr b. our lord Muḥammad b. Aẓhar ad-Dīn and Allah knows it. It was he who transferred the people and the army from the land of Dakar to Harar to settle there in the month of *sha'bān* of the year nine hundred and twenty-six [i.e. July 17-August 14, 1520] and he remained seventy-four years before the year one thousand of the Prophet's Hegira [i.e. 1591-1592], may the best of prayers and the purest of peace be upon him. (Cerulli, 1931: 49)

And the author of the *Taʿrīkh al-mulūk* on the other hand considers that:

The movement of the *jarād* Abūn and the Sultan Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad Aḏhar ad-Dīn, from Dakar to Harar, to settle in the latter, took place during the month of *shaʿbān* in the year 926 H. (Mercier, 2020: 41)

Written from the sultans' point of view, the first text indicates that it was Sultan Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Aḏhar ad-Dīn alone who transferred the population and the army of Dakar to a place called Harar. On the other hand, the second text indicates that while this move was made by the same Sultan Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Aḏhar ad-Dīn, he was helped by the *jarād* Abūn. We have seen that the *jarād* Abūn, according to 'Arab Faqīh, took power over the sultanate during the troubled period and then was overthrown by Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad. According to the *Futūḥ al-Ḥabasha*, the *jarād* Abūn continued his struggle against Abū Bakr long after this overthrow. Indeed, the Imām Aḥmad is said to have been under his command until his death and continued the struggle against Abū Bakr ('Arab Faqīh, 2003: 9). Moreover, the author of the *Taʿrīkh al-mulūk* considers the *jarād* Abūn to be so important, that in addition to associating him with Abū Bakr for the transfer of Dakar to Harar, he precisely specifies the time of his death: "The *jarād* Abūn was killed at the time of twilight on Tuesday, the 7th of the month of *shaʿbān* in the year 931 H. [i.e., Tuesday, May 30, 1525 AD]" (Mercier, 2020: 41). No other information on this period is contained in this text. Sultan Abū Bakr's death is not even mentioned even though we know from the *Futūḥ al-Ḥabasha* that he was killed by Imām Aḥmad during the 1520s and after *jarād* Abūn's death ('Arab Faqīh, 2003: 21; Chekroun & Hirsch, 2020b). It seems for the author of the *Taʿrīkh al-mulūk*, the *jarād* Abūn is much more important than the Sultan Abū Bakr.

Thus, the scant evidence about this period all tends to demonstrate that, before moving the capital of the sultanate from Dakar to Harar, the period was politically unstable. However, while there is no question that the transfer of the capital must have been intimately linked to the internal conflicts within the sultanate, it is difficult, given the available documentation, to understand the precise reasons for it. Was it a tactic on the part of the sultan to distance himself from voices that spoke out against his authority? Is it an attempt to re-found the sultanate on new foundations or a sign of an oppositional victory that made him flee? Are there other reasons (climatic, economic, etc.) for this choice? Was the pressure from some neighboring Somali populations also a factor?

3. Fortifications of the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn's urban places

As mentioned in the historical sources, at least during the 19th century – but we can also assume since the foundation of the emirate in the mid-17th – the

emirs of Harar controlled the entrances to the city.⁴ The 4- to 5-meter-high city wall that demarcates the city has 5 gates (Wagner, 2005: 1013). Before the Egyptian occupation, these gates were locked at night, the keys were guarded by the authorities, and foreigners were forced to leave the city walls (Abdullahi Mohammed Ahmed, 1990: 322). The city's wall thus formed a border between the city and the surrounding countryside. In 1875, following internal conflicts in the emirate, the city was occupied for 10 years by the Egyptians who reorganized its administration and opened the city to foreigners and non-Muslims. As demonstrated by Avishai Ben Dror in his book dedicated to the Egyptian occupation of Harar, "the Egyptians preserved one of the most prominent symbols of Harar – the *jugal* (city wall). They did not change the route of the wall, but rather renewed and strengthened its gates" (Ben Dror, 2018: 77; Hecht, 1982: 57-58). Finally, the conquest of the city by Menelik II in 1897 and the integration of the region into the Ethiopian Empire marked the definitive opening of the city and the abandonment of the use of gates as a system of limiting access.

The first mention of the construction of the city wall appears in documentation during the government of Emir Nūr. The latter placed the legitimate sultan [i.e. a descendant of Sa'd ad-Dīn] under guardianship as early as 1551-1552. Nūr then ruled Harar and the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn until his death in 1567-1568. Emir Nūr is primarily known for killing the Christian King Galawdéwos in 1559, which is cited both in textual sources and in oral tradition, and specifically within the Galawdéwos chronicle (Solomon Gebreyes, 2019: 56-58) and the *Ta'rīkh al-mulūk*:

He is the one who led the second conquest as well as the one who killed the king of the Ḥabasha. He fought the king named Aṭnāf Sajad, killed him and cut off his head. He went down with that head to the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn and I saw it myself with my own eyes. (Mercier, 2020: 41)

But Emir Nūr is also known for giving Harar its present shape. In the same period, what historiography calls "the great Oromo migrations" began. Though the time frame and modalities of the migrations remain obscure (cf. Ficquet, 2002), these "migrations" saw the installation of Oromo populations who probably came from southern regions of the country into the southern and eastern

⁴ In 1855, Richard Burton presented himself before the Emir not disguised as he previously had been as an Arab merchant. He thus became the first undisguised European to visit Harar. He notes: "After sitting for an hour at the eastern gate, waiting the permission of the Emir to enter his walls, we were ordered by a grim guard to follow" (Burton, 1855: 147). To my knowledge, this is the first mention of the control of the city entrances by the Emirs in the sources.

half of the Christian kingdom and into Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn territories. The Oromos supplanted the existing populations present in the medieval period and in particular the Muslim populations under the domination of the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn Sultanate, including those surrounding the city of Harar. The *Ta'riḫ al-mulūk* explains that the construction of the walls was undertaken in large part in order to defend against the newly arrived Oromo who were plundering the region:

There came an exceptional famine in our country. [...] The Jāla [i.e. Oromos] plundered the people of all regions. [...] The Jāla [i.e. Oromos] plundered (*takḥaṭṭafa*) the area and preyed (*ḳharraba*) on the region (*balad*) of Sīm, Shawā, Nujub, Jidāya and Dakkar and most of the land of Harjāyā. The survivors built fortifications (*al-ḥuṣūn*) and dug trenches (*al-ḳhandaq*). (Cerulli, 1931: 53; Mercier, 2020: 42)

In response to the Oromo attacks, it seems that a general fortification of the region took place. The regions mentioned here are also found in other textual sources of the time. These are some of the main territories under the authority of the Sultans of Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn. Some of them are mentioned as early as the 13th century in the *Dhiḳr at-tawārīḳh*, the so-called “Chronicle of Shawah.” These annals of some Ethiopian Muslim territories in the 12th-13th century, written in Arabic at the end of the 13th century, mention many Islamic territories, including Shawah and Jidāyah that the *Ta'riḫ al-mulūk* says were fortified in the mid-16th century. Shawah and Jidāyah, but also Dakar, Harjāya and Sīm, are found in many Arabic and Ge'ez sources of the 14th and 15th century (see Chekroun, forthcoming) up to the writing of the *Ta'riḫ al-mulūk* and the mention of their fortification. These regions do not only appear in the textual sources after the collapse of the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn, but also just after their fortification.

The ambiguity of the quotation from the *Ta'riḫ al-mulūk* implies that, in addition to Harar, all the localities mentioned and that were attacked by the Oromos were fortified. Moreover, Harar is not explicitly mentioned in this list. No precise date is provided in this text, however, in Harar, these fortifications seem to have been decided upon before the death of Emir Nūr and after his return from his war against the Christian king [i.e. after 1559-1560 and before 1567-1568]. Furthermore, the same text mentions the presence of a gate and a ditch surrounding the city in the 1570s within a description that leaves no doubt about the presence of fortifications surrounding the city:

They even arrived at the city of Harar and besieged its people for several days. Fighting took place between them at the entrance to Harar, until the city gate was filled with corpses and the Jāla turned back. The wazīr was wounded by about twenty blows from the blades and collapsed in the ditch. God Almighty saved him; he was brought back to the city of Harar and lived. (Mercier, 2020: 44)

Other textual sources confirm this period of fortifications. Shortly thereafter, the port city of Zayla', under the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn Sultanate authority, was also adorned with protective walls. A fragment of a chronicle in Arabic from the late 16th century explains that this construction was carried out at the behest of the city's governor, the *jarād* Lādū, by a man from Yemeni origin, a Qurashī:

And he began [the construction] of the walls [*darb*⁵] of Zayla' to protect it, and this happened on the day of Wednesday, the fifth of the month of *safar* of prosperity. This was by the hand of 'Aṭiya b. Muḥammad al-Qurashī, who was in charge of the construction of the walls by the governor of Zayla' at that time, who was the *jarād* Lādū. The sultān Muḥammad b. sultān Naṣīr was then in al-Ḥabasha [i.e. Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia]. The *jarād* Lādū died in the land of Awsah in the village of Warābah on Friday, the 26th of the month of *shawwal* in the year 996 [i.e., September 18, 1588]. (Cerulli, 1931: 89)

The decision to build walls “to protect it” probably took place between 1575 and 1577. According to the *Ta'rīkh al-mulūk*, Sultan Muḥammad b. Naṣīr b. 'Uṭmān b. Badlay ruled over the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn between 1572/3 and 1577. He went on an expedition against the Christian kingdom towards the end of his reign. This expedition was a bitter failure for the Muslims who notably suffered a part of their troops deserting to the Christian side. During the sultan's absence in 1575/6, a man named Maṣūr b. Muḥammad b. Ayyūb moved to Harar to fight the Oromos (Cerulli, 1931: 162-163; Paulitschke, 1888: 509). Christian sources confirm the date of this Sultan Muḥammad' expedition. The *Short Chronicle*, a compilation of short notices regarding the history of Christian Ethiopia from the legendary reign of Menilek I to the modern period, states that in the 13th year of Śarḍa Dengel's reign (r. 1563-1597), i.e. in 1576, Muḥammad arrived in Christian territory and that “in the 14th year, [Śarḍa Dengel] marched against Muḥammad, gave battle to him in the valley of the Wabi River, chase him off, and wintered at Zaḥon-dour” (Basset, 1881: 117). As for the chronicle of Śarḍa Dengel's reign, it notes that “the king of Adal, called Muḥammad” arrived in Christian territory in the 13th year of that king's reign. He killed the “chiefs of the Muslim (*malasāy*) tribes” and their families. Even if they were Muslim, because they were Muslim vassals of the Christian king, this was seen as an attack on the Christian kingdom. In 1577, the following year, Śarḍa Dengel decided to attack Muḥammad, whom he found on the side of the Wabi, a river south of his kingdom. After more than a month of fighting, Muḥammad was betrayed by one of his own, captured, and killed in the Christian camp (Conti Rossini, 1907: 56 and 59). Thus, between 1575 and 1577, while the Sultan of the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn was

⁵ E. Cerulli points out that the term *darb* in East African Arabic refers to a “surrounding wall,” and that this meaning has passed into Somali, where the term “*derbi*” is synonymous (Cerulli, 1931: 89 note 1).

fighting the Christian king and the Oromos continued to attack the sultanate's territories, the governor of Zayla' decided on the construction of protective walls just as Emir Nūr had decided a decade earlier in Harar.

This surrounding wall was described three centuries later by Richard Burton, during his visit to Zayla' before going to Harar in 1854:

After hearing the worst accounts of it, I was pleasantly disappointed by the spectacle of white-washed houses and minarets, peering above a long low line of brown wall, flanked with round towers. [...] The walls, without guns or embrasures, are built, like the houses, of coralline rubble and mud, in places dilapidated. There are five gates. [...] We must return before sunset, when the gates are locked and the keys are carried to the Hajj [i.e. El Hajj Sharmarkay b. Ali Salih, governor of Zayla' under the orders of the Ottoman pasha], a vain precaution, when a donkey could clear half a dozen places in the town wall (Burton, 1856: 14, 21 and 48-49).

Well preserved and accessible via five gates, this wall worked in the same way as the one of Harar: at nightfall, entrance to the city was forbidden and the keys to the gates were kept by the governor. This wall surrounding the port of Zayla' no longer exists. During their two 2001 visits to Somaliland, François-Xavier Fauvelle and Bertrand Hirsch identified the remains of a probable enclosure wall to the south of the present-day city, which they included within their topographical survey of the city but did not describe elsewhere (Fauvelle-Aymar et al., 2011: Fig. 2.2). Other medieval urban sites in Somaliland appear to have had similar enclosure walls, such as with the site of Amud, where “what could be the foundations of the medieval enclosure” exist as well as with the site of Sheikh where “the remains of a wall that could be an enclosure wall are noted” (*Ibid.*: 41). In contrast, the ERC project StateHorn (2020-2025), which is currently excavating five medieval sites in Somaliland, considers that, “as it is commonly the case for the medieval sites throughout Somaliland, it has no defensive walls” (<https://statehorn.com/portfolio/abasa/>). However, these Somaliland sites are not dated, and no texts mention them. The future results of the ERC project StateHorn should provide a better understanding and dating of possible fortifications at Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn sites beyond just the main locations of Harar and Zayla' and confirm or disconfirm the information in the *Ta'rīkh al-mulūk*.

Thus, it appears that the fortification of (or at least some of) Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn's urban sites was a common strategy and more or less simultaneously directed process during the second half of the 16th century in response to the arrival of the Oromos and the various upheavals the region experienced during this period (Mercier, 2022a). It should be noted that the urban sites of Awfāt, the sultanate that preceded that of the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn in the 13th-14th centuries, also show remains of impressive fortifications. For instance, the archaeological site of Nora, dated to the 14th century, revealed a massive wall

that blocked access to the city to the north (Fauvelle, Hirsch & Chekroun, 2018: 256 and Fig. 6). The cities of Awfāt were thus fortified and probably because of their position, which was close to Christian territories. On the other hand, Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn's urban sites would have been fortified only at the extreme end of the sultanate's history in order to defend themselves not from Christian attacks but from the new Oromo threat and epidemics. Does this mean that no fortifications existed or were needed in the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn before the second half of the 16th century? It is difficult to assess such a question. First, Harar had only been an important political center for a few decades by the 1560s, and these periods were rife with political instability. The sultans may not yet have had time to adorn their new capital with city walls. Second, the first capital of the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn was the city of Dakar where the sultans remained for more than a century. No description of this city is recorded and its archaeological site has yet to be identified (Chekroun, 2015). It is possible that this city was fortified as early as the 15th century, although the brief excerpt from the *Ta'rīkh al-mulūk* mentions Dakar in the list of places attacked by the Oromos when fortifications were built in the 1560s. Similarly, how can it be explained that Zayla', the main African port in the Gulf of Aden since at least the 13th century (Fauvelle-Aymar et al., 2011: 51-70), did not have fortifications before the second half of the 16th century? Perhaps the burning of Zayla' by Lopo Soarez and the Portuguese in 1517 led to the destruction of the medieval walls and the need to build new ones a few decades later. Indeed, in 1503, the Italian traveler Ludovico di Varthema, on his way to Persia from Aden, found himself carried by the winds to Zayla' where he stayed a few days while waiting for more favorable winds. He wrote a brief description of the city in his travelogue, which was published in Italian in 1510. He notes: "The place has poor walls and a bad port nevertheless it is situated on level ground and the mainland" (Varthema, 1863: 87-88). These "poor walls" that existed at the very beginning of the century, and which later suffered a fire as well as a Portuguese attack and subsequent years of war most likely needed to be rebuilt in order to strengthen the fortifications of the city during the second half of the 16th century.

Still, the construction of Harar's walls by Emir Nūr was not an isolated case. However, due to its position as the capital of the sultanate and then of the Emirate, on the one hand, and as the only city to have continued to prosper in the early modern and contemporary eras on the other, Harar is the only urban site from this period to have retained its wall erect. The walls of the urban sites of Somaliland are now entirely ruined (and perhaps have been since the collapse of the Barr Sa'd ad-Din in the second half of the 16th century). The port of Zayla', which was supplanted by Djibouti and the construction of the railroad, declined during the 20th century to the point where it is now a small, ruined village.

To conclude these few thoughts on the early history of Harar, it is also worth pointing out that Harar ceased to be the capital of the Barr Sa‘d ad-Dīn when Muḥammad Gasha moved to Awsa, marking the collapse of the sultanate (Mercier, 2020). This transfer from Harar to Awsa in the end of the 16th century took place within a context of serious internal crisis (Mercier, 2022a). It is interesting to note the parallel between the shift of power from Dakar to Harar due to a complex political context with the shift from Harar to Awsa, which again occurred within a time of crisis and during the collapse of the Barr Sa‘d ad-Dīn. In the end, Harar remained the capital of the sultanate for only a few decades. The construction of fortifications during this half-century remains closely linked to the figure of Emir Nūr in contemporary oral tradition. In fact, there is no evidence today that the city was not already equipped with a protective system before the reign of Nūr and that the city walls as we know it today dates from this period. Until archaeological excavations allow us to precisely date the phases of construction of these walls, which have been reworked and rebuilt many times, it will be impossible to date the form and organization of the walled Islamic city as it appears in the sources since the 19th century. As Héloïse Mercier’s work shows, the writing and rewriting of Harar’s history during the late 19th century and the 20th century crystallized some narratives and associations in contemporary historical understanding, notably the importance of the figure of Nūr within the history of the city and its organization into 5 quarters and 5 gates. But, as this paper has shown, the sources are silent on these matters before the 19th century. Moreover, the walls and gates underwent many changes over the centuries. To provide one example, the gate “Bāb al-Futūḥ” is described as being to the west of the city in a 17th-century Arabic document published by Enrico Cerulli who recounted the coming of two sheriffs to Harar: “And the two Sheriffs used to go out to the Gate of the Conquests (*Bāb al-Futūḥ*) from the Western side and sit down to rest there” (Cerulli, 1931: 94). However, this same gate, whose Harari name is Assum Bari and Amharic name is Fällana Bārr, is cited as being located north of the city of Harar as early as the mid-19th century (see Burton, 1855: 144; Wagner, 2005b: 1013).

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Héloïse Mercier*

Writing and rewriting history from Harar to Awsa: a reappraisal of the *Ta'riḫ al-mulūk*

Abstract

This article focuses on a particular moment in the historiography of Harar (Eastern Ethiopia): when the city declined, and the seat of power was transferred to the Awsa Oasis in 1576. Three chronicles, two of which are rewritings of the original version, were then composed. This historiographical ebullition reflects the scale of the disruption signified by the shift towards Awsa as well as the oppositions it sparked. Based on a comparative study of the three chronicles, this article attempts to understand the reasons behind this transfer of power.

Keywords: Harar, Awsa, chronicles, 16th century, Enrico Cerulli, Ethiopian Islamic manuscripts

Résumé

Cet article s'intéresse à un moment particulier dans l'écriture de l'histoire de Harar (Éthiopie orientale) : lorsque la ville décline et que le pouvoir est transféré vers l'oasis de l'Awsa, en 1576. Trois chroniques, dont deux sont des réécritures de la première, sont alors rédigées. Cette ébullition historiographique traduit l'envergure de la rupture que signifie le déplacement vers l'Awsa, ainsi que les oppositions qu'il suscite. À partir de l'étude comparée des trois chroniques, l'article tente de comprendre les raisons de ce transfert du pouvoir.

Mots-clés : Harar, Awsa, chroniques, xvi^e siècle, Enrico Cerulli, manuscrits islamiques éthiopiens

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“The ill, the great ill, is that we are not of our century. Each age is like a river, sweeping us according to the inclination of destinies, when we surrender to it. But it seems to me that we are all out of its course. Some have crossed it with impetuosity, and have jumped onto the other bank. Others have remained on this side, not wanting to embark.”

François-René de Chateaubriand,
Essai sur les Révolutions, 1797.

In 984 AH/1576, *Imām* Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Jāsa took power in eastern Ethiopia. He abandoned Harar, which had been the Islamic centre of power of the region since the 1520s. He chose instead to settle in “the land of Awsa”: “He was the first of the *mujāhidūn* to settle there¹.” This shift is described in the *Ta’rīkh al-mulūk*, or “History of the kings,” that the Italian orientalist Enrico Cerulli edited nearly a century ago in 1936, in his pioneering work, “Documenti arabi per la storia dell’Etiopia.” Yet, the shift from Awsa to Harar has thus far remained largely unexplained. Why did Muḥammad Jāsa settle more than 200 km north of Harar (see Fig. 1)?

Whilst Harar is located on the eastern Ethiopian plateau at an elevation of 1,885 m, Awsa is only a few hundred metres above sea level. East of the present-day city of Assayta (in eastern Ethiopia), it is the lake region into which the Awash River empties. Together with the Kaló Plain located between Awsa and the city of Tendaho to the northwest, it is a unique territory within the eastern Ethiopian lowlands. While the latter are generally arid, the many canals that irrigate Awsa allow for the existence of pastures and make agriculture viable.

Very little is known about the history of Awsa before the mid-16th century. This is because neither Ethiopian Islamic sources nor those produced within the Ethiopian Christian kingdom mention this oasis before that date. The only representation of Awsa that dates from before the mid-16th century is one from the Venetian Fra Mauro’s 1460 world map, which compiled Mediterranean cartographers’ geographical knowledge of the time (Falchetta, 2006). There is a mention of a “Gurele Lake” (*Lago gurele*) into which the “Auasi River” (*fl. Auafi*), most probably the Awash River, flows. A legend on this map states that “within this lake, which is surrounded by mountains, these waters are retained and become stagnant” (*qui i(n) q(ue)sto lago torniato da montagni q(ue)ste a(qu)e se retien e mour*). It is certainly Awsa that is represented and named “Gurele,” since, in the 17th century, a Portuguese member of the

¹ *Mujāhidūn* (pl. of *mujāhid*) is an Arabic term describing those who take part in *jihād*.

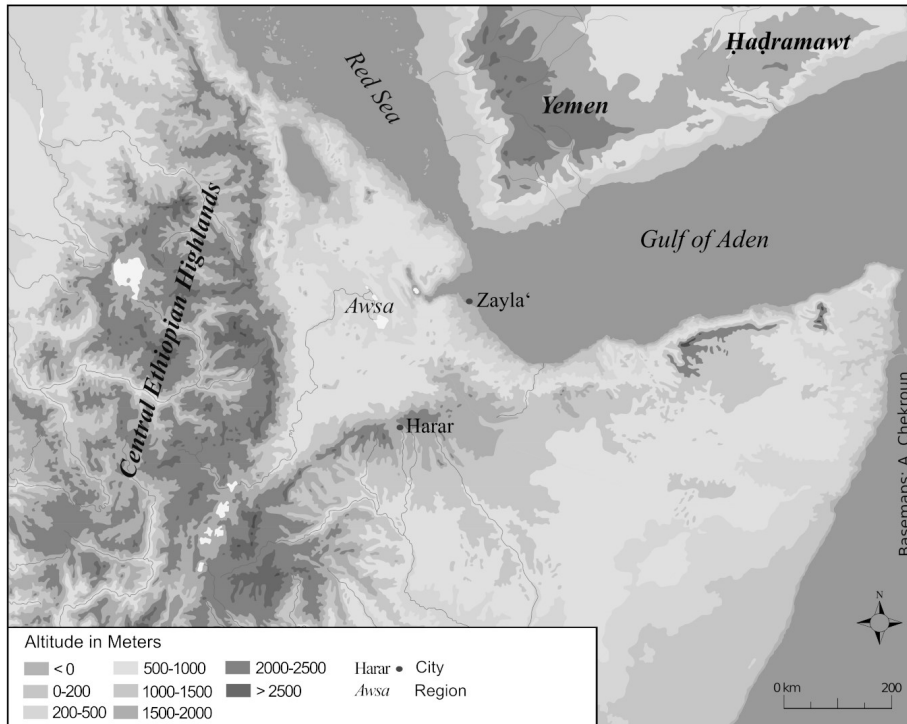


Figure 1. General map of the Horn of Africa.

Jesuit mission in Ethiopia, Manuel de Almeida, referred to the oasis as “Aucâ Gurrelé” (Beckingham & Huntingford, 1954: 195).

In later sources in the late 1560s and early 1570s, Awsa appears as an urban centre within the political territory controlled by the city of Harar, even though it was located on the margins of this polity. The *Ta'riḫ al-mulūk* mentions a *hayjān* (governor, chief) who ruled Awsa in the name of Harar's *sultān*. But the oasis is also described in this text as a space where political opponents took refuge and in which the battle for power played out; it was a strategic margin within which a separate political identity seems to have gradually emerged.

Harar's power in the 1560s and 1570s derived from the sultanate known as Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn. This sultanate undertook the conquest of the Ethiopian Christian kingdom under the leadership of *Imām* Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm from 1531 to 1543. However, the sultanate underwent considerable reorganization following the death of *Imām* Aḥmad in 1543. The sultans of the Walasma' dynasty who founded this polity at the beginning of the 15th century (Chekroun, 2013: 145-154; Chekroun, 2020) gradually lost all political power. Meanwhile, Harar had to relinquish its control over many territories due to the combined impact of the Christian reconquest and the advances of Oromo populations (Cerulli, 1931: 53; Ezekiel Gebissa, 2014; Mohammed Hassen, 1990 & 2015; Chekroun & Hirsch, 2020b; Chekroun, 2022). In the 1560s, the city controlled only its immediate surroundings, as well as the two urban centres of the Awsa

Oasis and the port of Zayla⁶, each more than 200 km away from Harar. In the 1570s, Harar's rulers faced new unrest: in 1576 *Sulṭān* Muḥammad b. Naṣīr (r. 1572/1573-1576) embarked on a military campaign against border territories of the Christian kingdom (Chekroun, 2013: 107-108). This ended in failure for the Muslims of Harar: not only was their army defeated by that of the Christian kingdom, but the Oromos also took advantage of their departure to war and attacked the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn, which even included laying siege to the city of Harar. Then, following some months of political instability, in 984 AH/1576, *Imām* Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Jāsa seized power and chose not to govern from Harar like his predecessors but to settle in the Awsa Oasis.

In the research on Ethiopian Islam, this resettlement in Awsa, which is today a territory inhabited by Afar people, has been perceived as a sign or a cause of decay. Cerulli – even though he himself edited and translated chronicles relative to the history of this oasis up to the late 17th century – considered that,

the ancient kingdom of Adal², which later became the Imāmate of Aussa, transforms into a small Dancali [Afar] Sultanate in which the Danākil [the Afars] will soon have absolute supremacy. [...] the Muslim Adal, who for two centuries had arrogated to itself the mission to spread Islām in Ethiopia, was transformed into a semi-barbaric state dominated by those Dancali Bedouins that the Semitic or Semitized aristocracy of Adal had always regarded only as savage raiders of caravans. (Cerulli, 1931: 87)

This denial of the Islamic history of Awsa is linked to the contempt for the Afars in the field of Ethiopian studies. This is itself related to the bias researchers in this field have shown in favour of the so-called “Semitic” populations – such as the Adares of Harar – to the particular detriment of the so-called “Cushitic” populations – such as the Afars (Ficquet, 2004; Braukämper, 2003: 89)³. But careful analysis of an updated corpus of sources

² Enrico Cerulli here refers to the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn. On the history and uses of the name “Adal,” see Chekroun, 2013: 145-154 and Chekroun & Hirsch, 2020a. ³ European travellers in the 19th century already described Afar people as barbarian, violent, and even bloodthirsty nomads. See for instance: Barker, 1842: 238-239; Harris, 1844: I, 98-99, 129, II, 226-227, 309; Johnston, 1844: I, 210-211, 489-490; Rochet d'Héricourt, 1846: 77. As for Werner Munzinger (1869: 214), he writes about the Afars: “the natives [have] no memory for history.” On the other hand, the so-called Adare or Harari populations of Harar have managed to put forward a historical discourse which asserts their urban and Islamic identity – in opposition to their Oromo and Somali neighbours (Caulk, 1977: 372-373; Waldron, 1979 & 1988). These strategies of memory and identity crystallised in the 1990s with the creation of the Harari Regional State within the new Ethiopian federation (see Osmond, 2005 & 2014: 1-7, 19-20; Desplat, 2008: 164-165). Harar seems to have benefited in the academic field from the prestige associated with this memory of an ancient Islamic city.

will show below that the end of the 16th century was, in fact, a time of political founding, rather than the start of a period of decay.

1. A reassessment of the corpus: from one *Ta'riḫ al-mulūk* to three chronicles of the history of Harar in the second half of the 16th century

The *Ta'riḫ al-mulūk* (“The History of the kings”) edited and translated by E. Cerulli in 1936 has thus far been considered the main source for studying Ethiopian Islam in the second half of the 16th century. Cerulli edited this text from an unknown manuscript he found in Harar c. 1926.⁴ It briefly covers the history of Harar and its region from the 1550s to the 1580s – that is from the reign of *Amīr* Nūr b. Mujāhid (from 959 AH/1551-1552 or 960 AH/1552-1553 to 975 AH/1567)⁵ to that of *Imām* Muḥammad Jāsa (984 AH/1576-991 AH/1583). It is a chronicle that divides time according to successive reigns (see Tab. 1), often specifying when they begin and end. It focuses on political events (changes of power, revolts, military conflicts, etc.) and therefore mostly provides information on the rulers as well as on the patrician elites of the polity governed by Harar.

Table 1. Timeline of the rulers mentioned in the *Ta'riḫ al-Mulūk* and their dates of reign.

Name	Beginning of reign	End of reign
<i>Amīr</i> Nūr b. Mujāhid	959 AH/1551-1552 or 960 AH/1552-1553	975 AH/1567
<i>Amīr</i> ‘Uthmān al-Ḥabashī <i>Jarād</i> Jibrīl rebelled against him.	975 AH/1567	977 AH/1569
<i>Sulṭān</i> Ṭalḥa b. ‘Abbās	977 AH/1569	978 AH/1571
<i>Sulṭān</i> Naṣīr b. ‘Uthmān	978 AH/1571	980 AH/1572-1573
<i>Sulṭān</i> Muḥammad b. Naṣīr	980 AH/1572-1573	c. 1576 ⁶
Maṣṣūr b. Muḥammad b. Ayyūb He takes advantage of <i>Sulṭān</i> Muḥammad’s absence to try to seize power.	983 AH/1575	984 AH/1576
<i>Imām</i> Muḥammad Jāsa	984 AH/1576	991 AH/1583

⁴ Cerulli explains that he copied his “Documenti arabi” in Harar c. 1926, from booklets sewn at the beginning or end of books of Muslim law or exegesis of the Qur’an (Cerulli, 1936: 40). ⁵ In the *Ta'riḫ al-mulūk* edited by Enrico Cerulli, the date is 959 AH/1551-1552. But in all the recensions of the *Nabdha fī ta'riḫ al-mujāhidīn*, a variant of the *Ta'riḫ al-mulūk* that I will present below, the date is 960 AH/1552-1553.

In his “Documenti arabi,” Cerulli identified a second text closely related to the *Taʿrīkh al-mulūk*. It is unclear whether he found it in the same unknown manuscript as the *Taʿrīkh al-mulūk* or in another one. Cerulli never published this text in full. He only edited and translated the parts of it that differed from the *Taʿrīkh al-mulūk* as the so-called “variants” (*varianti*) of the *Taʿrīkh al-mulūk*. A few decades before Cerulli, the Austrian orientalist and traveller Philipp Paulitschke published a German translation by his colleague Adolf Wahrmund of a few manuscript folios he had been gifted by the *Amīr* Abdullāhi of Harar (r. 1885-1887) in 1885-1886. These “Historical documents from Harar” (*Historische Documente aus Harar*) published by Paulitschke in 1888 contain a text he and Wahrmund entitled “Abū Bakr ben Muhammed ben Hussayn’s history of the rulers of Harar who led the holy war against Abyssinia” (*Abū Bakr ben Muhammed ben Hussajn’s Geschichte der Herrscher von Harar, welche den heiligen Krieg gegen Abessinien geführt haben*). The folios from which this text was translated – torn from a larger manuscript by *Amīr* Abdullāhi – were brought back from Harar to Europe by Paulitschke. They are now kept in the Bibliothèque nationale de France as the ms. “Arabe 4957.” Wahrmund considered that this “history of the rulers of Harar who led the holy war against Abyssinia” was a single text that was authored by Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn. Yet, the structure of his translation is surprising: in the first part, the text provides information on the history of Harar from the reign of *Amīr* Nūr to that of *Imām* Muḥammad Jāsa. Then, a second part is again devoted to the reign of Nūr. This section of the text is incomplete; its remainder was written on folios that *Amīr* Abdullāhi refused to give to Paulitschke.⁷ In the ms. BNF Arabe 4947, these two “parts” are clearly separated by a blank space, which suggests that they could be two distinct texts.

From manuscripts collected in Ethiopia in the 20th century and given to European libraries by orientalists Hans Schlobies (see Höfner, 1951), E. Cerulli, and E. Wagner, I have identified four complete recensions of the “second part” that is cut short in the ms. BNF Arabe 4947.⁸ In its full version, it covers a period lasting from the reign of *Amīr* Nūr to that of *Imām* Muḥammad Jāsa – just like the first “half” of this “history of the rulers of

⁶ See Chekroun, 2013: 107 on the dating of *Sultān* Muḥammad’s campaign against the Christian kingdom which ended with him being killed. ⁷ See Paulitschke, 1888: 501: “Unfortunately, the conclusion of this historical sketch is missing, as the emir took the manuscript from a compilation of holy writings and, according to Ahmed Alī Abdullāhi, he could not tear out the folio on which the end of the story was written, because it also marked the beginning of a ritual prayer that the emir could not remove from the book.” ⁸ Ms. Vatican Ar. 1792, f. 10r-10v; ms. Berlin SBB Hs. or. 10452, f. 21v-23r; ms. Berlin BBAW NL Schlobies 7a, f. 2r-3r; ms. Berlin BBAW NL Schlobies 7b, f. 4r, 5r, 6r, 7r, 8r, 9r. See Appendix.

Harar.” Moreover, in none of these four copies does this “second part” directly follow the “first part,” like it does in the ms. BNF Arabe 4957. Similarly, in Ethiopian Islamic manuscripts kept in European and Ethiopian libraries, I found several recensions of the “first part” independent of its “second part.”⁹ All of this implies that these two “parts” are in fact two different texts. The first one is the *Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn bi-balad al-Ḥabasha*¹⁰ (“Overview of the history of the *mujāhidīn* in the country of the Ḥabasha”) written by Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. ‘Alawī Shanbal Bā ‘Alawī. The other can be titled, to quote its first words, *Wa kāna wafāt* (“And there came the death of...”). The name of its author is not specified. Looking at those chronicles in their full Arabic version also makes it clear that what Cerulli partially edited as the *Varianti della Storia dei Re* was, in fact, the *Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn* and the *Wa kāna wafāt*. Cerulli made the same mistake as Wahrmund and Paulitschke: he too saw the *Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn* and the *Wa kāna wafāt* copied one after the other and thought that they were a single text. He wrote: “Then, immediately after, the story of Emir Nūr follows again” (Cerulli, 1936: 64). But what he thought was a repetition within one text is in fact the beginning of a second one. A critical edition and translation of these two texts based on all their recensions is underway by the present author. Pending the completion of this work, I will use below translations based on diplomatic editions of only one of each of these texts’ recensions.

The *Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn* and *Wa kāna wafāt*, like the *Ta’rīkh al-mulūk*, are chronicles of the history of Harar and its region from the 1550s to the 1580s. It is evident that these three chronicles were all written from the same text. They share the same structure – that is, they organise time according to the same reigns – and they often give the same information. There are even identical passages between them. Many passages from the *Ta’rīkh al-mulūk* appear in either the *Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn* or in the *Wa kāna wafāt*. Those excerpts are rich in detailed information and precise dates. Conversely, there is little factual information that appears in the *Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn* or in the *Wa kāna wafāt* that does not appear in the *Ta’rīkh al-mulūk*, and the passages specific to either version are essentially prayers or praises. In the *Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn*, additional praises are written for

⁹ Ms Vatican Ar. 1792, f. 10v-11v; ms. Berlin SBB Hs. or. 10451, f. 24v (the end of the text is missing); ms. Berlin SBB Hs. or. 10452, f. 16v-18r; ms. Berlin SBB Hs. or. 10453, f. 2v-5v; ms. Addis Ababa IES 320, f. 1v-5r; ms. Addis Ababa IES 2072, f. 238r-239v. See Appendix. ¹⁰ Thereafter abridged as *Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn*.

Amīr Nūr, *Jarād Jibrīl* (who rebels against *Amīr ʿUthmān* in the 1560s), and *Imām Muḥammad Jāsa*¹¹:

[*Amīr Nūr*] had – may God have him in His mercy – a perfect conduct in justice and equity, especially as regards to his soul.¹² He is the one who led the second conquest¹³ as well as the murderer of the king of the Ḥabasha named Aṭnāb Sajjad.¹⁴ He took the quint and gave it to those mentioned by Almighty God in His Clear Book when He said – and He is The Truest of utterers – “know that one-fifth of your battle gains belongs to God and the Messenger.”¹⁵ He was – may God Almighty have him in His mercy – ruthless to the unbelievers and merciful to the believers. No one complained about him to God. May God Almighty have him in His mercy and welcome him into heaven. When he died – may God have him in His mercy – he was pleased with the people and the people were pleased with him. May God Almighty have him in His mercy! [...]

*Jarād Jibrāyl*¹⁶ was killed – may God Almighty have him in His mercy – and was buried near the place of the great sheikh named Aw Barḥadlīh – by the mercy of God Almighty, may we benefit from his grace and that of all pious men! He was – may God have him in His mercy – a learned, ascetic and pious man who did not fear the reproaches of God. He was – by God’s mercy – as worthy as *Amīr Nūr*. Most of the time, when he spoke, it was to quote the magnificent Qur’an. From the day he left his country¹⁷ until his death, he did not wear any scanty clothing¹⁸ and he ordered – may God have him in His mercy – that he should be buried only next to the *Sharīf* al-Šālīḥ ʿAlawī b. Muḥammad Shanbalī. During his stay in Zaylaʿ, he drew his strength – may God have him in His mercy – from the depths of his soul and especially from the above-mentioned *sharīf*. May God Almighty have him in His mercy and cover him with mercy, Amen, oh God, Amen! [...]

[*Imām Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Jāsa*] settled in the land of Awsa. He was the first of the *mujāhidūn* to settle there. This took place during the month of *Jumāda al-Awwal* in the year 984.¹⁹ He was killed [in the land of Awsa] on Friday the seventh of the month of *Dhū al-Qaʿda* in the year 991.²⁰ He was killed by the Jāla [the Oromos] called Wardāyya – may God have him in His mercy as well as the dead Muslims! He had a perfect and good conduct. He gathered around him the *mujāhidūn* who were among the Ḥabasha and the Jāla until the total of his cavalry reached six hundred horsemen, the number of his men one thousand and the number of his rifles seventy. All the tribes obeyed him and the king of Abyssinia was afraid of him, of his bravery and his ardour. He had a perfect and good faith in the *sayyid*-s and the *sharīf*-s, especially the Bā ʿAlawī and the sheikhs.

¹¹ The translation below is based on the edition of the ms. Paris BnF Arabe 4957, f. 2v-3v. The translation is mine. ¹² I.e. as regards to spiritual matters. ¹³ As opposed to the “first conquest” led by *Imām Aḥmad*.

¹⁴ The Ethiopian Christian King Aṣnaf Sägäd or Gälawdewos (r. 1540-1559).

¹⁵ Qur’an, VIII, 41 (Abdel Haleem, 2005: 113). ¹⁶ This is the spelling found

in ms. Paris BnF Arabe 4957. Other recensions have “Jibrīl.” ¹⁷ I.e. the day he left for Zaylaʿ from the country of Harar during his rebellion against *Amīr ʿUthmān*. ¹⁸ Perhaps this means that he wore clothing judged worthy of a pious man and that covered his entire body. ¹⁹ July-August 1576 CE.

²⁰ The 22nd of November 1583 CE, which actually falls on a Tuesday.

In the *Wa kāna wafāt*, it is *Amīr Nūr* that is lengthily lauded²¹:

And there came the death of him whose spirit God sanctified and whose sepulchre He illuminated, the learned, the pious, the ascetic, the efficient, the only one in his era, the unique one in his time, the *imām al-Muslimīn*, the *amīr al-Mu`minīn*, my lord *Amīr Nūr* b. *al-Wazīr* Mujāhid – may God grant him the mercy accorded to the pious and may He welcome him in the *Dār al-Qarār*,²² in the name of our Lord Muḥammad, the Chosen One, and of the God of the pious, and of the companions of the Prophet, Amen! – on the day of Friday the second of *Rabīʿ al-Awwal* in the year 975 of the Hegira of the Prophet²³ – may the peace and blessing of God be upon him.

After his death, the people lamented him a lot; all, near and far, lamented him. He was buried on the night of Saturday, at daybreak. [...]

Amīr Nūr was – may God have him in His mercy – a pious believer: he enjoined what is right and forbade what is wrong. He practiced abstinence from the goods of this world, bearing the weight of little boredom and much wisdom. His enemy was careful to avoid his dwelling place, and he did not settle anywhere without his horse saddled and harnessed at his side. He raided the country of the Ḥabasha and fought their king, killed him and cut off his head. He went down with that head to the Barr Saʿd ad-Dīn and the narrator transcribing this story said²⁴: “I saw it with my own eyes” – may the curse of God be upon this king [the Christian king]. He [Nūr] laid waste to the country of the Ḥabasha and then went back to his country. There occurred, after his return from that raid, an exceptional famine in our country. The price of the *ṣāʿ* of grain reached twelve *ashrafī*, that of the *ṣāʿ* of salt twenty-five *ashrafī* [*sic*], and that of an ox three hundred *ashrafī*. The Jāla [...] looted people in all regions. God comforted the people in this misfortune. The endurance [*ṣabr*] of *Amīr Nūr* was great; his faith and asceticism grew stronger. [...]

The aforementioned *Amīr* [Nūr] constantly took upon himself the suffering [of the people] as if it were strength.

The elements presented above suggest that the *Taʿrīkh al-mulūk* was probably the original chronicle, or that it is a text close to the original chronicle. Indeed, laudatory elements are more likely to have been added in a rewriting than factual data, as the authors of these reworkings were presumably less concerned with gathering information than the author of the first version, who had to carry out such an investigation in order to write his chronicle. On the other hand, as we shall see below, the authors of such rewritings were probably driven by political or intellectual projects that influenced their writing of another version of history. This would explain why, in the *Nabdha fī*

²¹ The translation below is based on the edition of the ms. Berlin BBAW NL Schlobies 7a, f. 2r-3r. The translation is mine. ²² One of the stages of *janna* (paradise) in Islam. ²³ The 6th of September 1567 CE, which actually falls on a Saturday. ²⁴ This way of introducing the passages in the first person (“and the narrator transcribing this story said [...]”) is not included in the other recensions of the *Wa kāna wafāt*. Others only have: “[...] and I saw it with my own eyes.” It could therefore be a copyist’s addition specific to the branch of manuscripts from which the ms. BBAW NL Schlobies 7a is descended.

ta'riḳh al-mujāhidīn and in the *Wa kāna wafāt*, passages were shortened – their authors wishing to minimise or ignore a historical moment – or praises were added – to insist on specific historical figures.

2. Writing and rewriting history: intellectual and political projects behind the *Ta'riḳh al-mulūk*, *Nabdha fī ta'riḳh al-mujāhidīn*, and *Wa kāna wafāt*

2.1. *The Ta'riḳh al-mulūk: writing history in times of crisis*

The author of the *Ta'riḳh al-mulūk* is a scholar capable of writing in Arabic – although his native or vernacular language may have been a local one, possibly related to modern Harari.²⁵ Throughout his chronicle, he writes from the point of view of a Harar citizen and he is mainly interested in the history of this city and its rulers. He probably belongs to Harar's patrician elite, is educated, and is close to power. Concerning the reign of 'Uthmān (975 AH/1567–977 AH/1569), he gives the point of view of the ulemas of Harar: “the ulemas [...] never ceased to denounce his acts and to condemn his transgressions of the *sharī'a*.” He was no doubt close to them. At times, the chronicler uses the first person, which shows that he himself was a direct witness to some of the events he describes. This is the case when he recounts a trial that took place during the reign of *Amīr* Nūr: “I was one day sitting in the assembly of our sheikh the *Qāḍī* Jamāl ad-Dīn...” Similarly, he writes of the decapitated head of the Ethiopian Christian King Gälawdewos (r. 1540-1559) brought back to the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn by Nūr: “I saw it myself with my own eyes.” The fact that the author was a contemporary of *Amīr* Nūr (r. from c. 1552 to 1567) implies that he could not have lived very long after the last events he recounts in his *Ta'riḳh* – Muḥammad Jāsa's settlement in Awsa in 984 AH/1576 and his death in 991 AH/1583. This means that he probably compiled his text during the end of the 16th century, shortly after 1583. However, he might have been using notes written in previous decades, by himself or others, as sources. It is possible that elements of his text were written down independently before his compilation. This would explain why he is able to give so much information about the first decades covered by his chronicle, such as the precise figures on commodity prices during the reign of Nūr. To complement his knowledge, the author may have also interviewed other witnesses.

What are the reasons that led this scholar to write, towards the end of the 16th century, a history of Harar that covers the period from the coming to power of Nūr in the 1550s to the transfer of power from Harar to Awsa in the 1570s? The context in which the *Ta'riḳh al-mulūk* was written is a time of crisis for the Muslims of Harar. After the unravelling of the Barr Sa'd

²⁵ Maybe, such as today, many people and especially scholars in Harar could read and write Arabic but it was not the language they spoke amongst themselves.

ad-Dīn that had followed the death of *Imām* Aḥmad in 1543,²⁶ the failure of *Sultān* Muḥammad b. Naṣīr's campaign, and the subsequent Oromo siege of Harar c. 1576, power was leaving Harar and moving towards the Awsa Oasis. These political upheavals were undoubtedly experienced as tragic events by the citizens, or at least by some of the scholars of Harar. Accordingly, the author of the *Ta'riḳh al-mulūk* might have wanted to recount the history of his city, in a context of fearing that Harar could fatally decline and ultimately disappear. His act of writing may have been guided by a certain nostalgia – he writes history in a vain attempt to protect the past and dispel the uncertainty generated by political unrest. This echoes Bertrand Hirsch's comment on the writing of history in Africa between the 13th and 17th centuries:

Times of crisis thus seem to be conducive to writing history. Faced with the danger of a disappearance or a profound transformation of the political power which was the immediate horizon of the court scholars, and which suddenly no longer seemed immutable, a duty to safeguard the past emerges. [...] In this sense, history is the result of a rupture in the order of time. (Hirsch, 2018: 398-399)

In this regard, the choice of *Amīr* Nūr as a starting point for this chronicle is not incidental: he is described in the *Ta'riḳh al-Mulūk* – and to a certain extent is still perceived this way today in Harar²⁷ – as the ruler who ended the wars against the “Ḥabasha” by killing the Christian King Gälawdewos²⁸ and who came back to Harar to settle in the city and govern in a pious and fair way

²⁶ See A. Chekroun's contribution to this volume on the period of fortification the region experienced in the 1560s and 1570s: cities in Sīm, Shawā, Nujub, Jidāya and Dakkar as well as, presumably, Harar, were fortified in the 1560s due to the rise of Oromo attacks. As for the port of Zayla', it was fortified in the 1570s, maybe because of the threat that some Somali groups posed: during *Imām* Muḥammad Jāsa's reign (1576-1583) Zayla' was attacked by a group of Somalis (see Mercier, 2020: 136). ²⁷ Nūr has been regarded in Harar, from the late 16th century to the present day, as a saint and as the (re)founder of the town. Today, he is the second most important historical figure for the inhabitants of the town, behind Abādir 'Umar ar-Riḍā (see Wagner, 1978 & 2003) but well ahead of *Imām* Aḥmad. See: Burton, 1856: 320; Cerulli, 1936: 35; Desplat, 2008: 176; Fauvelle-Aymar & Hirsch, 2011: 23. ²⁸ This owed him the title of “Lord of the Second Conquest” (*Ṣāhib al-faṭḥ ath-thānī*) in the *Ta'riḳh al-Mulūk* and *Nabdha fī ta'riḳh al-mujāhidīn*, as opposed to the “first conquest” led by *Imām* Aḥmad in the 1530s and early 1540s.

by its people's side²⁹. He seems to have been thought of by late-16th-century scholars as the one who ended the era of the “conquest of the Ḥabasha” and who re-established the city and polity of Harar in the mid-16th century. His reign signified a rupture in time and a moment of political foundation.

As for the *Nabdha fī ta'riḳh al-mujāhidīn* and the *Wa kāna wafāt*, both seem to convey clearer political ambitions than the *Ta'riḳh al-Mulūk*: as will be shown below, one appears to support the power that orchestrated the shift towards Awsa while the other seems opposed to it. For this reason, it is likely that these two rewritings were composed shortly after the *Ta'riḳh al-Mulūk* itself and towards the end of the 16th century. It was indeed at this moment that the need to support or oppose the settlement in Awsa may have culminated as this question must then have been crucial. Afterwards, once the shift in power had been accepted, it was probably no longer an issue central enough for scholars to write chronicles in favour or against this decision.

2.2. *The Nabdha fī ta'riḳh al-mujāhidīn: the discourse of jihād to support the power of Awsa*

The *Nabdha fī ta'riḳh al-mujāhidīn* was certainly written by a scholar close to the newly settled power of Awsa. The identity of this chronicler is known: his name is Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Ḥassan b. Muḥammad b. 'Alawī Shanbal Bā 'Alawī. The Bā 'Alawī are “a large and influential clan of South Arabian sayyids and Ṣūfīs, for the most part living in Ḥaḍramawt, in or near the town of Tarīm” (Löfgren, 1986: 828; see also Serjeant, 1957). In the *Nabdha fī ta'riḳh al-mujāhidīn*, Muḥammad Jāsa is praised for his respect for the *sayyid*-s of this clan.³⁰ The *Nabdha fī ta'riḳh al-mujāhidīn* also refers to another *sharīf* Bā 'Alawī, who is not mentioned in the *Ta'riḳh al-mulūk*: the *Sharīf* Ṣāliḥ 'Alawī b. Muḥammad Shanbal. It is at his side that the *Jarād* Jibrīl would have wanted to be buried. In addition, the *Ta'riḳh al-mulūk* and the *Nabdha fī ta'riḳh al-mujāhidīn* both mention an influential *sharīf* who is said to have opposed the

²⁹ Admittedly, he is presented in the *Ta'riḳh al-Mulūk*, the *Nabdha fī ta'riḳh al-mujāhidīn* and the *Wa kāna wafāt* as having “laid waste to” (*ḳharraba*) the Christian kingdom, but he is said to have then returned to his country. In this respect, his strategy is very different from that of *Imām* Aḥmad, for whom, from 1531 onwards, the “departure from Harar was intended to be definitive. The annexation of new territories became systematic, as did the appointment of Muslim governors.” (Chekroun, 2013: 289) Nūr is more in line with the war culture that prevailed before the conquests of Aḥmad: he carries out raids and then returns to his territory. The authors of the *Ta'riḳh al-Mulūk*, the *Nabdha fī ta'riḳh al-mujāhidīn* and the *Wa kāna wafāt* seem to approve of Nūr's strategy: if they praise his warlike qualities, they insist above all on his piety, his way of behaving and governing well, as well as on his sense of justice. ³⁰ See the passage cited above: “He had a perfect and good faith in the *sayyid*-s and the *sharīf*-s, especially the Bā 'Alawī and the sheikhs.”

impious *Amīr* ‘Uthmān (r. 975 AH/1567-977 AH/1569) and is called “*al-Sayyid* Muḥammad b. *al-Sayyid* ‘Umar ash-Shāṭirī.” These texts seem to indicate that this man lived in Zayla‘ at the time. His *nisba*, however, reveals that he came from Shāṭir, a *wādī* in Ḥaḍramawt close to the city of Tarīm. Hence, scholars who originated from Ḥaḍramawt – or who claimed such an origin – seem to have been influential in Harar, Awsa, and Zayla‘ during the second half of the 16th century.

These sheikhs are mentioned in the *Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn* more than in the *Ta’rīkh al-mulūk*. Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad Bā ‘Alawī particularly insists on the proximity between these *sayyid*-s on the one hand and *Jarād* Jibrīl and Muḥammad Jāsa on the other. Their good relationship with religious scholars and elders is but one of the qualities that is praised in Jibrīl and *Imām* Muḥammad by the author of the *Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn*. Along with Nūr, they are the subject of praises that Abū Bakr Bā ‘Alawī added in his rewriting of the *Ta’rīkh al-mulūk*. In passages quoted above, all three are presented as pious – having a good behaviour and respect for the *sharī‘a* – and as fighting against infidels or heretics – Nūr and Muḥammad fought against Christians and Oromos whereas Jibrīl rose against ‘Uthmān. Out of all the rulers mentioned in the *Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn*, these qualities praised in Nūr, Jibrīl³¹, and Muḥammad point to them as the main *mujāhidūn* referred to by Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad Bā ‘Alawī in his title.

Jihād is a notion often used to describe the armed struggles undertaken by Muslims against “unbelievers” in order to conquer them, to raid them, or to defend themselves against their attacks (Morabia, 1993: 121-126, 197-200, 340-341). But, as the scholar Michael Bonner pointed out, this concept “has been revived and reinterpreted in many historical contexts,” making it difficult to give it a fixed definition (Bonner, 2004: 18). A. Morabia explains that,

partly compensating for rulers’ failure to carry out the offensive activity enjoined on them by legal treaties, ḡihād was internalized and, in accordance with its original meaning of “effort to promote the triumph of Religion,” took on a new colour, adapted to the course of events. (Morabia, 1993: 294)

The effort to preserve a power claimed to be just, but also the struggle against the designated enemies of religion “within the Umma itself, or in the depths of souls” (Morabia, 1993: 295), can both be conceived as falling within the scope of *jihād*. In the case of the *Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn* and through the examples of Nūr, Jibrīl and Muḥammad Jāsa, the *jihād* promoted by the author is both a defensive *jihād* and an internal political *jihād*. On the one hand, Abū Bakr Bā ‘Alawī insists on the need for Muslims to defend themselves against “infidels,”

³¹ Moreover, the *Ta’rīkh al-mulūk* indicates that Jibrīl is Nūr’s son-in-law. Family ties therefore complement the political genealogy between Nūr and Jibrīl.

especially Oromos (for lack of being able to conquer them). On the other, he advocates for the establishment of a just, pious, and good power.

The expression *balad al-Ḥabasha* (“country of the Ḥabasha”) is associated with the *jihād* in the title chosen by Abū Bakr Bā ‘Alawī – “Overview of the history of the *mujāhidūn* in the country of the Ḥabasha.” In the *Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn* as in the *Ta’rīkh al-mulūk*, this designation quite clearly refers to the Ethiopian Christian kingdom.³² It is therefore perhaps the actions of Nūr (who manages to kill the Christian king), of Muḥammad b. Naṣīr (who attempts to raid territories of the Christian kingdom), and of Muḥammad Jāsa (the latter is said to be feared by the “king of the Ḥabasha” and to have gathered *mujāhidūn* that were amongst the “Ḥabasha³³”) that are considered by Abū Bakr Bā ‘Alawī as *jihād* “in the country of the Ḥabasha.” This could be a way for him to exaggerate the military successes of these Muslim leaders. Indeed, Nūr may have succeeded in killing the Christian king, but neither he nor any of his successors occupied or conquered Christian territories. This title could also be a reference to the – much more extensive – conquests carried out by *Imām Aḥmad* between 1531 and 1543. These are recounted in the *Futūḥ al-Ḥabasha* by ‘Arab Faqīh, a text that was most probably circulating amongst the scholars of Harar and Awsa at the time of the writing of the *Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn* towards the end of the 16th century (Chekroun, 2013: 86–108). By choosing the terms “*ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn bi-balad al-Ḥabasha*,” Abū Bakr Bā ‘Alawī may have wanted to present the rulers or *mujāhidūn* of the second half of the 16th century as the successors of *Imām Aḥmad*.

Another introductory phrase of the *Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn* deserves attention. Abū Bakr Bā ‘Alawī writes: “May God make us and them persevere in *jihād*, may He make us and them depart from deviance and obstinacy, and may He resurrect us and them among the first on the day of Resurrection, in the name of our Lord Muḥammad The Messenger.” This call for unity is aimed at Muslims since the author wants the “others” designated by the third person plural to be present with him on the day of Resurrection. As it is argued above, Abū Bakr Bā ‘Alawī probably writes towards the end of the 16th century and soon after Muḥammad Jāsa’s settlement in Awsa. This

³² The *balad al-Ḥabasha* is often associated with the *malik al-Ḥabasha* (“the king of the Ḥabasha”), sometimes clearly referred to as the Christian king – the name of the one who is beheaded by Nūr is given by the author. ³³ See the section of the *Nabdha* quoted above: “He gathered around him the *mujāhidūn* who were among the Ḥabasha and the Jāla until the total of his cavalry reached six hundred horsemen, the number of his men one thousand and the number of his rifles seventy.” The *mujāhidūn* “who were among the Ḥabasha” could be Muslims who had remained in territories reconquered by the Christian kingdom after the death of *Imām Aḥmad*.

excerpt could therefore be addressed to any group in Awsa that was opposed to those Abū Bakr supported – a later chronicle shows that rivalries were numerous in Awsa in the 1580s and 1590s.³⁴ But, this sentence can also be understood as a broader call to support the settlement in Awsa. Indeed, this shift of the seat of power does not seem to have been met with unanimous approval. In 991 AH/1583, when Muḥammad Jāsa's brother³⁵ succeeded him, he chose to remain in Harar and to rule from this former capital, which he had thus far governed in the name of his brother.³⁶ Moreover, as I will try to demonstrate below, the *Wa kāna wafāt* could have been written to oppose the settlement in Awsa. Hence, the right path, the *jihād* that Abū Bakr Bā 'Alawī calls for, could be the submission to the power founded by Muḥammad Jāsa. Those who refused to obey this power would be, according to this author, showing “deviance” and “obstinacy.”

All of the above shows that the *Nabdha fī ta'riḳh al-mujāhidīn* tries to legitimise the shift towards Awsa: for Abū Bakr Bā 'Alawī, Muḥammad Jāsa is a defender of Islam, a *mujāhid* among illustrious *mujāhidūn*. Therefore, to question his actions and the power he founded is *fitna* (see Martinez-Gros et al., 2011 on this notion). He and his successors can claim a legacy of *jihād* and expect “the duty of obedience to the sovereign” that the “internal *jihād* of political nature” demands, according to A. Morabia (1993: 299). Here, the act of writing – or rewriting – history accompanies and supports the creation of a new polity. As J.-L. Triaud wrote,

the institution of a memory is an act of power on the part of a group, the affirmation of a starting point, a path and a future. This operation takes place within a strategy of symbolic conquest, occupation of space and claiming legitimacy. Far from being a survival, this instituted memory is a tool for apprehending and comprehending the world. (Triaud, 1999: 11)

While the transfer to Awsa seems to be a cause for dismay for the author of the *Ta'riḳh al-mulūk*, this shift is, on the contrary, a source of enthusiasm for Abū Bakr Bā 'Alawī. For him, this moment of (re)foundation is an opportunity; it is a chance to build a polity that aligns with his principles. For the former, memory is “nostalgia,” for the latter, it constitutes a “capital of experiences” – to quote the opposition formulated by the historian Jean-Pierre Chrétien (1999: 498).

³⁴ See the “Awsa Chronicles” edited and translated by Enrico Cerulli (1931: 70-88) and by the present author (Mercier, 2020: 129-144). ³⁵ His name is also Muḥammad Jāsa. ³⁶ See the “Awsa Chronicles” cited above.

2.3. *The Wa kāna wafāt: a history centered on Harar to resist the shift towards Awsa*

The *Wa kāna wafāt*, on the other hand, seems to be a rewriting of the *Taʿrīkh al-mulūk* that was written to oppose the shift towards Awsa. This version distinguishes itself by its insistence on the figure of Nūr as well as by its minimisation of the reigns of Muḥammad b. Naṣīr and Muḥammad Jāsa. The first lines of this text, which are quoted above, are devoted to prayers for the deceased *Amīr* Nūr and to praises for his pious behaviour, his good conduct, and his qualities as a leader: he enjoined what was right and forbade what was wrong, and he was a brave and good fighter (his horse was always ready at his side). About Muḥammad b. Naṣīr and Muḥammad Jāsa on the other hand, the *Wa kāna wafāt* only reports that they took power, without specifying the dates of their reigns and/or of their death: “His son the *Sultān* Muḥammad took power on a Saturday, the first day of *Jumāda al-Awwal* in the year 981.³⁷ Then, Maṣūb b. Muḥammad b. Abūy took power after him. Then, Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Jāsa took power after him.”

The author of this text may have chosen to glorify Nūr – devoting more than half of his chronicle to him and writing praises for him that do not appear in the *Taʿrīkh al-mulūk* – because he considered this *Amīr* to have defended, fortified, and remained in the city of Harar, despite economic or political difficulties. This allowed him to put forward a positive history of Harar at a time when the city was experiencing a crisis. The chronicler might also have wanted to present Nūr as a competing model to Muḥammad Jāsa – a founding figure put forward by the supporters of the transition of power to Awsa. Hence, in the *Wa kāna wafāt*, Nūr bears the title of *imām al-Muslimīn* or “imam of the Muslims,” which is not the case in the other versions, whereas Muḥammad Jāsa, who is named *imām* in the *Taʿrīkh al-mulūk* and the *Nabdha fī taʿrīkh al-mujāhidīn*, is referred to only by name in the *Wa kāna wafāt*. This title of *imām*, when worn by a political leader, seems to carry a strong symbolic value in the context of 16th-century Ethiopian Islam. Very few rulers are presented as such, and those who seem to have borne this title – Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm and Muḥammad Jāsa – are associated with disruptive and revolutionary moments, namely the conquest of the Christian kingdom and the shift towards Awsa. These two men, who called themselves *imām*, also claimed to be the leaders of a *jihād*. This title therefore has an important dimension of political activism and defence of the faith. By giving this title to Nūr – who otherwise seems to have been known as *amīr*³⁸ – the author of the *Wa kāna wafāt* might have

³⁷ The 29th of August 1573 CE. ³⁸ This is how he is referred to in the *Taʿrīkh al-mulūk* and all of its rewritings, with the exception of the *Wa kāna wafāt*. He also appears as “*Amīr* Nūr” in several other sources: this is the case for instance in the *Futūḥ al-Ḥabasha* by ‘Arab Faqīh (Basset, 1897: II, 92), or in the 19th-century travel account of Richard Burton (Burton, 1856: 320).

wanted to further insist on his role as a pious fighter and as the (re)founder of Harar.

In addition, in the *Ta'riḫ al-mulūk* and *Nabdha fī ta'riḫ al-mujāhidīn*, Maṣṣūr is not presented as a proper ruler but rather only as a man who fought the Oromos in Harar in 1576 and then tried to take control of Zayla' and Awsa. In the *Wa ḳāna wafāt* however, Maṣṣūr and Muḥammad Jāsa are both presented in the same way as both having taken power (*tawallā*) successively. It could be to oppose Muḥammad Jāsa that the author of the *Wa ḳāna wafāt* chose to introduce Maṣṣūr in the same way as him, that is, as a sovereign in his own right. Indeed, we know from the *Ta'riḫ al-mulūk* that Maṣṣūr was killed by his companions just before Muḥammad Jāsa took power, which suggests that he may have been murdered at the latter's initiative. The author of the *Wa ḳāna wafāt*, hostile as he was to Muḥammad Jāsa, was perhaps better inclined towards Maṣṣūr. This could explain why he chose to present him as a legitimate ruler.

The *Wa ḳāna wafāt* says almost nothing of Muḥammad Jāsa, and this text does not even mention his settlement in Awsa. Instead, at the end of the *Wa ḳāna wafāt*, a few lines were added that recount the attacks of the Christians Fānīl and Ḥamalmal against Harar in 957 AH/1550 and 966 AH/1559. The death of Harar's *Sultān* Ḥabīb results from one of these offensives: he was killed in a fight against the "infidel" Ḥamalmal. Thus, despite the chronological structure of the text, the author of the *Wa ḳāna wafāt* chose here to present another fragment from the history of Harar that depicts a figure who defended the city and who died a "martyr" for it. This composition could be a way of opposing the transfer to Awsa by showing a history centred solely on Harar, at a time when competing scholars were trying to make the oasis of Awsa the legitimate seat of power and to inscribe this legitimacy in history.

The author of the *Wa ḳāna wafāt* therefore draws, from his account of the past, resources to challenge the present. He clings onto "discourses of stability and continuity" and onto a founding narrative whilst the present is permeated by "forces of decomposition or innovative forces" (Chrétien, 1999: 493). Accordingly, the *Wa ḳāna wafāt* may have emerged from the resistance by a part of the Harar elite against the shift of power towards Awsa. It is perhaps this same feeling of opposition that pushed the brother of Muḥammad Jāsa, when he succeeded him after his death in 991 AH/1583, to remain in Harar and to rule Awsa from there.

3. Rethinking the second half of the 16th century and the shift towards Awsa

The study of the *Ta'riḫ al-mulūk* and of its two rewritings from the 1580s-1590s – the *Nabdha fī ta'riḫ al-mujāhidīn* and *Wa ḳāna wafāt* – allows us to rethink the period in which these texts were written or rewritten and to better understand the transfer of power from Harar to Awsa that took place

at the end of the 16th century. The hypothesis generally accepted by researchers thus far (Trimingham, 1952: 97; Wagner, 1979: 657; Pankhurst, 1997: 239; Morin, 2015: 79, etc.) is the one Enrico Cerulli expressed in 1931: Muslims left Harar for Awsa to escape Oromo attacks (Cerulli, 1931: 62, note 10). But this explanation alone is not convincing as Muḥammad Jāsa himself was killed by Oromos in 1583. In addition, a later chronicle produced in Awsa indicates that Oromo raids on the oasis continued throughout the 1580s.³⁹ If protection from Oromo attacks had been the only reason for settling in Awsa, it would be inexplicable that Muslims remained there, and even returned to the oasis – the brother of Muḥammad Jāsa, when he succeeded him to power in 1583, first chose to remain in Harar but then *returned* to Awsa a few months later and remade this oasis the centre of power. The settlement in Awsa therefore needs to be explained by a political project of a larger scale.

This is what the *Nabdha fī ta'rīkh al-mujāhidīn* shows. This text, produced by a scholar close to those who had settled in Awsa, presents the actions of Muḥammad Jāsa as a political rupture. The geographical shift towards Awsa both marks and sustains this rupture. It implies and encourages a political refoundation. Awsa becomes, in the rhetoric of those who settled there, the territory of Muḥammad Jāsa and of his *jihād*: political ideal and geographical space are associated. The adhesion to this project was perhaps initially uncertain, as shown by Muḥammad Jāsa's brother's decision to first remain in Harar. But the interweaving of the polity founded by the *Imām* Muḥammad and of the territory of Awsa probably grew stronger over the years. As the memory of Muḥammad Jāsa as a glorified founder strengthened, the legitimacy accorded to his actions may have consolidated. Perhaps the shift towards Awsa was progressively seen as a founding act, which would have given it an irrevocable and definitive character. At the same time, settling in Awsa also certainly led to matrimonial alliances and cultural adaptations, which undoubtedly further anchored the Muslims from Harar and the former Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn into Awsa. The attachment to the territory of Awsa and the adherence to the political project initiated by Muḥammad may have mutually reinforced each other.

But this still does not make it clear why Muḥammad Jāsa chose the Awsa Oasis to implement his political project. How is it that Awsa, a place not even mentioned in the *Futūḥ al-Ḥabasha* – which draws an extensive picture of the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn and its neighbouring territories in the 1520s and 1530s – is, barely half a century after the conquests of *Imām* Aḥmad, a place important enough to become a political centre? It seems that Muslims from the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn who had participated in the wars against the Christian kingdom may have started to move towards Awsa soon after the defeat of the 1540s.

³⁹ See the “Awsa Chronicles” cited above.

While the western territories of the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn were subject to Oromo attacks, Muslims who refused to submit to these "infidels" may have sought out other lands where they could settle. In the east, people of the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn may also have faced opposition from Somali populations who wanted to reclaim their independence. Former inhabitants of the Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn might have then considered Awsa's position as particularly favourable as it was isolated enough from Christian, Oromo, and Somali attacks and because its water resources and agricultural potential certainly made it a propitious space for the settlement of these rather sedentary and urban Muslim populations (Fauvelle-Aymar & Hirsch, 2008 & 2017).

In any case, it is almost certain that in the 1560s, Muslims who had come from territories governed by Harar had settled in Awsa. Indeed, according to the *Ta'riḳḳh al-mulūḳ*, the *Nabdha fī ta'riḳḳh al-mujāhidīn*, and the *Wa ḳāna wafāt*, when *Jarād* Jibrīl disobeyed *Amīr* 'Uthmān in the late 1560s, it is in this region that he took refuge with his followers and it is from Awsa and Zayla' that he organised his rebellion. The *Ta'riḳḳh al-mulūḳ* and the *Wa ḳāna wafāt* indicate that the ulemas of Harar were opposed to 'Uthmān, whom they considered sinful and a thief, and that they supported the rebellion of Jibrīl.⁴⁰ If the latter headed towards Awsa, it is probably because he knew that he could find support there to denounce the impious and unjust behaviour of 'Uthmān. It can therefore be assumed that in the 1560s, sheikhs close to those of Harar were living in Awsa. The oasis could have by then become a new centre of Islamic erudition in which scholars from the former Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn found refuge. The *Ta'riḳḳh al-mulūḳ* and the *Wa ḳāna wafāt* tell: "God cast in the hearts of all, common folk and dignitaries, love for *Jarād* Jibrīl, and the prayers for him lasted all day and all night." It is not very clear in these two texts, but it seems that the people in question praying for Jibrīl are those of Awsa. This would mean that the people of Awsa were concerned with the political affairs of Harar. Hence, they were presumably, at least in part, people who came from territories that were governed by Harar in the first half of the 16th century. Given the weakness of the power of Harar in the 1540s-1550s, it is indeed unlikely that it was able to conquer any new territory. If the people of Awsa took sides in the political conflicts of Harar, it is probably not because they were conquered by this polity but rather because they came from it.

Then, facing Jibrīl's rebellion, 'Uthmān hastened to take back Awsa and even abandoned Harar to settle temporarily in the oasis. Later, in 1576, after *Sultān* Muḥammad's death, Awsa seems to have been one of the key sites in the battle for power: *Manṣūr* first tried to take hold of the oasis shortly before *Imām* Muḥammad Jāsa settled there. As Harar weakened due to political instability

⁴⁰ "The ulemas whom God placed on a straight and truthful path never ceased to denounce his deeds and to condemn his transgressions of the *ṣarī'a*."

and Oromo attacks (see Chekroun, 2022), Awsa appears to have grown as a competing urban centre.

Moreover, a political project specific to this space seems to have emerged. The people of Awsa supported Jibrīl in his struggle against “impious” rulers and demanded the establishment of a stronger and more just power. It is this same model of internal political *jihād* that is promoted in the *Nabdha fī taʿrīkh al-mujāhidīn*. This suggests that Abū Bakr BāʿAlawī could have been an Awsa scholar. Since he supported the transfer to the oasis, one can even imagine that he, and perhaps other Awsa scholars, had advocated for it. The settlement in Awsa would therefore not only be supported but also have been driven by the people or scholars of Awsa. They could have called for the establishment of a new, just, and pious polity that was away from a declining Harar and that was capable of ensuring the protection of Muslims against Oromo attacks. Very little is known about Muḥammad Jāsa.⁴¹ It is therefore impossible to assert that he also came from Awsa. However, it is likely that he was close to the scholars of this oasis since, according to the *Nabdha fī taʿrīkh al-mujāhidīn*, “he had a perfect and good faith in the *sayyid*-s and the *sharīf*-s, especially the BāʿAlawī and the sheikhs.” Moreover, the political project that he implemented – the transfer to Awsa and the internal and defensive *jihād* – is the one that the sheikhs settled in this territory since the 1540s-1560s seemed to have promoted.

The shift towards Awsa therefore must be understood as being driven by a movement of political refoundation that was led by Muḥammad Jāsa and probably based upon ideas developed by the scholars of Awsa in the second half of the 16th century. This refoundation made Awsa a centre and it associated the newly-founded polity with this territory.

Conclusion

The *Taʿrīkh al-mulūk*, *Nabdha fī taʿrīkh al-mujāhidīn*, and *Wa k̄āna wafāt* circulated and were rewritten after the end of the 16th century. Indeed, in manuscripts brought to European libraries from Ethiopia by the scholars H. Schlobies, E. Cerulli, and E. Wagner, I have identified as many as five rewritings of these three chronicles (See Appendix). One of these texts had already been edited and translated from another unknown manuscript by the French orientalist Gabriel Ferrand in the late 19th century (Ferrand, 1884: 290-291). Four of these rewritings are composite texts that mix fragments from at least two of the late-16th-century chronicles – the *Taʿrīkh al-mulūk*, *Nabdha fī taʿrīkh al-mujāhidīn*, and *Wa k̄āna wafāt* (see Fig. 2). They are titled

⁴¹ From their common use of the title *imām*, Cerulli assumed there was a family connection between Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm and Muḥammad Jāsa (Cerulli, 1931: 62, note 9). This assertion, although completely unfounded, has been accepted by later scholars. See for instance Trimingham, 1952: 96; Abir, 1980: 139; Wagner, 2005: 1016b.

– or I titled them by quoting their first words – *Wa k̄āna ‘adūhu* (“His enemy was...”), *Yaqūlu al-‘abd al-faqīr* (“Says the poor and humble servant...”), *Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn malik al-Ḥabasha* (“Overview of the history of the *mujāhidūn* [against] the king of the Ḥabasha”), and *Fī Ta’rīkh* (“In the history”). These heterogeneous texts, which combine fragments of originally competing versions, are seemingly late reworkings: they were probably written at a time when the political and intellectual stakes that had motivated the three “original” versions had largely subsided or were forgotten. They were perhaps produced from the mid-17th century onwards, by scholars who had access to the *Ta’rīkh al-mulūk*, the *Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn*, and/or the *Wa k̄āna wafāt* and who wanted to synthesise in a single text the information provided by these competing versions. They probably selected the passages that they judged most complete or best formulated and assembled them one after the other whilst eliminating any redundancy. Finally, I identified one other text: the *Wilāyat al-Amīr Nūr b. Mujāhid* (“The reign of the *Amīr* Nūr b. Mujāhid...”), which was also probably adapted from two of the chronicles written towards the end of the 16th century – namely the *Ta’rīkh al-mulūk* and the *Wa k̄āna wafāt*. But this text is not a simple compilation of fragments from these chronicles like the other four composite texts. Rather, its author selected the information he considered most important, sometimes reworded it, and thus wrote a much shorter text than the original chronicles – a text of only a few lines. We cannot determine precisely when the *Wilāyat al-Amīr Nūr b. Mujāhid* was compiled for the first time, but it too was probably produced rather late and likely between the second half of the 17th century and the 19th century.⁴² Since it provides only a few key dates and information about the history of Harar, it may have been written by a local scholar who wanted to give a brief chronology of Harar’s past but for whom the details of the period covered no longer mattered.

All these aforementioned texts form a corpus of chronicles of the history of Harar in the second half of the 16th century. This corpus is the result of successive stages of rewriting (see Fig. 2). The study of the three chronicles written towards the end of the 16th century (the *Ta’rīkh al-mulūk*, the *Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn*, and the *Wa k̄āna wafāt*) sheds light on the context in which the shift towards Awsa took place. It is not so much a period of decay – as previous historians had thought – but more a moment of tumult and political effervescence. The settlement in Awsa corresponds to the founding of a new political order based on the principle of *jihād* and on the figure of Muḥammad Jāsa. This political project is promoted by Abū Bakr Bā ‘Alawī in his *Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn*. Other scholars from Harar responded

⁴² The date of publication of this text by G. Ferrand (1884) provides a *terminus ante quem*.

differently to this shift towards Awsa. For instance, it seems to have been a source of worry for the author of the *Taʿrīkh al-mulūk* and to have pushed him to record the history of his city as it seemed to him on the verge of disappearing. As for the author of the *Wa kāna wafāt*, he writes history in order to defend a status quo: he idealises the past and wishes Harar to remain the political centre of Islam in the region. Hence, the study of these texts allows us to understand the shift from Harar to Awsa as a moment of uncertainty. The move towards Awsa faced great support and resistance and the oasis even experienced some oscillation as a centre, as when Muḥammad Jāsa's brother and successor first settled back in Harar in 1583. It was a time of crisis that led to the historiographical ebullition of the end of the 16th century which saw the composition of the *Taʿrīkh al-mulūk* and its rewriting into both the *Nabdha fī taʿrīkh al-mujāhidīn* and the *Wa kāna wafāt*, which is a phenomenon unique in the history of Ethiopian Islamic literature before the 20th century.

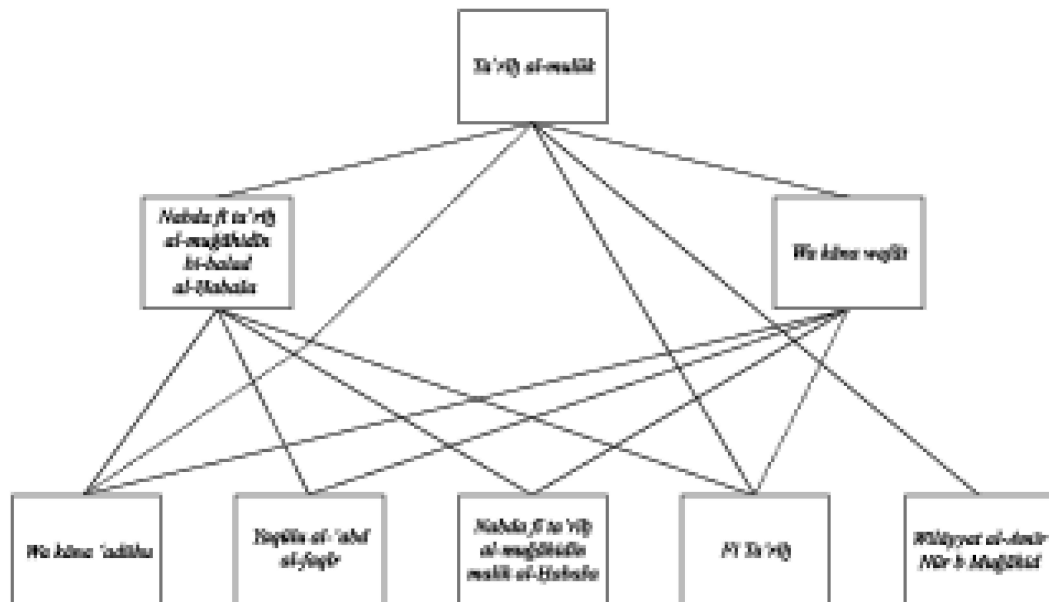


Figure 2. Genealogy of the *Taʿrīkh al-Mulūk* and its rewritings. Dotted lines indicate uncertain genealogical connections between the texts.

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Appendix

Summary table of the Ta'riḳh al-Mulūḳ and its rewritings and all of their known copies.

Version	Known copies	Additional information
<i>Ta'riḳh al-Mulūḳ</i>	Manuscript used by E. Cerulli (unknown)	
<i>Nabdha fī ta'riḳh al-mujāhidīn bi-balad al-Habasha</i>	Manuscript used by E. Cerulli (unknown)	Cerulli's edition is very incomplete: he only edited the sections of this text that differed from the <i>Ta'riḳh al-Mulūḳ</i> . He also thought that the <i>Nabdha fī ta'riḳh al-mujāhidīn</i> and <i>Wa kāna wafāt</i> were one and only text.
	Paris BNF Arabe 4957 (f. 2v-3v)	It is from this copy that P. Paulitschke and A. Wharmund published a German translation in 1888.
	Vatican Ar. 1792 (f. 10v-11v)	
	Berlin SBB Hs. or. 10451 (f. 24v)	The end of the text is missing.
	Berlin SBB Hs. or. 10452 (f. 16v-18r)	
	Berlin SBB Hs. or. 10453 (f. 2v-5v)	
	Addis Ababa IES 320 (f. 1v-5r)	
	Addis Ababa IES 2072 (f. 238r-239v)	
<i>Wa kāna wafāt</i>	Manuscript used by E. Cerulli (unknown)	Cerulli's edition is very incomplete: he only edited the sections of this text that differed from the <i>Ta'riḳh al-Mulūḳ</i> . He also thought that the <i>Nabdha fī ta'riḳh al-mujāhidīn</i> and <i>Wa kāna wafāt</i> were one and only text.

Version	Known copies	Additional information
	Paris BNF Arabe 4957 (f. 3v)	The end of the text is missing in this copy from which P. Paulitschke and A. Wharmund published a German translation in 1888.
	Vatican Ar. 1792 (f. 10r-10v)	
	BerlinSBB Hs. or. 10452 (21v-23r)	
	Berlin BBAW NL Schlobies 7a (f. 2r-3r)	
	Berlin BBAW NL Schlobies 7b (f. 4r, 5r, 6r, 7r, 8r, 9r)	This manuscript is presumably a copy of ms. BBAW NL Schlobies 7a by Hans Schlobies.
<i>Wa k̄āna ‘adūhu</i>	Vatican Ar. 1796 (f. 13r-13v)	Composite text, mixing passages from the <i>Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn</i> and <i>Wa k̄āna wafāt</i> .
<i>Yaqūlu al-‘abd al-faqīr</i>	Berlin SBB Hs. or. 10451 (f. 22v-23r)	This text only covers the reign of Nūr. It compiles a fragment from the <i>Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn</i> and another one from the <i>Wa k̄āna wafāt</i> .
<i>Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn malik al-Ḥabasha</i>	Vatican Ar. 1796 (f. 19v)	Composite text, mixing passages from the <i>Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn</i> and the <i>Wa k̄āna wafāt</i> .
<i>Fī Ta’rīkh</i>	Berlin BBAW NL Schlobies 6b (f. 1r)	This text only covers the reign of Nūr. It compiles a fragment from the <i>Nabdha fī ta’rīkh al-mujāhidīn</i> and another one from the <i>Ta’rīkh al-Mulūk</i> .
<i>Wilāyat al-Amīr Nūr b. Mujāhid</i>	Manuscript used by G. Ferrand (unknown)	This short text seems to be a very briefly summarised rewriting of the <i>Wa k̄āna wafāt</i> and <i>Ta’rīkh al-Mulūk</i> .
	Berlin BBAW NL Schlobies 54a (f. 3v-4v)	Here, the <i>Wilāyat al-Amīr Nūr b. Mujāhid</i> is inserted in a larger text covering the history of Harar from the 16 th to the 19 th century.

Sana Mirza*

A Red Sea Style? The Early Eighteenth Century Qur'an Manuscripts of Harar

Abstract

The large corpus of Qur'an manuscripts produced in the city of Harar, in present-day eastern Ethiopia, provides rich material with which to consider diachronic circuits of artistic exchange in the Red Sea. A major center of manuscript production in the Horn of Africa, Harar produced hundreds of codices between the late seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. The early eighteenth-century Harari Qur'an manuscripts and religious poetic texts employ decorative styles associated with the Mamluks, who ruled Egypt, Syria, and Arabia from 1250 to 1517. The shared artistic forms of Egyptian, Arabian, and Harari manuscripts suggest complicated artistic relationships that span the late medieval and early modern periods. This article aims to situate these aesthetic connections, which offer testimony to the mobility of artistic forms and their role in the formation of interrelated manuscript cultures. It argues for a regional Red Sea style of manuscripts defined by shared ornamental repertoires, artistic practices, and organizational frameworks. Religious scholars potentially played a large role in the creation and dissemination of these artistic modes. Situated at a crucial moment, at the political and economic re-emergence of Harar in the early eighteenth century, these manuscripts reveal the operation of multidirectional and nuanced artistic networks that, however paradoxically, were crucial to the construction of a distinctive Harari manuscript tradition.

Keywords: Harar, Ethiopia, Islam, Qur'an, Manuscript, Red Sea, eighteenth century, art history, manuscript studies

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Résumé

L'important corpus de manuscrits coraniques produits dans la ville de Harar, dans l'actuelle Éthiopie orientale, fournit un riche matériel permettant d'étudier les circuits diachroniques d'échanges artistiques dans la mer Rouge. Centre majeur de production de manuscrits dans la Corne de l'Afrique, Harar a produit des centaines de codex entre la fin du xvii^e et le xix^e siècle. Les manuscrits du Coran et les textes poétiques religieux du début du xviii^e siècle à Harar utilisent des styles décoratifs associés aux Mamelouks, qui ont régné sur l'Égypte, la Syrie et l'Arabie de 1250 à 1517. Les formes artistiques partagées des manuscrits égyptiens, arabes et harari suggèrent des relations artistiques complexes qui s'étendent de la fin du Moyen Âge au début de la période moderne. Cet essai vise à situer ces connexions esthétiques, qui témoignent de la mobilité des formes artistiques et de leur rôle dans la formation de cultures manuscrites interdépendantes. Il défend l'idée d'un style régional de manuscrits de la mer Rouge, défini par des répertoires ornementaux, des pratiques artistiques et des cadres organisationnels communs. Les érudits religieux ont potentiellement joué un rôle important dans la création et la diffusion de ces modes artistiques. Situés à un moment crucial, lors de la réémergence politique et économique de Harar au début du xviii^e siècle, ces manuscrits révèlent le fonctionnement de réseaux artistiques multidirectionnels et nuancés qui, aussi paradoxal que cela puisse paraître, ont été cruciaux pour la construction d'une tradition manuscrite harari distincte.

Mots-clés : Harar, Éthiopie, Islam, Coran, Manuscrit, Mer Rouge, xviii^e siècle, histoire de l'art, étude des manuscrits

“I am acquainted with the Abyssinian victories written by Shiḥāb Aḥmad son of ‘Abd al-Qādir son of Sālam son of Uthmān, resident of Jizān called Tuḥfat az-Zamān”

Ḥājji ad-Dābir (b. 946/1539-40)
(Lokhandwala, 1970: 468).

Introduction

Writing in western India in the first decade of the seventeenth century, Mecca-born historian Ḥājji ad-Dābir interrupts his history of Gujarat to recount the military campaigns of Imam Aḥmad al-Ghāzī (c. 912-50 H./1506-1543 A.D.) of the Barr Sa’d ad-Dīn sultanate in Eastern Ethiopia (Balachandran, 2016). He narrates the ascent of Imam Aḥmad, with his capital in the city of Harar, until his death at the hands of the Portuguese-Ethiopian forces of King Gālawdewos (r. 1540-1559). Ḥājji ad-Dābir’s interest in the politics of Ethiopia is perhaps unsurprising, as before his patron, Muḥammad Ulughkhān, rose to power as a military leader in India, he had been captured by Imam Aḥmad’s forces and sold as a slave in Yemen (Chekroun, 2012: 306; Ho, 2007: 353-55). More surprising, Ḥājji ad-Dābir mentions the source of his information: a copy of the *Tuḥfat al-Zamān* (Wonder of the Time) by Shiḥāb ad-Dīn Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Qādir Jizānī known as ‘Arab Faqīh. His excerpt – composed just fifty years after the original composition – is the oldest known version of the text and is also known as the *Futūḥ al-Ḥabasha* (Conquest of Ethiopia) (Chekroun, 2012: 305-7).

Implicit in both texts are the relationships that stretched across the Red Sea, from Ethiopia to Southern Arabia and then to India, which shaped cultural terrains and allowed for the circulation of texts and the movement of individuals. Both authors were trained in Western Arabia or Yemen and relocated (possibly temporarily in Shiḥāb Aḥmad’s case and multiple times in Ḥājji ad-Dābir’s) to Ethiopia and India respectively. It is unclear where Ḥājji ad-Dābir encountered Shiḥāb Aḥmad’s text – Yemen and Gujarat are the strongest possibilities – but the account is supplemented with either oral testimony or other texts (Chekroun, 2012: 307). The convergence of political, economic, military, and social networks paved the way for one of the most important texts of Harari history to be preserved in India. It further emphasizes how embedded Harar was within these long-distance networks by the beginning of the seventeenth century – a position that would have implications for the city’s burgeoning manuscript culture and the hundreds,

if not thousands, of manuscripts produced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹

I have previously noted a resonance of styles, forms, and compositions from fourteenth century Egypt and eighteenth century Harar in terms of the distinctive opening page style (Mirza, 2017). These tripartite incipit page compositions, color palettes, and vegetal forms highlighted the critical role Yemen and the Hijaz would have played in these visual relationships – mirroring the transregional entanglements of the *Futūḥ al-Ḥabasha* and its circulation. This article expands on these visual resonances by looking beyond the incipit pages of Qur’ans and provides the first step towards situating these formal relationships by focusing on the early eighteenth-century decorated manuscripts. I argue that the shared aesthetic connections between Egyptian, Arabian, and Harari codices offer testimony to the mobility of artistic forms and the existence of a *longue durée* Red Sea manuscript culture – one that had its beginnings in the medieval period and that largely ignored contemporaneous Ottoman models. Building upon studies by Nancy Um that re-define the Red Sea architectural style (Um, 2012: 257), I would like to advance that this notion – a distinctive transhistorical Red Sea regional style – could be extended to the manuscripts produced in this region and particularly those from Harar. Characteristics of this style are found in a shared artistic repertoire, compositional forms, and decorative treatments.

Situated at a crucial moment of transition in the history of the city and the region, the Harari manuscripts appear to echo earlier trends and reveal the operation of multidirectional and nuanced artistic networks that, however paradoxically, were crucial to the construction of a distinctive Harari manuscript tradition. These connections, overwhelmingly to Egypt, to the Hijaz, and to Southern Arabia, can be contextualized in the socio-economic history of the southern Red Sea region. These early eighteenth-century manuscripts set the stage for the development of a Harari visual style, which is one rooted in the past but that also responds to the reemergence of a consolidated Harari emirate.

1. An Archaizing Tendency? Transhistorical Resonances

The earliest known decorated Qur’anic manuscripts (*muṣḥaf*, pl. *maṣāḥif*) form a distinctive group dating from 1100 H. / 1689 A.D. to 1141 H. / 1749 A.D., with the majority produced in the first decade of the eighteenth century (see Appendix). Stunning in their rich variety and individualism,

¹ The exact size of this corpus is unknown, but large collections survive today in museums within Ethiopia (Kawo, 2015: 192-200) as well as libraries and private collections in the US and Europe (Gori et al., 2014: xxxvii-xxxviii). The most extensive catalogue of Ethiopian Islamic manuscripts is managed by the Islam in the Horn Project Team: <https://islahornfr.tors.ku.dk/backend>.

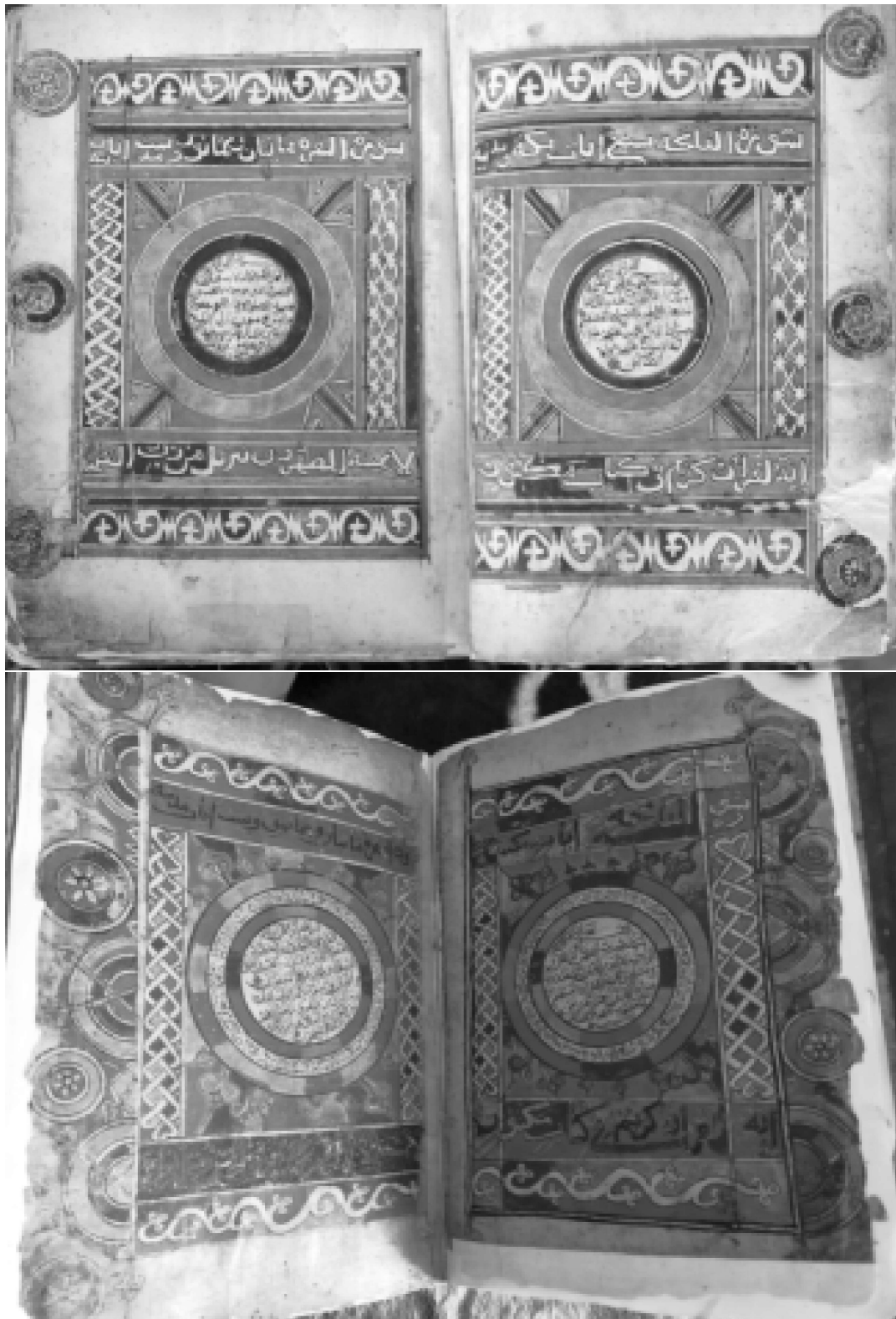


Figure 1. Top: Qur'an manuscript, completed in 1120/1708 by Ḥājji Khalīfa b. Kabīr Ḥāmid, Sherif Harar Museum, SH2009-0006. Bottom: Qur'an manuscript, completed before 1117 H./1705-6 A.D., Sherif Harar Museum, SH2006.009. Photographs by author.



Figure 2. Top: Final two chapters of the Qur'anic volumes endowed by Sharīfa Salma. Photographs by author. Bottom: Incipit page, Qur'an manuscript, copied by Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Kamāl b. Yaḥya al-Anṣārī al-Mutatabbib, completed in *Sha'bān* 744 H./December 1344–45 A.D., Mamluk Cairo, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.: Gift of Susanne K. Bennet, F1999.9.

their calligraphy signals the scribes were knowledgeable of wider traditions of Arabic manuscript production. The script is an uncodified mix of *muḥaqqaq* and *naskḥ*, two proportioned, rectilinear scripts commonly used for copying the Qur'an (Gacek, 2009: 46-47). They are mostly single-volume *maṣāḥif*, with the exception of a particularly elaborate thirty-part Qur'an endowed by Sharīfa Salma bint as-Sayyīd 'Abd Allāh, which was likely completed by 1144 H./1721 A.D., if not decades earlier, and an undated first half of a two-part Qur'an in the Leiden University Library.

These ten manuscripts are united not only by dated material (colophons, inscriptions, and endowment statements), but also by similarities in their codicological features, double illuminated frame composition, decorative repertoire, and other ornamental features (Fig. 1). When present, the stamped leather bindings have envelop flaps; their decoration and features are described by Pankhurst and Regourd (Pankhurst, 1987; Regourd, 2014: lxxx, lxxxiv). It is possible the manuscripts were bound or rebound at a later date as Regourd has noted the use of provisional bindings in Ethiopia (Regourd, 2014: lxxx). Colors are limited to red, black, green, and yellow. The golden yellow color, which is only found in this early period, is likely orpiment, an arsenic sulfide mineral. The corrosive green color is most probably verdigris, a copper-based pigment, and the black ink is likely carbon based. The manuscripts are fairly consistent in size, with volumes tending to be either small or medium-sized, and perhaps indicate a more intimate, single-person reading context.

The style of the early eighteenth-century Qur'anic manuscripts from Harar stands in stark contrast to the dominant styles of Harar's largest Muslim neighbor: the Ottoman Empire, which controlled present-day Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Yemen, and Eritrea. As described by Tim Stanley and François Déroche, by the eighteenth-century, Ottoman Qur'an manuscripts were standardized in their use of the distinctive Ottoman *naskḥ* as well as in strict rules dictating page layout and illumination. These characteristics are visible in Qur'an manuscripts produced across the Ottoman Empire and beyond, such as from the Maghreb to Indonesia (Stanley, 2004; Déroche, 2000; Akbar, 2015). Remarkably, these early Harari *maṣāḥif* do not follow this Ottoman mode. Instead, the compositions incorporate earlier models and prototypes of illumination styles and page layouts and subtly engage with these older styles to create new forms. These archaizing models, as will be discussed below, can be found in the double-page incipit composition and decorative devices of the earlier Qur'anic manuscripts, as well as within the *mise-en-page* of other religious texts, specifically the *Qaṣīdat al-Burda*.

The Harari *maṣāḥif* have limited decorative pages and vignettes, but they are relatively standardized in terms of color, design, and placement. The articulation of the double-page frames, including the tripartite division of the principal field created by two horizontal inscriptional bands, as well

as the protruding circular and semicircular medallions, suggests a close relationship between the Harari *maṣāḥif* and those of the fourteenth and fifteenth-century Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt and Syria (648-922 H./1250-1517 A.D.) (Mirza, 2017) whose styles continued into the early Ottoman period and within Yemen (James, 1992a: 48). These same decorative features, albeit more simplified, were also used in non-courtly Mamluk manuscripts, which might have circulated further or may have been more accessible as models. Examples reveal the same thick armature structuring the composition, similar proportions, almost mirrored placement of decorative medallions and semi-circular designs, and the rectangular rather than cartouche inscription bands (Fig. 2).

Illuminators added to this framework using a dense arrangement of ornamental panels and borders with vegetal scrolls, palmettes, and interlacing designs (Fig. 1). Compositions are designed with vibrant use of green, red, and yellow, as well as circular and semicircular marginal medallions bearing blossoms, usually with five petals. Within the manuscript, marginal medallions also call attention to important divisions, namely the start of each *juz'* and other divisions of the Qur'an, most notably with inscription of fourths (*rub'*), sevenths (*sub'*), sixtieths (*ḥizb*), and the instructions to prostrate (*sajda*) (Fig. 3). The marginal ornament aides the reader in keeping their place within the text, like bookmarks, and therefore in completing a full reading of the Qur'an. The most common medallion features concentric rings of white and yellow encircling the word *juz'* against a red ground (Fig. 3a). Several manuscripts elaborate these markers with palmettes and trefoils or more rectangular or ogival central forms (Fig. 3b-g). Nonetheless, these shapes remain variations on closely related presets and have clear familiar relationships to other Qur'anic manuscript traditions.

Similarly, select chapter titles are enclosed in decorative panels, which dramatically intrude into the text, in three of the manuscripts (Fig. 4). In each, the reserve white inscriptions stand against red backgrounds and name the sura title, place of revelation, and number of verses. These panels regularly terminate with a marginal vignette, again with a clear, familiar relationship to earlier Qur'an illumination. A striking comparison is found in a Yemeni *juz'* in the Khalili Collection (QUR525) produced before *Dhū al-Qa'da* 953 H./1546-1547 A.D. and has been attributed to the fifteenth century (James, 1992b: 52) (Fig. 5a). These similarities go further. Like the Harari manuscripts, a yellow pigment is used instead of gold and the same modulating red and green background as found in the Sharīfa Salma volume (Fig. 5b) is also used. The Yemeni sura chapter heading features a panel with the exact vegetal scroll found in Harari manuscripts in which trilobe leaves part from the main vine with a bud at each juncture. A simplified version is found in the Qur'anic manuscripts in figure 1. The marginal medallion with its six-petalled rosette is

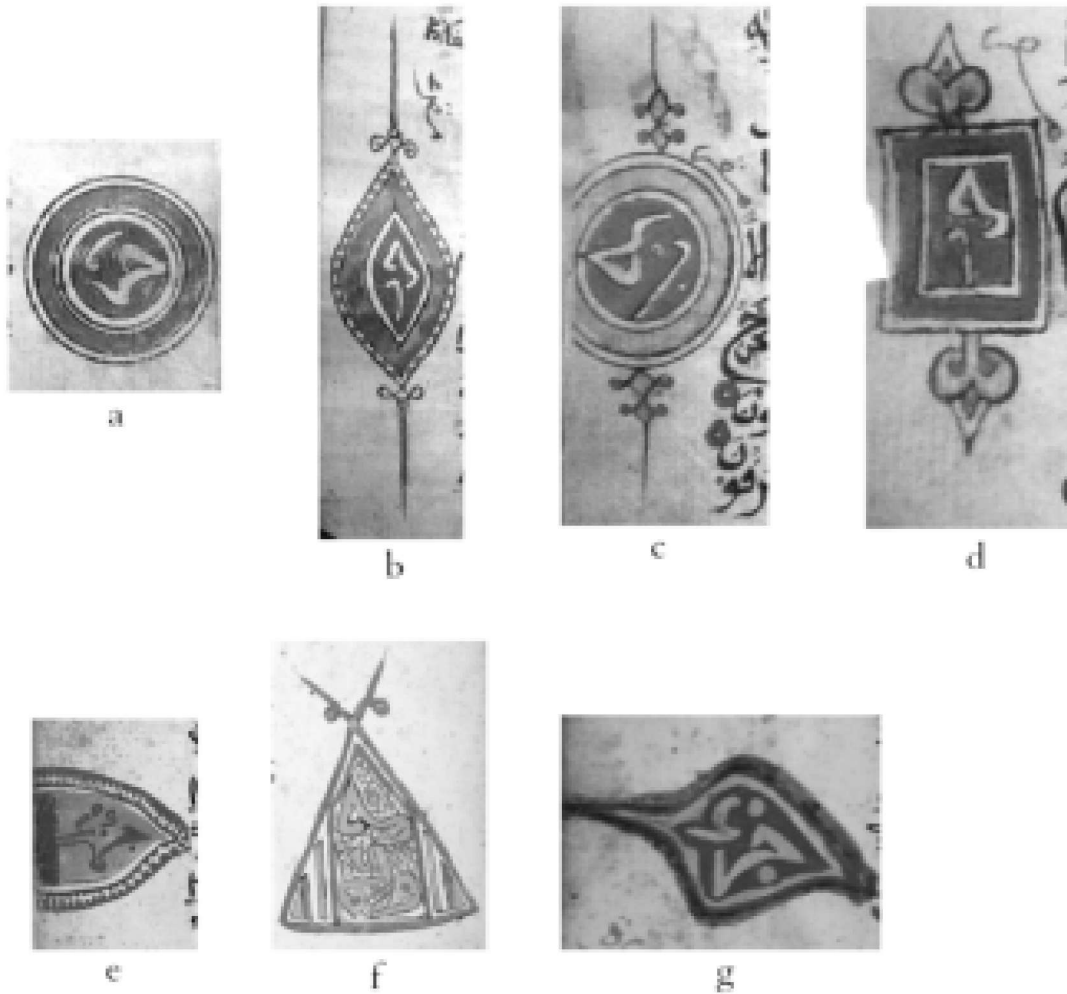


Figure 3. Decorative makers within Harari Qur'ans. a-b: undated first half of the Qur'an, Leiden University Libraries, Or. 23.981; c: Qur'an completed 1120 H./1708 A.D., Sherif Harar Museum, SH2006.050; d: Qur'an, 1120 H./1708 A.D., Sherif Harar Museum, SH2009.006; e-g: Qur'an, 1143 H./1731 A.D., Private Collection. Photographs by author.

articulated like those found in Harari examples: the reserve rosette stands out against a colored background, encircled by three rings of white, yellow, and, in the Harari example, red.

Another undated Yemeni manuscript in the Leiden University collection (Or. 25.181) contains not only a red-dominant palette (Fig. 10), but also the same lattice design in the Harari Qur'an copied by Ḥājī Khalīfa in 1120 H./1708 A.D. (Fig. 1a) and a more stylized vegetal scroll and double-strand twisted motif related to those found in a Qur'an completed in 1143 H./1731 A.D. (Fig. 6). The double-strand twisted motif is found in a majority of the Harari Qur'ans. Perhaps representing the enduring popularity of this shared decorative repertoire, a Qur'an copied in 1244 H./1829 A.D. and attributed to the Arabian Peninsula not only has the same double-strand twisted motifs,



Figure 4. Top: Detail, chapter heading within the thirty-part Qur'an endowed by Sharīfa Salma. Image © Sherif Harar Museum. Bottom: detail, sura heading, Qur'an, completed in 1708 A.D./1120 H. by Ḥājī Khalīfa b. Kabīr Ḥāmīd, Sherif Harar Museum. Photograph by author.

but the form also terminates as a single strand, which has exact parallels to Harari examples (Christie's, 2014: Lot 368). Chapter headings and ornamental vignettes within the Qur'anic text and margins are not found after the mid-eighteenth century, which makes them hallmarks of this early eighteenth-century moment.

The sense of familiarity with older models expressed by these Harari Qur'ans is further strengthened by a spectacular manuscript in the Sherif Harar Museum (catalogued under the shelfmark SH2006.0166), which contains several texts praising the Prophet Muḥammad. Colorful devices and title pages separate each text (Fig. 7). Drawing attention to these intentionally composite manuscripts, A.J. Drewes mentions the popularity of compilations of the *'Unwān ash-Sharīf* and the *Qaṣīdat al-Burda* in Harar, followed by al-Qayrawānī's *Tanbīh al-Anām* (Drewes, 1983: 70). The first was composed by Abū al-Ḥasan Nūr ad-Dīn, a sixteenth-century scholar of hadith and exegesis. The second, more formally known as *al-Kawāqib al-durriya* (The Pearly Stars), is a thirteenth-century eulogy of the Prophet's robe by al-Būṣīrī (608-691 H./1211-1296 A.D.) to which both talismanic and therapeutic properties were ascribed. While it was composed in Egypt, the text circulated widely and was popular across the Islamic World (Stetkevych, 2010: 70-71; Schimmel, 1985: 181-84). Alessandro Gori describes these compilation volumes as *takhmīs al-Fayyūmī 'alā al-Burda* and links them to *mawlid* practices within Harar where they would have been read aloud to celebrate the birthday of the Prophet Muḥammad (Gori, 2010: 55, 57-58).

The Sherif Harar Museum copy was completed in *Dhū al-Hijja* 1128 H./ November 1716 A.D. by Sayyid 'Alī b. Sayyid Ibrāhīm b. Sayyid Aḥmad b. Sayyid Muḥammad and is in fragile condition due to pigment corrosion. Three decorative panels contain central polylobed rosettes, with each lobe encircling the distinctive palmettes form found in the early Qur'ans as well as stylized vegetal motifs. The delicate outline and radiating lines of the central design readily corresponds to Mamluk examples, such as an example in the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in Washington D.C. (Fig. 8). The central design of the Sackler manuscript (S1986.29) is nearly identical to the Harari polylobed medallion. In both, the text lies on a circular panel with a thick border framed by lobes filled with a tripartite floral motif, which is further enclosed by two thick borders and a slight outline. The Harari version is also framed within a square, the corners of which contain quarter wedges filled with vegetal motifs, and strongly evokes the Mamluk composition down to the faint outlining and radiating extensions. This polylobed design was a standard one found on talismanic Mamluk prayer scrolls and other religious texts. The Harari artisans replaced the blue and gold grounds with red ones and outlined the white text with yellow rather than gold. Even the eight-petalled rosette, used to separate verses and as a filling motif in the Harari text, is comparable

to manuscripts within the Mamluk tradition. This formal kinship is only reinforced by a later, probably late eighteenth-century, *Qaṣīdat al-Burda*, which is also found in the Sherif Harar Museum (Mirza, 2017). Other decorative panels evoke the same vegetal motif in the Leiden Yemeni manuscript.

It is difficult to situate these color schemes and ornamental forms as they appear over a vast geographic and chronological span. Vegetal scrolls and twisted designs can be found on Mamluk metalwork, brass revetments, carpets, and woodwork. The plaited and twisted rope designs of the Yemeni and Harari manuscripts also bear a close resemblance to Mamluk textiles, which includes a block-printed cotton fragment found at the Smithsonian's Cooper Hewitt Museum in New York (Fig. 9). In the horizontal and vertical panels, the twisted motifs are almost identical to the Harari manuscripts and also rendered in reserve. Ephemeral textiles may have had a wider role in circulating motifs and styles. Silk and linen cloth were regularly imported from India and Egypt to Ethiopia (Wion, 2020: 417). Significant here is the layering of form, color, and placement, which suggests a more direct relationship between the artistic traditions. Furthermore, Anne Regourd has found several similarities between Yemeni and Harari manuscripts on a codicological level, underscoring the close relationship between the two regions (Regourd, 2014: xlix, lxix). Both the Yemeni and Harari material have only been minimally studied which leaves open the possibility of additional parallels.

The use of seemingly archaizing styles in the earliest Qur'anic manuscripts of Harar – ones that can be linked to Egypt and Southern Arabia – appears to be an outgrowth of the city's engagement within the Red Sea zone. The Harari scribes and artisans' deployment of related but not identical forms and formats with visual cognates from across this region suggests a possible transhistorical religious manuscript style that was active outside of court styles. I posit that this phenomenon is rooted in a *longue durée* manuscript culture that loosely encompassed Egypt, Western Arabia, Yemen, and Harar, and provided both ornamental repertoires and formats for the Qur'an that were established at least by the fourteenth century. These eighteenth-century Harari manuscripts therefore provide a later window into the artistic dynamics of the early modern Red Sea regions.

2. A Red Sea Style? Transregional Connections

Recently, there have been increased suggestions that the regions adjoining the Red Sea should be considered as a distinctive cultural zone (Wick, 2016: 5; Raymond, 2002: 46-57). Jonathan Miran notes the importance of interpreting the Red Sea as an aggregated region, "characterized by multilayered, interconnected and overlapping circuits and networks operating within and across it while still linked to both the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean" (Miran,



Figure 5. Top: detail, sura heading, Qur'an *juz'*, Yemen, c.1450-1500, Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, QUR525, 14b. Image © The Khalili Family Trust. Bottom: Detail, sura heading, Qur'an completed 1120 H./1708 A.D., Sherif Harar Museum, Sh2006-050. Image © Sherif Harar Museum.

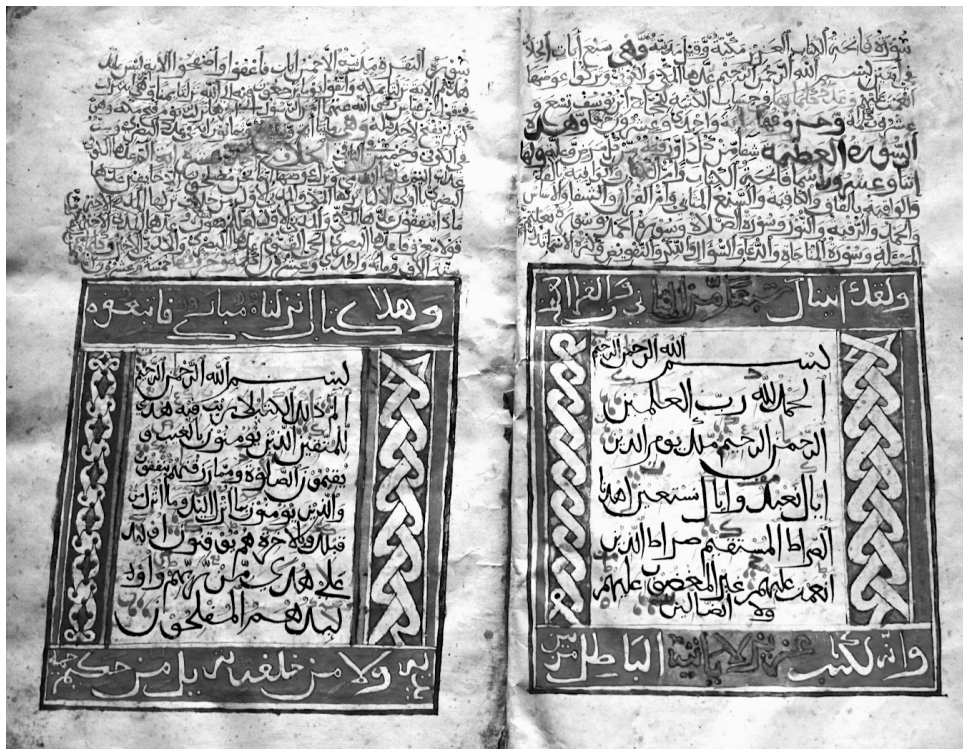


Figure 6. Incipit page, Qur'an manuscript, completed on *Sha'ban* 1143 H./ February 1732 A.D., Private Collection. Photograph by author.



Figure 7. Decorated pages from a multi-text manuscript including the *Qaṣīdat al-Burda* and *Tanbīh al-Anām*, Sherif Harar Museum, SH2006.0166. Photograph by author.

2014: 197). Traveler accounts and histories attest that trade routes stretched from Yemen to Zaylaʿ, and these therefore place Harar directly within this zone (Rouaud, 2012; Wick, 2016: 29). The Red Sea commodity par excellence was undoubtedly coffee (Wick, 2016: 45-49), and Harar (through the port city of Zaylaʿ) was one of its major exporters.

One reason allowing for a distinctive Red Sea repertoire may be the more superficial nature of Ottoman control in the region, which was the result of the entrenched authority of the Sharīfs, the local rulers of the Hijaz, until the 1880s (Low, 2020). In fact, their continued strength forced the Ottomans to circumvent Jeddah to undermine the financial resources of the Sharīfs and invest more heavily in Yemen – which would aid in the revitalization of Zaylaʿ and, by extension, Harar, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Peacock, 2017: 291, 320-21; Burak, 2017: 290-91, 305). The brief first period of Ottoman control of Yemen, which lasted about a century from 1538 to 1636, failed to completely disrupt Red Sea regional networks, but may have, conversely, contributed to their growth. In the wake of the Ottoman defeat, the delegation of the Hijaz to longstanding local rulers led to a bifurcated Red Sea in the



Figure 8. Left: detail, finispiece, *Qaṣīdat al-Burda*, Sherif Harar Museum, SH2006.0166. Photograph by author. Right: detail, frontispiece, *Qaṣīdat al-Burda*, Egypt, Mamluk period, ca. 1460, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C: Purchase – Smithsonian Unrestricted Trust Funds, Smithsonian Collections Acquisition Program, and Dr. Arthur M. Sackler, S1986.29.

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: the northern half, from Cairo to Jeddah, was dominated by Ottoman, namely Egyptian, merchants while the southern half, from Jeddah to Aden, was controlled by Yemeni rulers and Indian, especially Gujarati, merchants (Raymond, 2002: 46-57). In fact, the threat of Ottoman expansion may have strengthened diplomatic ties between Yemen and Ethiopia in the seventeenth century (Kuriyama, 2017: 40-41), the same moment as the development of a manuscript culture in Harar. Reinforcing this notion, ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazīrī’s (d. 977 H./1569-1570 A.D.) treatise on coffee, which is the earliest known, presents geographical imagery that integrates the Horn of Africa with Arabia and suggests that they belong to a common world that makes cross-pollination (of plants and drinking customs) obvious (Wick, 2016: 77-78). Chekroun also notes that the military aide provided to Imam Aḥmad came from the governor of Zabid rather than from Ottoman officials, which again highlights regional relationships over imperial ones (Chekroun, 2016: 181).

Nancy Um is the most recent scholar to address how this regionalism promoted an architectural style – the so-called “Red Sea Style” – from the sixteenth to twentieth centuries. Formed by “sustained cross-cultural continuity,” residential architecture in ports like Suakin, Masawa, Jeddah, Yanbu‘ al-Bhar, and Mocha shared similar characteristics (Um, 2012: 249). These include: elaborately carved woodwork, wooden projecting windows, plaster coated walls, multilevel constructions with the ground floor devoted to

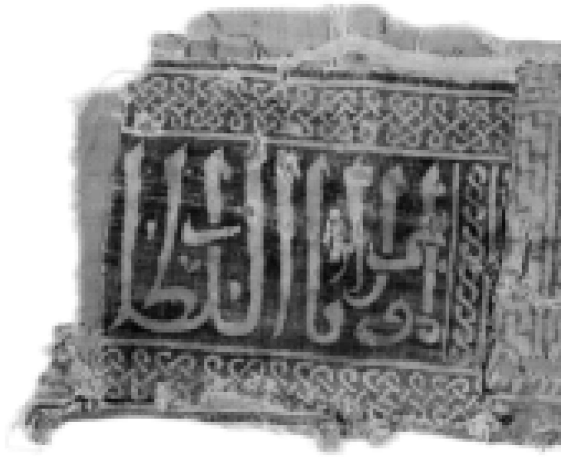


Figure 9. Detail, textile fragment, Egypt, thirteenth or fourteenth centuries, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C: Museum purchase from Au Panier Fleuri Fund; 1954-52-5.

quasi-public spaces for commercial functions, or gathering spaces with built-in benches. The deployment of these features was localized and diverse in its final forms; this style was more of an “architectural sheath,” or a flexible membrane that encompassed a diversity of forms that were held together by organizational schemas related to shared functions and concerns (Um, 2012: 257). Um notes the irony of this development: Ottoman rule provided the structures that enabled greater cross-regional exchange and its economic underpinning. Yet, these Red Sea artistic forms cannot be called “Ottoman” (Um, 2012: 248). Alexis Wick similarly argues that the Red Sea did not become an “Ottoman lake” until the second half of the nineteenth century (Wick, 2016: 55-56), well after the Harar tradition of Qur’anic manuscripts was established.

It may be possible to extend this umbrella of a Red Sea architectural style to encompass Harar. Traditional Harari houses are multi-storied – with the first floor dedicated to a quasi-public gathering area with built-in benches – and are made of plaster with wooden screened windows. Projecting wooden windows are found on the larger houses built in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Santelli, 2008: 634-40). These Harari residential architectural styles were also forming in the early and mid-eighteenth century as suggested by Hecht (Hecht, 1982: 60-62). This is the same period as these early Qur’an manuscripts. I propose this same phenomenon – of shared but malleable characteristics with localized deployment histories – could be extended to consider the parallels found in the manuscripts described above. This “Red Sea Style” of manuscripts would include the red-dominated color palate as well as the strong use of yellow and green, double- and multi-twisted motifs, vegetal scrolls, rosettes, and shared, transhistoric decorative formats.

The early eighteenth-century Harari manuscripts, therefore, have the potential to reveal a regional artistic repertoire that developed within the Red Sea by the late seventeenth century. It linked to the early Mamluk period but continued to develop and thrive as Harari artisans synthesized compositions and page layouts to create their own local, Harari idiom by the mid-eighteenth



Figure 10. Incipit page, Undated Qur'an manuscript, attributed to Yemen, Leiden University Libraries, Or. 25.18.

century. This *longue durée* style was consolidated in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, which was a moment when manuscript production became prolific and when Ottoman infrastructure helped to further connect these regions and facilitated exchanges that furthered a Red Sea visual culture.

These economic and political relationships may have accounted for the spread of formats between Yemen and Egypt as well as the development of a shared repertoire of ornamental forms and decorative templates, particularly for chapter headings and the incipit page. This nuanced Red Sea decorative repertoire dates back to at least the Mamluk period when political and economic ties closely bound Egypt to Yemen and Zayla'. Mamluk models may have been widely available throughout the Red Sea region, particularly due to Mamluk suzerainty over the Rasulids (626-858 H./1229-1454 A.D.) of Yemen and the Sharifs of the Hijaz until 1517 (Meloy, 2003: 1). As Mamluk vassals, the Rasulids were intrinsically tied to the royal court, which regularly exchanged precious gifts and traded luxury goods. Furthermore, the movement of artisans between the two regions, as well as the interrelated court culture, is well documented (Ward, 2016: 38). In particular, at least one high-profile Mamluk illuminator relocated to the Rasulid court, 'Abd al-Raḥman b. Ibrāhīm al-Āmidi, the son of one of the most famous Mamluk

illuminators, produced a copy of *al-Kawāḳib ad-durriya* in the court of Ṣanaʿā in 798 H./1398 A.D. (James, 2007: 10). “Mamluk-style” illuminations were also added to a Rasulid Qurʾanic commentary of the Qurʾan in the fifteenth century (Colini, 2016). A sign of Yemen’s diverse milieu, a rare Qurʾan folio linked to the Rasulid court and now in the Khalili Collection, displays not only “superficial Mamluk features,” but also the combination of multifold styles including those associated with Iran. This combination is representative of the artistic culture of Yemen as distinct from Egypt (James, 1992b: 160). Yemen and Arabia have also been noted for their conservative artistic repertoire (James, 1992a: 52). It is difficult to unearth the visual culture of medieval Mecca or to separate it from Yemen. Within the city, the Yemeni sultans were major patrons of madrasas, outbuilding even the Mamluks, who sent lavish gifts and furnishings to Mecca (Mortel, 1997: 249-52). Not many manuscripts are known from the region, but those few that are known often continue a mixture of styles, which reveals a diverse artistic vocabulary that preserved older forms. Attesting to the circulation of portable objects, Mamluk metalwork from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries appears within the treasuries of medieval Ethiopian churches and monasteries and likely arrived in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Bittar, 2012: 317-21; Behrens-Abouseif, 2014: 49-52; Loiseau, 2018: 638-57). Additionally, the diffusion of Mamluk-period Christian Arabic manuscripts, particularly given the cross-confessional visual vocabulary of Coptic manuscripts, and the availability of Mamluk composition styles in Christian Ethiopian manuscripts, has already been noted for Ethiopian Christian manuscripts (Heldman, 2007: 84-105; Balicka-Witakowska, 2010).

Greater Mamluk interest in the Red Sea led to the rise of the port city of Zaylaʿ as the main axis of Islamicization in Ethiopia by the fourteenth century as well as to the growth of Harar. It also encouraged the circulation of artistic forms within the Red Sea region (Fauvelle-Aymar & Hirsch, 2004: 41-42). Recent excavations in the nearby town of Harlaa have revealed not only gold and silver coins from twelfth and thirteenth-century Egypt, but also evidence of a wide range of imported material revealing connections to the Red Sea, western Indian Ocean, Egypt as well as China and South Asia (Insoll, 2020: 432; Insoll et al., 2021: 494). Additionally, Insoll has shown how archeological excavations at Harlaa have revealed previously unknown marine shell source material in the Red Sea (Insoll, 2021: 20), which is another indicator of how closely the Horn of Africa was tied into Red Sea networks between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries. Similarly, funerary inscriptions found in the Chercher region (which includes Harar) are comparable to the Egyptian steles of Ayyubid and Mamluk styles of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Fauvelle-Aymar & Hirsch, 2008: 351-52). The fourteenth-century tombs of the Walasmaʿ dynasty additionally reveal connections to Mamluk epigraphical

styles (Fauvelle, Hirsch & Chekroun, 2017: 270-78). These inscriptions that are carved in stone in relief suggest connections to Mamluk artisans and artistic styles in medieval Ethiopia and open the possibility for the incorporation of Mamluk forms into local Islamicate aesthetic forms. The inscriptions can be linked to the decorative scripts of the Harari Qur'ans in their use of space as well as the wide, nested script. Harari coins were also designated using Mamluk terms into the nineteenth century, another tangible sign of the survival of long-distance connections (Zekaria, 1989: 29). These anachronistic similarities and historic transregional ties reinforce the idea of sustained engagement, with moments of increased circulation of artistic styles, between Egypt and Harar – and, possibly, the Red Sea region between them.

3. Establishing a Harari Visual Idiom

These decorated Qur'anic manuscripts all date to the period of the revival of Harar under the 'Alī b. Dāwūd dynasty (r. 1056-1292 H. / 1647-1887 A.D.). The dynasty stabilized the region and extended Harar's influence from Aleyyu Amba to Jijiga (*History of Harar and The Hararis*, 2015: 105-7). It remains impossible to pinpoint the formation of a manuscript culture in Harar. The existence of the *Futūḥ al-Ḥabasha*, completed in the 1550s, may indicate the presence of manuscript production in Harar in the mid-sixteenth century. As argued by Amélie Chekroun, this text was most likely commissioned in Harar and written to persuade and revitalize the campaigns against the Solomonic king Gälawdewos (r. 1540-1559) (Chekroun, 2015: 317). To meet this goal, it would have been necessary to copy it extensively. While it is clear that copies circulated – and even reached as far as Gujarat and within the Solomonic court in Ethiopia – the earliest extant Harari copy has only been attributed to the seventeenth century (Chekroun, 2012: 298-300; Chekroun, 2017). Additionally, Giorgi Banti has argued that the oldest known Harari 'ajamī text was completed before 1701 (the date of an inscription within the manuscript), and that local *mawlid* and other religious texts were composed as early as the seventeenth century, if not the sixteenth (Banti, 2009: 153-55). More research is needed to determine if the limited number of manuscripts dated to the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries may have been copied elsewhere and brought to Harar.

The Qur'anic manuscripts suggest a robust manuscript tradition – one with a shared organizational schema and decorative repertoire drawing on a *longue durée* Red Sea style. Yet this style was not formalized in Harar by the first third of the eighteenth century. The artisans' work reveals small hesitations and inexperience with some small details. On the incipit pages, the decorative inscriptions were not planned, and the scribe had to squeeze in the final words to fit the space (Fig. 1). Earlier planning lines are still visible as the composition seemed to shift after the initial layout and forms overlap. The

named scribes, such as Ḥājji Sa‘d, Faqīh Ḥusayn, Ḥājji Muḥammad, and Ḥājji Khalīfa, appear, from their titles, to have undertaken pilgrimage to Mecca, possibly have spent time in the Hijaz, or to have been scholars. Through their religious training, these individuals would have received instruction in basic penmanship and scribal practice. Muna Abubeker describes the traditional educational system in Harar: students began in the *Qur’an Gey*, where they would learn to recite the Qur’an and read and write Arabic. Then they would study in the houses of religious scholars (*Kabir Gar*) and each scholar would teach a specific subject, such as law, theology, Arabic grammar, and Qur’anic commentary (Abubeker, 2007: 48-49). Other Qur’an manuscripts dated to the early-eighteenth century also seem to have been likely copied by members of the religious elite. No information is given about the decorators or binders of the manuscripts, which leaves open the possibility that they were either the same individuals as the scribes or separate artisans. In the case of Sharīfa Salma’s volumes, there is also the possibility of multiple artisans, particularly given the difference between the compositions of the first and final pages of Qur’anic text, the diverse single-page incipit pages in select volumes, and other decorative elements. Yet, these ten manuscripts are a clear stylistic group that are united by their codicological and textual traditions, ornamental repertoires, decorative framework, and conceptualizations. They utilize the same tripartite composition, color palettes, medallions of red and yellow, text left in reserve on red panels, five and six-petalled rosettes, trefoils, and trilobed vegetal scrolls.

The seeming contradiction of amateur scribes or artisans coupled with stylistic uniformity can be better understood once the manuscripts, and their creators, are placed within the wider artistic milieu of the Red Sea region. The artisans drew upon the flexible sheath of the Red Sea style of religious manuscripts and created idiosyncratic volumes united in their color plates, ornamental repertoire, and decorative structure. Religious networks, such as those of Ḥājji ad-Dābir and Shihāb ad-Dīn Aḥmad in the century before, require further investigation to better situate these scribes and understand their role – as transmitters of text and artistic modes – in crafting a distinctive Harari style for the Qur’an in the mid-eighteenth century, which would persist for more than a century. In the following decades, Harari artisans used the same decorative structure for incipit pages, ornamental repertoire, and color palette when copying Qur’anic manuscripts. Building upon these foundations, the increasingly professionalized Harari artisans would crystalize distinctive formats and calligraphic styles intrinsic to the city while also drawing upon its Red Sea and Indian Ocean milieu (Mirza, 2017). These changes signal a new period within Harar as the emirate sought to distinguish itself. These early Harari manuscripts highlight the dynamic nature of the artistic cultures of East Africa and the untold histories embedded within material objects – histories that encourage us to re-conceptualize the medieval and early

modern Red Sea region. They also hint at the how little is known about the beginning of Harar's manuscript tradition. Deeper attention is needed to attend to the role of sufi *turuq* and Islamic educational networks that connected the Horn to neighboring regions. These long-distance relationships may have allowed for the flow of artistic styles as well, and these religious manuscripts must be seen as one dimension of Harar's intellectual culture. Further examination of the sura titling conventions, *mawlid* traditions, marginal paratexts, and other religious manuscripts may illuminate these ties between Harar and the Red Sea as well as the wider Indian Ocean littoral.

Appendix

Decorative Qur'an Manuscripts from late Seventeenth to Early Eighteenth century Harar

1

Single-volume Qur'an

Sha'ban 1100 H. / May-June 1689 A.D.

Sherif Harar Museum, SH2006.0043

21.6 × 17 × 6.15 cm

<http://islhornafr.tors.sc.ku.dk/backend/manuscripts/1766>

<https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/527076>

2

Single-volume Qur'an

Completed before 17 *Muharram* 1117 H./ May 11, 1705 A.D.

28 × 16.2 × 5.3 cm

Sherif Harar Museum, SH2006.009

3

Single-volume Qur'an

8 *Rabi' al-awwal* 1120 H. / May 28, 1708 A.D.

Copied by Hājī Khalīfa b. Kabīr Hāmīd

Endowed 13 *Dhu al-Hijja* 1305 H./ August 21, 1888 A.D.

Endowed by Kabīr 'Umar Sharīf al-Muqr'i b. Sayyid 'Alī

30 × 24 × 4.1 cm

Sherif Harar Museum, Sh2009.0006

<http://islhornafr.tors.sc.ku.dk/backend/manuscripts/835>

<https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/527288>

4

Single-volume Qur'an

29 *Rabi' al-awwal* 1120 H. / June 18, 1708 A.D.

15.3 × 10.1 × .9 cm

Sherif Harar Museum, Sh2006.050
<http://islahornafr.tors.sc.ku.dk/backend/manuscripts/1770>
<https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/527080>

5
Thirty-part Qur'an set
Possibly completed before *Jumādā* I 1123 H./1711-2 A.D.
Endowed by Sharīfa Salma bint al-Sayyid 'Abd Allāh
15 × 10,2 × 1 cm
Sherif Harar Museum
<http://islahornafr.tors.sc.ku.dk/backend/people/3162>

6
Single-volume Qur'an
13 *Rabī' al-awwal* 1127 H. / March 19, 1715 A.D.
Copied by Hājī Muḥammad b. Muḥammad *al-marhūm*
24.1 × 17.5 cm
Sherif Harar Museum, SH2013.0015

7
Single-volume Qur'an
10 *Shawwāl* 1131H. / August 26, 1719 A.D.
Copied by Faqīh Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad Shaykh ash-Shahīr bi-Almātū b. Faqīh
'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Faqīh Ay Muḥammad b. Faqīh Abī Bakr ash-Shahīr bi-Ay
Wakarrī
30 × 26 × 7.5 cm
Institute of Ethiopian Studies, IES 4629
<http://islahornafr.tors.sc.ku.dk/backend/manuscripts/95>
<https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP286-1-1-613>

8
Single-volume Qur'an
25 *Rajab* 1141 H. / February 24, 1729 A.D.
21.5 × 17 × 6 cm
Institute of Ethiopian Studies, IES 258
<http://islahornafr.tors.sc.ku.dk/backend/manuscripts/320>
<https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP286-1-1-388>

9
First half of the Qur'an
Early eighteenth century
Leiden University Libraries, Or 23.981

10

Single-volume Qur'an

10 *Sha'bān* 1143 H. / February 17, 1731 A.D.

31.5 × 21.5 cm

Private collection

11

Single volume Qur'an

Shawwāl 1162 H./ September-October 1749 A.D.

Copied by Hajji Sa'd b. Adish 'Umar Dīn *al-marhūm*

24.5 × 13.5 cm

Khalili Collection

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Muna Abubeker*

The Description of the Divorce Cases of the Court Documents of 19th century Harar

Abstract

Harari courts, which are Sharia courts, have registered different themes of cases that they have entertained for centuries. The registrations of two of the Harari qadis are housed in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa. These Arabic manuscripts cover the period of the pre-Egyptian occupation to Harar from 1242 to 1283 H. (1827-1867 A.D.). They registered marriages, divorces, inheritances, land transactions, and other cases. This study focuses on the description of divorce cases of the two qadis' registrations. It provides an edition and translation of several examples of divorces that appear in these records. Based on the information given in the cases, this study identifies the Islamic divorce types and their preconditions that the Harari court employed throughout the 40 years of the two qadis' period. The three types of Islamic divorces identified from reading the manuscripts are: *khul'*, *talāq*, and *faskh*. The cases show consistency across the years in many matters except in the number of the *khul'* type of divorce, which is believed to be initiated by woman. These divorce cases show that the qadis registered the final conclusion of the divorce without giving details on the process or procedures that took place for the divorce to finalize. Other matters related to the divorce, such as the maintenance and the guardianship of children, are not mentioned.

Key words: divorce, *khul'*, *talāq*, *faskh*, Harar, qadi, Islamic court, 19th century

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Résumé

Les tribunaux harari, qui appliquent la sharia, ont enregistré les affaires qu'ils ont traitées pendant des siècles. Les registres de deux des cadis de Harar sont conservés à l'Institute of Ethiopian Studies, à Addis Abeba. Ces manuscrits couvrent la période qui précède l'occupation égyptienne de Harar, entre 1242 et 1283 H. (1827-1867 ap. J.C.). Ils ont enregistré des cas de mariages, de divorces, d'héritages, de transactions foncières, etc. La présente étude se concentre sur la description des cas de divorce dans les registres de ces deux cadis. Elle fournit une édition et une traduction anglaise de plusieurs exemples de divorces qui apparaissent dans ces registres. Sur la base des informations fournies dans les cas étudiés, cet article identifie les types de divorces islamiques et leurs conditions préalables que le tribunal de Harar a utilisés pendant les 40 ans de la période de ces deux cadis. Les trois types de divorces islamiques identifiés à partir de la lecture des manuscrits sont les *khul'*, les *ṭalāq* et les *faskh*. Les cas montrent une cohérence à travers les années dans de nombreux domaines, sauf dans le nombre de divorces de type *khul'* qui sont censés être initiés par la femme. Ces cas de divorce montrent que les cadis enregistrent la conclusion finale du divorce sans donner de détails sur le processus ou les procédures qui ont eu lieu afin que le divorce soit finalisé. D'autres questions liées au divorce, comme la pension alimentaire et la tutelle des enfants, ne sont pas non plus mentionnées.

Mots clés: divorce, *khul'*, *ṭalāq*, *faskh*, Harar, cadi, tribunal islamique, XIX^e siècle

Introduction

Harar is an ancient Ethiopian city and was an independent Islamic Emirate until the occupation by Menelik in 1887. It used to enjoy the position of a city state with strong military power, and trade and was a religious centre in the East of Africa. The court *dīwān* is an institution developed long ago and maintains the tradition of recording the day-to-day activities of the court. Evidence shows that Harari records of the court began earlier than the 19th century. First, the manuscripts' organisation shows that the writers were not doing it for the first time then and that the tradition was already well established.¹ Second, the documents edited by Wagner (1974) from the ms. IES 276 provide additional evidence that the courts used to previously

¹ For details refer to Muna, 2017: 4, 10 & 11.

record proceedings.² Those documents are copies of an “old handwritten Harari document” (*Ibid.*: 215, 217 & 221) identified by Aḥmad b. ‘Alī ash-Shāmī who authored this manuscript in the middle of the 20th century. Two of the three documents edited by Wagner provide valuable information about the judicial system in Harar in the 18th century. One is a contract of a plot of land that was sold by Amir Ṭalḥa b. ‘Abd Allāh (r. 1700 -1721). At the time of the trial, the qadi was ash-Sharīf ‘Abd al-Qādir. In a footnote, Aḥmad ash-Shāmī notes that the “qadi al-Sayyid b. ‘Abd al-Qādir b. al-Sayyid Aḥmad died on Wednesday, 27 Rajab 1129 (7 July 1717 A.D.)” (*Ibid.*: 215, note 14). Thus, in the early 18th century, there was already a court and qadi in Harar that conducted trials and recorded judicial decisions in registers. The second document is from the end of the same century. According to this document, in 1785-6 A.D., the Harari Amir ‘Abd ash-Shakūr b. Yūsuf (r. 1783-1794), “reorganized the administrative system of Harar and reintroduced the institutions of *sijill* (register) and *dīwān* (chancery) that were neglected by his predecessors.” (*Ibid.*: 216). The qadi who participated in this reorganization and fixed the rights of the qadi within this institution was qadi Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Naṣr ad-Dīn (*Ibid.*: 219). Thus, we learn that at the end of the 18th century, the Harari judicial system was thoroughly reformed, the recording practice was restored within the already existing office of the qadi, and the neglected practice of the registration was also restored.

However, the oldest Arabic court record manuscripts known to this author are the ones from the 19th century and that are found in the manuscript section of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES) library at Addis Ababa University.³ The IES library holds the records of two Harari qadis registrations of their courts in three bindings. The first one is qadi ‘Abd ar-Raḥman Muḥammad. He was the successor of his father qadi Muḥammad b. Idrīs and was appointed qadi by the Amir ‘Abd al-Karīm b. Amir Muḥammad (r. 1825-34). He stayed in the office of the court from 1242 to 1252 H. / 1827-1837 A.D. The manuscript

² E. Wagner edited and translated three Arabic documents on the history of Harar that he found in the ms. IES 276B. This is a booklet entitled *Jadwal ash-Shāsh w-ash-Shāmī. Waḍ‘ar-rābi‘* that was written between 1946 and 1954 by a Harari scholar named Aḥmad b. ‘Alī ash-Shāmī (see Gori, 2014: 9). This booklet is a compilation of information about Harari history from, “printed books in Arabic, Amharic and French, handwritten Arabic materials such as letters, documents and the *Fath Madīnat Harar*” (Wagner, 1974: 213). The three documents edited by Wagner are footnotes to the names of emirs mentioned in the *Jadwal*. ³ The IES library holds other Harari court records, which are not in Arabic and are more recent. These are in Amharic and Italian. According to Stitz (1975), they are from 1887 onwards. In the handlist of the Islamic manuscripts in the IES library edited by Alessandro Gori, several manuscripts are Arabic records of the sharī‘a court, marriage contracts of Harar during the Egyptian occupation (1875-1885) (Gori, 2014: 20).

registered under the number ms. IES 955 consists of his recordings.⁴ The second qadi is qadi ‘Abd ar-Raḥman ‘Umar Ḥayy who begins recording right after qadi ‘Abd ar-Raḥman Muḥammad in 1252 H. / 1837 A.D. and stayed in the office until 1283 H. / 1867 A.D. There are two manuscripts that are the registrations of his court office: ms. IES 956⁵ and ms. IES 957.⁶ These two manuscripts contain records from 1252 to 1287 H. (1837-1871 A.D.). However, the material inside the manuscript shows that from 1283 H. / 1867 A.D. onwards the registrations were instead completed by his son, qadi ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd ar-Raḥman ‘Umar.

The registrations of both qadis include records of marriages, inheritances, divorces, land transactions and their registrations, keeping trust and handing over.⁷ They also include house rents, litigations, donations, and a few other cases. The records are not detailed descriptions of cases brought to the qadis, but rather they are the final registrations and decisions formatted in a template manner. Generally speaking, the cases include their dates, the names of the individuals involved, the action(s) taken within the case, and the witnesses, whenever the case demanded it. For example: marriage cases contain the names of the bride and groom, the dowry that the groom gave or promised to give, the guardian of the bride, and witnesses, which shows that the records are completed according to Islamic principles.

Number of divorce in Harar during the 19th century was low and this is confirmed by researchers on the manuscripts (Stitz, 1975; Muna, 2017) as well as secondary sources, such as Moktar (1876), who was in Harar just after the period when the manuscripts were registered. The Egyptian Moktar writes about the judicial organization of Harar before the Egyptian occupation (1875-1885):

The Kadis judge all trials and their power is absolute; but since their judgments had above all to please the Emir, who had the habit of taking care of everything, politics, justice, etc., it followed that most of the time, in order to please their master, they rendered completely unjust judgments. (Moktar, 1876: 364)

⁴ See Garad, 1990: 17; Muna, 2017: 14 & 15; Gori, 2014: 19; IES 955: “Physical Description: Paper, 211 × 168 × 32 mm, 193 folios, 25-26 lines, Arabic, first half of the nineteenth century.” ⁵ See Garad, 1990: 23; Muna, 2007: 24, 25 & 26; Gori, 2014: xli. ⁶ See Muna, 2007: 23; Muna, 2017: 4; Gori, 2014: 20; IES 957: “Physical Description: Paper, 222 × 157 × 152 mm, 304 folios, 26-29 lines, Arabic, second half of the nineteenth century.” ⁷ The inhabitants put money and materials at the qadi and they also receive it whenever they want it back. This is registered as *wadia* (a trust) and *iqbad* (hand over by the qadi to the one who kept the money or material).

Then, Moktar describes Harari traditions and gives some of his observations about Harari marriages and divorces:

Marriage among the Harraris is based on Muslim law and is performed in front of the kadi. With very few exceptions, the Harraris have only one wife; these women are so willful and jealous that it would be impossible for the most energetic man to have several. With the exception of the Emir Mohammed, who had four wives and some Abyssinian women as concubines, and of some of his court men, I never saw in Harrar an inhabitant with two wives; even divorce, so frequent in Muslim countries, does not exist in this country, or rather it is resorted to only in the last extremity; during the twelve months that I spent in Harrar, I knew of only one case of divorce out of a population of 35,000 inhabitants. (*Ibid.*: 366)

Divorce cases also show that the 19th century Harari qadis implemented Islamic law.⁸ In Islamic divorce, the husband has full authority of repudiating and a unilateral right over the divorce. When he exercises that right, it is called “*ṭalāq*.” On the other hand, the wife can only initiate a divorce in two ways. The first method is through providing some compensation to the husband, which is a “*khul*” divorce. The second method is through the courts and is the “*faskh*” divorce. Compensation is the term that the Islamic legal scholars use to refer to the money or the item(s) that the wife gives to her husband in order for him to free her from the marriage wedlock. It usually consists of the dowry that she received during the conclusion of marriage from the husband and that she returns it back to him.⁹ However, legal experts do not usually stipulate that it is exact dowry that she has to return and rather note that the amount is negotiable between the couple. If the couple does not agree on the compensation, then the amount must be the full dowry according to Shafi’i.

For *ṭalāq*, the husband does not need to go to the court. He can simply pronounce the *ṭalāq* phrase and then the wife waits three menstrual cycles (three months for women without menses or until delivery for pregnant

⁸ For more on Islamic divorce laws, see among many others publications: Chehaka, 1991; Alami & Hinchcliffe, 1996; Azhary Sonbol, 1996; Ahmad, 2009; etc. Islamic law is derived from the Quran (main source of Islamic law for Muslims), the Sunnah (actions that the Prophet of Islam did), the *qiyas* (analogy) and *ijma’*e (consensus by Islamic scholars). ⁹ The following is the sunnah, found in the narration of Bukhari (Volume 7, Book 63, Number 197) that Islamic scholars refer to in the case of Khule: “The wife of Thabit bin Qais came to the Prophet and said, “O Allah’s Apostle! I do not blame Thabit for defects in his character or his religion, but I, being a Muslim, dislike to behave in un-Islamic manner (if I remain with him).” On that Allah’s Apostle said (to her), “Will you give back the garden which your husband has given you (as Mahr ‘dowry’)?” She said, “Yes.” Then the Prophet said to Thabit, “O Thabit! Accept your garden, and divorce her once.” https://www.iium.edu.my/deed/hadith/bukhari/o63_sbt.html.

women) in his house for the divorce to be effectuated. He covers her maintenance until the end of the waiting period. Then, the husband must provide the promised dowry, if it has not already been given. Additionally, there is a provision that a husband should give to the ex-wife, which is known as *mut'ah*.¹⁰ In every case, the husband must continue to provide maintenance for the children. In the case of *ṭalāq*, the couple may go to court if the husband denies that he pronounced the divorce phrase. For *ḵhul'*, the woman can ask her husband directly or through family arbiters, if her husband accepts. The compensation is usually the dowry that he gave or promised to give her at the time of their marriage. If she took it, she will give it back to him or she will leave it to him if she has not already received it. This type of divorce is usually completed with the consent of both parties. If there is no consent, the wife has to go to the court. The condition for *faskh* is different from the above two types of divorces. The wife must go to the court for *faskh* with a reason for the divorce and witnesses for these reasons. Acceptable reasons could include the absence of the husband, mental or other acceptable sickness of the husband, such as leprosy, or the husband's inability to provide for the family. The qadi then dissolves the marriage and the wife keeps the dowry.

The aforementioned types of divorce are further divided as revocable or irrevocable divorces. This means that the couple can remarry if they are interested in getting back together but only according to the situation and the type of divorce they enacted. *Faskh* types of divorce are always irrevocable.¹¹ However, there are conditions under which *ṭalāq* and *ḵhul'* divorces may be revocable. If *ṭalāq* or *ḵhul'* took place more than two times the divorce becomes irrevocable unless additional conditions are fulfilled. A *ḵhul'* and *ṭalāq* divorce that happened once or twice can be revocable either during the three menstrual waiting periods (three months) of the wife or afterwards. If the remarriage is to take place after the waiting period, a new marriage contract with a new dowry must be fulfilled. Divorce after three subsequent divorces are possible if the woman happens to marry and afterwards divorce a second husband or if the second husband is deceased. Only then is remarriage possible for these couples.

This study investigates the frequency of the three Islamic divorce types (*ṭalāq*, *ḵhul'* and *faskh*), the roles of the courts and the "triple divorce" cases

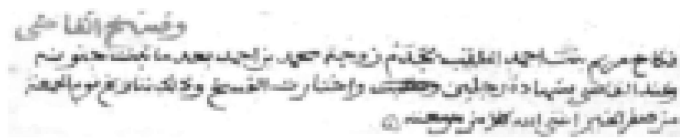
¹⁰ *Mut'ah* is a sum of money or material that the husband gives to the woman he is divorcing in *ṭalāq*. For the Shafi'i school it is a must that the husband makes this present. Al Nawai in his *Minhaj at-Talibin* (2005: 401-402) says if the couple do not agree on the amount the Qadi should decide base on the reality of the husband and the wife. ¹¹ The divorce is irrevocable because there is no chance for this couple to go back to marriage again.

in the ten years of qadi ‘Abd ar-Raḥman Muḥammad’s records and the thirty years of qadi ‘Abd ar-Raḥman ‘Umar Ḥayy’s registrations, which is a total of forty years. The details provided within these documents are very limited. The registrations do not cover details of what happened before the conclusion of the divorces. They simply register the final actions using some terminologies that hint at what type of divorce it was and whose initiative it was. Additional details are rarely given in the cases, which could add to our knowledge of what happened before the action took place. Still, we have enough cases, 340 altogether,¹² to further study them. The divorce cases of the ms. IES 955, which was the court registrations of qadi ‘Abd ar-Raḥman Muḥammad, are already edited and translated from Arabic to English with some annotation (Muna, 2017), but have never been published. Stitz (1975) also made few remarks on the divorce cases of this manuscript. However, this manuscript needs further inquiry as to the overall description of the cases, their classifications, the frequency of each type of the Islamic divorces, and a questioning of their gender distribution. As for the divorce cases in the two registers of the successor of qadi ‘Abd ar-Raḥman Muḥammad, qadi ‘Abd ar-Raḥman ‘Umar Ḥayy, these have thus far never been edited or translated.

1. Sample divorce cases of Qadi ‘Abd ar-Raḥman Muḥammad

Sample case 1 (*faskh*): ms. IES 955, p. 298¹³

Arabic text:



وفسخ القاضي نكاح مريم بنت احمد الملقب بجدم زوجته محمد بن احمد بعدما ثبت جنونه وعند
القاضي بشهادة رجلين واختارت الفسخ وذلك بتاريخ يوم الجمعة من صفر الخير اغنى الله كلا من
سعته

Translation: [1243 H. / 1827-1828] “The qāḍī dissolved the marriage of Maryam bint Aḥmad, nicknamed Jadamu, the wife of Muḥammad b. Aḥmad, after his mental illness is proved by the qāḍī, by two men witnesses. She preferred the termination of the marriage. This is on Friday, in the month of the good *Ṣafar*. May Allāh enrich both from His bounty.”

¹² Though the total number of divorce cases documented in the two manuscripts is 340, 139 for ms. IES 955 and 168 for ms. IES 956, we will only look at the 307 cases dated from the first two qadis. ¹³ The translation with some modification is from Muna, 2017: 349.

Sample case 2 (*faskh*): Ms. IES 955, p. 300¹⁴

Arabic text:

فسخ القاضي نكاح خديجة بنت ملاق بن حاج عمر زوجته ابراهيم عثمان بعدما غاب زوجها وتركها بلا مؤنة ونفقة واثبتت اعساره عند الامير وشهدا رجلين وامر القاضي ان يرفع لها فرفع لها وذلك بتاريخ يوم الاربعاء ٨ بقية من شهر جماد الاولى سنة ١٢٤٣

Translation: “The qāḍī dissolved the marriage of Khadīja bt. Malāq ‘Ali b. Ḥājǧ ‘Umar, the wife of Ibrāhīm ‘Uthmān, after he left her [become absent] and left her without expense and she attested this at [the council of] the Amīr, with two men witnesses. [The Amīr] ordered the qāḍī to dissolve it and he dissolved it. This is on Wednesday; 8 days remained, from the month of Jumāda al-awwal in year 1243.”¹⁵

Sample case 3 (*khul'*): Ms. IES 955, p. 296¹⁶

Arabic text:

لما كان يوم السبت لثلاثة عشر مضت من رجب سنة ١٢٤٤ ابرات فاطمة بنت مولود زوجها عمر اجاز من مهرها وشادر الذي كان لها عليه ديننا على طلاقها فطلقها تطلقها واحدة بين يدي القاضي اغنى كلا من سعته

Translation: “When Saturday has come and 13 days has gone from *Rajab*, in year 1242,¹⁷ Fāṭima bt. Mūlūd freed her husband ‘Umar Ujāz from her dowry and the *shādir*¹⁸ which was a loan on him, in order to divorce her. He divorced her one divorce [pronouncement], in front of the qāḍī. May Allāh enrich both from His bounty.”

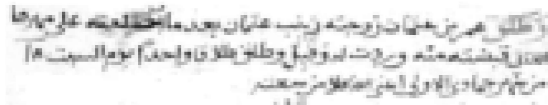
¹⁴ The translation with some modification is taken from Muna, 2017: 351.

¹⁵ I.e. November 12, 1827. ¹⁶ From Muna, 2017: 347. ¹⁷ I.e. February

10, 1827. ¹⁸ Black dress of women worn when they go out veiled.

Sample case 4 (*khul'*): Ms. IES 955, p. 300¹⁹

Arabic text:

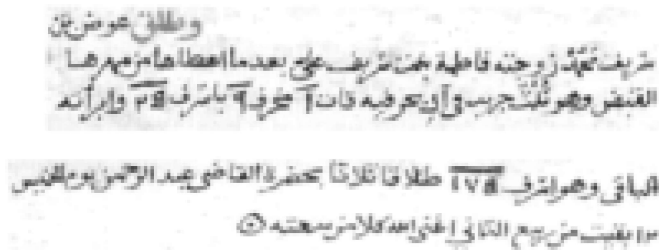


وطلق عمر بن عثمان زوجته زينب عثمان بعدما اخلعته على مهرها الذي قبضته منه ووردت له وقبل وطلق طلاقا واحدا يوم السبت ١٨ من شهر جمادى الاولى اغنى الله كلا من سعته

Translation: “Umar b. ‘Uthmān divorced his wife Zaynab ‘Uthmān after she [*khala athu*] from her dowry, which she received from him and she returned it to him. He accepted and divorced her with one [pronouncement]. [This is] on Saturday, 18 of the month of Jumādā al-awwal [1243 H.].²⁰ May Allāh enrich both from His bounty.”

Sample case 5: Ms. IES 955, p. 299-300²¹

Arabic text:



وطلق عوض بن شريف محمد زوجته فاطمة بنت شريف على بعدما اعطاها من مهرها القبط وهو ثلث جريب في البحر فيه قات ١ مخرف ٩ باشرف ٢٥ وابراته الباقي وهو اشرف ١٧٥ وابطاها ثلاثا بحضور القاضي عبد الرحمن يوم الخميس ١٢ بقية من ربيع الثاني اغنى الله كلا من سعته

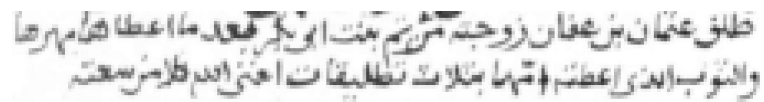
Translation: “Awaḍ b. Sharīf Muḥammad divorced his wife Fāṭuma bt. Sharīf ‘Aliy, after he gave her, the dowry [which he has promised to give at the conclusion of the marriage] which is handing over one third of *jarīb*²² at al-baḥr. It has ١ *qāt* of 9 rows of land, for 25 *ashraf*. And she freed him from the remaining which is 175 *ashraf*. It is three divorces [pronouncements] in the presence of the Qāḍi ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān on Thursday, 12 days remaining from Rabī‘ ath-Thāni [in the year 1243 H.].²³ May Allāh enrich both from His bounty.”

¹⁹ From Muna, 2017: 350. ²⁰ I.e. December 7, 1827. ²¹ From Muna, 2017:

250. ²² A measurement of land. ²³ I.e. November 8, 1827.

Sample case 6 (*ṭalāq*): Ms. IES 955, p. 299²⁴

Arabic text:



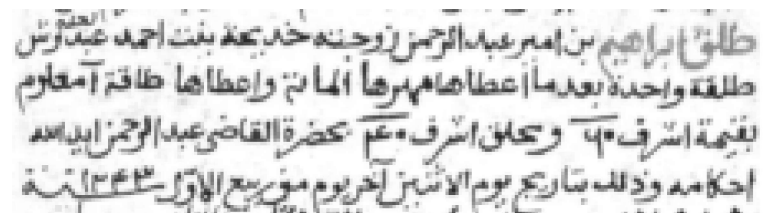
طَلَّقَ عَثْمَانُ بْنُ عَفَّانٍ زَوْجَتَهُ مَرْيَمَ بِنْتَ أَبِي بَكْرٍ بَعْدَ مَا أَعْطَاهَا مَهْرَهَا
وَالثَّوْبَ الَّذِي أَعْطَاهَا بِهَا بِثَلَاثِ تَطْلِيقَاتٍ أَغْنَى اللَّهُ كَلَامَ مِنْ سَعْتِهِ

طلق عثمان بن عفان زوجته مريم بنت ابى بكر بعدما اعطاها مهرها والثوب الذى اعطته امها
بثلاث تطليقات اغنى الله كلا من سعته

Translation: [In the year 1243 H.] “Uthmān b. ‘Affān divorced his wife Maryam bint. Abā Bakr, after he gave her her dowry and the dress that her mother gave him. [This is] with three divorces [pronouncements]. May Allāh enrich both with his bounty.”

Sample case 7 (*ṭalāq*): Ms. IES 955, p. 299²⁵

Arabic text:



طَلَّقَ اِبْرَاهِيمُ بْنُ اَمِيرِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ زَوْجَتَهُ خَدِيجَةَ بِنْتَ اَحْمَدَ بْنِ عَبْدِ اَوْشٍ
طَلَّقَتْهُ وَاحِدَةً بَعْدَ مَا اَعْطَاهَا مَهْرَهَا الْمَائَةَ وَاعْطَاهَا طَاقَةَ اَمْعَلُومِ
بِقِيَمَةِ اَشْرَفِ ٦٠ وَمَحْلُقِ اَشْرَفِ ٤٠ حَضْرَةَ الْقَاضِي عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ اَبِي اَبِي
اِحْكَامِهِ وَذَلِكَ بِتَارِيحِ يَوْمِ الْاِثْنَيْنِ اَخِرِ يَوْمِ رَبِيعِ الْاَوَّلِ سَنَةِ ١٢٤٣

طلق ابراهيم بن امير عبد الرحمن زوجته خديجة بنت احمد بن عبد اوش
المائة واعطاها طاقاة معلوم بقيمة اشرف ٦٠ ومحلوق اشرف ٤٠ بحضور القاضي عبد الرحمن
ايد الله احكامه وذلك بتاريخ يوم الاثنين اخر يوم من ربيع الاول سنة ١٢٤٣

Translation: “Ibrāhīm b. Amīr ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān divorced his wife Khadīja bt. Aḥmad ‘Abdūsh, with one divorce [pronouncement], after he gave her dowry which is hundred. And he gave her 1 ṭāqa, which is known to cost 60 ashraf and 40 maḥalaq. [This is] in the presence of the Qāḍī ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān, may Allāh support his judgement. This is on Monday, the last day of Rabī‘ al-awwal, in year 1243.”²⁶

Sample case 8 (*ṭalāq*): Ms. IES 955, p. 300²⁷

Arabic text:



طَلَّقَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ ابْنِ ابْنِ زَوْجَتِهِ فَاطِمَةَ بِنْتَ عَبْدِ وَشٍ حَضْرَةَ الْقَاضِي بَحْضَرَةَ الْقَاضِي يَوْمِ الثَّلَاثَا مِنْ شَهْرِ جَمَادَى
الْاُولَى اَغْنَى اللَّهُ كَلَامَ مِنْ سَعْتِهِ

طلق عبد الله بن ابون زوجته فاطمة بنت عبدوش بحضور القاضي يوم الثلاثاء من شهر جمادى
الاولى اغنى الله كلا من سعته

²⁴ From Muna, 2017: 349. ²⁵ From Muna, 2017: 350. ²⁶ I.e. October 21,

1827. ²⁷ From Muna, 2017: 350.

Translation: “‘Abd Allāh b. Abūn divorced his wife Fāṭuma bt. ‘Abdūš, in the presence of the Qāḍī on Tuesday, from the month of Ğumādā al-awwalā.²⁸ May Allāh enrich both from His bounty.”

2. Analysis

The wife requested the annulment of the marriage by the qadi in the case of *faskh* divorces. *Faskh* cases consist of 22 out of 139 cases. They are 14.3 % of total divorces that took place in the ten years that the ms. IES 955 document covers. After studying the cases recorded here, we learn that these divorces were not common and this was most likely because the preconditions of this divorce are not easy. To generalize the required preconditions of dissolving marriage, two or more of the following are required:

1. When the husband is absent for some time from home.
2. When the husband does not cover the expenses of the family (while he can afford).
3. When the husband is not capable of providing to the family expenses.
4. Mental illness.
5. When two men, fair individuals, provide witness on the above cases, and this applies for all the cases.

The reason mentioned for each requirement could also be mental illness, which should be supported by witnesses in the council of the Amir or the qadi and as is seen in the sample case 1. The Council of the Amir also sometimes entertained the listening procedure of the *faskh* divorce to the witnesses and gave direction to the qadi for the annulment of the marriage, as both samples 1 and 2 show. This also shows that the *faskh* procedure is not something that is taken lightly by society: unlike in other cases of the court, the highest political organ must be involved in these cases. Wives also initiate *faskh* divorce when their husbands are absent from home without giving the family expenses and if they are unable to afford family expenses. The husband must be absent for a minimum of four years. However, there are cases that do not mention the years that the husband was absent and instead simply state that, “the husband is absent for years.” So, we cannot determine the exact number of years that the absence had to have been before the wife applied for the annulment. It is, however, surely years and not months that the husband had been absent, which can be discerned from the readings of the manuscripts. Moreover, the absence alone is not mentioned as the reason for the annulment. This is instead accompanied by the husband’s failing to provide for the family expenses and his incapability to provide. When we look at the sample case 2 above, the husband was away from home and failed to provide for his family. Thus, there are two reasons that met the conditions of the dissolution of the marriage.

²⁸ I.e. December 1827 or January 1828.

In the ten years included in the record, there are no instances where the wife has applied for the annulment of the marriage and has been denied this application, and thus we do not know if this or other situations existed at the time. We also do not know if there were cases where only one condition was fulfilled and thus the dissolution was denied. For instance, if the husband was absent from home for some years but maintained provisions for the family, would this have been considered sufficient for the annulment of the marriage or the vice-versa: that the husband does not provide for the family but is still with his family? The document provides no mention of such a case. In the case the husband was absent without any trace, it is more obvious that he could not provide for his family. It seems if the husband and wife are together but he is not providing or is not capable of providing for his family, no case of annulment was accepted and the wife may have been forced to request *khul'* divorce if she was not happy with the marriage. Furthermore, it is possible that the wives did not complain if their husbands were present but their husband's income was tight.

Khul' is another form of divorce attested in the manuscript IES 955. This type of cases is registered as *khul'* or *ṭalāq*. We understand they are *khul'* when the main features of *khul'* are observed in the cases; that is the returning back of the dowry that the woman has received or leaving it to him in the cases of a promised dowry. For example, in the sample case 3 the term *khul'* is not mentioned but it involves leaving the promised dowry to the husband. 97 of the total divorce cases (i.e. 69.7%) are of *khul'*. One can observe that the majority of cases mention the wife returning back the dowry she received during the conclusion of marriage or leave the husband the promised dowry. But there are a few cases in which the wife returns back other gifts as well, received during the marriage or frees him from loans he has taken from her.

The *khul'* cases of divorce are categorised as *ṭalāq* 'divorce' because they are performed by the husband; though it is initiated by the wife, the husband has to agree and declare the pronouncement. The only difference in this case is the dowry. If the dowry is paid, the wife has to return it to the husband, and if she has not yet taken the dowry, she leaves it to him. When the divorce takes place by the husband's initiative, the husband must give the dowry if he has not already done so and in some of these cases the husband will return gifts, loans, or other small expenses. Some of the registrations show that the wife received *mut'ah* as well. Moreover, *khul'* and *ṭalāq* seem to have had an additional spirit of negotiation between the two sides. In the documents, we see that when the wife previously took part of the dowry, she was expected to return the remaining, but not all of it, and there were cases where the husband left the loan he had on her in the cases of *khul'*. The sample case 5 describes such a case.

This was probably enacted through the mediation of families. As observed from some of the divorce cases, the cases were first concluded between the family arbiters (*ḥakam*),²⁹ and in such cases the husband and wife came to the court only for the registration of the case and the property. It seems that the conclusions of divorces were completed while taking family as well as society into consideration. Thus, divorce was not only the separation of the family members but also put the economic situation of the family at stake, especially in a society where the majority of the dowry was land, which was the only or at least primary means of subsistence. The dowries given to the wife-to-be from the groom was either money or farmland, which produced the then Harari cash crops, chat (*qat*), and coffee. The land was mostly promised as a family property that would supply the family's means of income. If the husband were to die, the land would be returned to the wife as her property because dowry was traditionally considered a debt and upon the death of the husband, the first issue to be resolved would be to free him from his loan. This is observed in the manuscripts under the inheritance cases. On the other hand, in the case of *ḫhul'*, the wife had to leave the property to the husband, or his family, because the responsibility of family expenses was on the husband according to the Islamic tradition.

Though the manuscripts' recordings do not clearly state this, we can assume that in Harari tradition the maintenance of minor children was the responsibility of the husband. However, we do find hints of this being the cases in two of the *ḫhul'* cases where the wife receives a divorce after she freed the husband from her dowry and took responsibility of covering the expenses of their children. The records do not elsewhere mention maintaining children except in *ḫhul'* where the wife freed the husband from his obligation; this tells us that it was the obligation of the husband to maintain the children within Harari culture.

“We may assume that *ṭalāq*, as the easiest form of divorce, was also the most common, but because divorce by *ṭalāq* was not ordinarily registered in the court, we have no firm idea of its frequency.” (Tucker, 2008: 104) Because *ṭalāq* is a unilateral right of the husband, it is assumed that it is the easiest and also that it does not require the husband to go to the court for its processing. This is true in so far as the couple does not need to go to the court for the property settlement and registration and the husband is not forced to hand over the dowry to the wife, which should be registered in her name. In the case of *ṭalāq* in the documents, the wife at least received the dowry, which was a promised one in Harari culture and a piece of land that was employed as one

²⁹ Quran 4:35 states that if there is a quarrel in the marriage that they should appoint an arbiter (*ḥakam* in the Quranic term) from his family and an arbiter from her family to settle the matter.

of the main sources of income to the family. Likewise, those who received a dowry of 200 or 100 *ashraf*, which was the second largest dowry, received an amount that was not considered a small amount of money for most families at that time (Stitz, 1974).

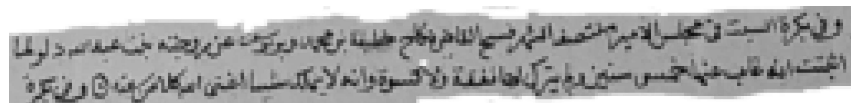
In addition to the dowry, the husband, as observed in the sample case 7, provided an additional sum of money or property to the wife. This additional money is not always observed in the cases, and we do not know the condition in which it was given. This can only be a *mut'ah* compensation. Sample case 6 also shows that the husband had to return properties that were given to him at the time of the marriage contract. This case is similar to the cases of *khul'* divorce where the wife returned the gift she received at her wedding from the husband or his family. However, this is rarely observed within the documents. Thus, we can also assume that the husband did not rush towards initiating divorce.

3. Sample divorce cases of Qadi 'Abd ar-Raḥman 'Umar Ḥayy

Most of the registration of the Qadi 'Abd ar-Raḥman 'Umar Ḥayy court can be found in the ms. IES 956. This covers the period of 1252-1271 H. (1836-1855 A.D.). The total number of divorce cases that are in the manuscript is 201. However, only 168 of them are registered in the period mentioned and by the qadi. The remaining is registered by his son, 'Abd Allah, after he became a qadi. Out of these 168 divorces that occurred and were registered during his thirty years in the qadi office, 81 (48.2%) are *ṭalāq*, 21 (12.5%) are *faskḥ*, and 66 are (39.5%) *khul'*.

Sample case 9 (*faskḥ*): Ms. IES 956, p. 293

Arabic text:



وفي بكرة السبت في مجلس الامير منتصف الشهر فسخ القاضي نكاح خليفة بن محمد وبر يوسف عن زوجته بنت عبد الله دلوا انهم اثبتت انه غاب عنها خمس سنين ولم يترك لها نفقة ولا كسوة وانه لا يملك شيئا اغنى الله كلا من سعته

Translation: “In the early morning of Saturday, in the middle of the month [of Muḥarram, 1258],³⁰ at the council of the Amir, the qadi dissolved the marriage of Khalifa b. Muḥammad Wabar Yūsuf to his wife, the daughter of 'Abd Allah Dalū, when she has attested that he left her for five years without providing family expenses (of food) and clothing and he does not have anything. May Allah enrich both from His bounty.”

³⁰ I.e. end of February – beginning of March 1842.

Analysis: Like qadi ‘Abd ar-Raḥman Muḥammad, qadi ‘Abd ar-Raḥman ‘Umar Ḥayy also applied the same conditions for the granting of *faskḥ* divorces. We see in sample case 9 that the wife had to bring witnesses to the council of the Amir to provide testament that her husband left her without family expenses for five years. After this testimony, the qadi ended her marriage. Similarly, the qadi also dissolved marriages when the wife attested that her husband was mentally ill. However, in many instances qadi ‘Abd ar-Raḥman ‘Umar registered the *faskḥ* without mentioning the reason for the divorce. This is most likely because it was too obvious to record. This manuscript also shows that in general, this qadi gave shorter descriptions than qadi ‘Abd ar-Raḥman Muḥammad.

Sample case 10 (*ḳhul*): Ms. IES 956, p. 290

Arabic text:

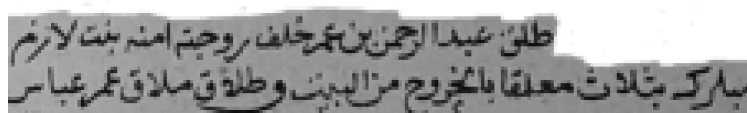


طلق محمد فاتح حراز زوجته بنت المحن بواحدة بخلع اغنى الله كلا من سعته

Translation: [“In this month, in the 8th of Muḥarram 1254]³¹ Muḥammad Fātiḥ Ḥarāz divorced his wife the daughter of al-Miḥan, with one by *ḳhul*. May Allah enrich both from His bounty.”

Sample case 11 (*ṭalāq*): Ms. IES 956, p. 287

Arabic text:



طلق عبد الرحمن عمر خلف زوجته امينه بنت لازم مبارك ثلاثا معلقا بالخروج من البيت

Translation: “‘Abd ar-Raḥman b. ‘Umar Khalaf divorced his wife Aminah bt. Lāzim Mubārak with three [pronouncements], with *mu‘alaq* [her marriage was suspended] and she was out of the house [already not living together].”

Analysis: *Ṭalāq* cases here are similar except Qādī ‘Abd ar-Raḥman ‘Umar Ḥayy provided us with additional information by referring to terms like *mu‘alaq*. These are terms that we do not find in ms. IES 955. For example, sample case 11 shows us that the wife was already separated from the husband without the divorce conditions being fulfilled for some time. That is what *mu‘alaq* means, to be married, but only officially.

³¹ I.e. April 3, 1838.

4. The role of the qadi under Harari divorce court cases

In examining the Harari registered court cases, we can come to the conclusion that divorces took place on several levels: the level of only the husband, the level of the husband and the wife, the family mediators, the qadi, and the Amir of the city state. For the divorce to be effectuated in normal circumstances there was no need of the qadi's involvement, except in the case of *faskh*. The qadi was the only authority in this regard. Even when the Amir himself listened to the wife's argument, he directed the qadi to take action in the dissolution of the marriage. Moreover, the qadi was also responsible for ending the other forms of divorces in cases of disagreements.

In *ṭalāq* cases, we observe cases where the husband pronounced the divorce phrases and subsequently denies doing so. The woman then came to the court to attest his pronouncement and confirm the divorce. We observe two cases where the mediators brought this to the attention of the qadi and provided confirmation. The qadi and the Amir also ended quarrelsome marriages in both in *khul'* and *ṭalāq* divorces. In one case, the husband was ordered to divorce, end the quarrelsome marriage, and return the dowry to the wife. In another, the husband was ordered to divorce his wife and the wife to return the dowry to him in order to end the 'quarrelsome' marriage. However, these cases do not mention the reason why they were ended in a different divorce type, *khul'* rather than *ṭalāq* or vice-versa. We can assume from these cases that the court was considerate of situations that the registration does not share with us and likely based their decisions on those details. Thus, we can conclude that if the divorce did not end at the level of family or the couple themselves, it was the responsibility of the qadi and even the Amir to interfere. This is especially in cases that favoured the case of the wife. Because divorce was the responsibility of the husband and in the case where the husband refused to agree for divorcing his wife, there was a chance that the wife could fulfil the divorce without fulfilling the conditions of *faskh* while also maintaining a chance of keeping the dowry. Here, the wife did not have to negotiate the return of the dowry if it was the husband who was the trouble-maker.

Beyond the aforementioned cases, we can observe cases that came to the qadi's court out of a necessity for divorce. For instance, a husband could divorce his wife without coming to the court, but we see that there were husbands coming to the court and divorcing in front of the qadi. There are also similar incidents in *khul'*. This shows that the purpose of the court was not only for divorce but there were additional services of the court that the society benefitted from.

Thus, one of the main roles of the court was registration. People needed to ensure the registration of the divorce and the property involved. The handing over of the dowry money and land needed to be registered. The registration and ownership of the land, which was the major form of dowry at that time,

needed to be clearly recorded in writing. This is why families needed to come to the court after the divorce had already occurred.

4.1. Types of Divorce

Table 1. Comparative Description of divorce cases of the two qadis.

Name of the qadi and ms. call. no	period	no of divorce	no of <i>khul'</i>	no of <i>talāq</i>	no of <i>faskh</i>	dowry or part of dowry compensation	dowry plus additional compensation	three pronouncements of divorce	one pronouncement of divorce
qadi 'Abd ar-Rahman Muḥammad Ms. IES 955	1242-1252	139	97 69.7%	22 15.8%	20 14.3%	76 78.3%	20 20.6%	34 28.5%	85 71.4%
qadi 'Abd ar-Rahman 'Umar Ms. IES 956	1252-1283	168	66 39.5%	81 48.2%	21 12.5%	52 78.7%	14 21.2%	81 48.2%	65 44.3%

The above table outlines the divorce cases and their types in general and compares them between the two qadis. When we compare the number of divorces that occurred in each qadi's time compared to the years that they served, we can clearly see that the number of divorce cases declined. If we simply calculate the number of years, the number of cases registered in ms. IES 955 was 13.9 annual cases of divorce whereas in ms. IES 956, registered by qadi 'Abd ar-Rahman b. 'Umar, it was 5.4 cases of divorce annually. We can safely assume that divorces declined by half. This may have been for different reasons. One of the factors could have been the qadi himself. For instance, there were no *faskh* registered after qadi 'Abd ar-Rahman 'Umar came into office and for six years after he began his role. And, *faskh* was handled by the qadi alone, so there was no chance that it could have occurred elsewhere like other forms of divorce. Why wives who came to the court for *faskh* has disappeared for six years in the records after the installation of a new qadi is an interesting inquiry. For *khul'* and *talāq*, there might have been a chance that the couple declined coming to the court for only the registration of the divorce and thus their divorce could have been concluded outside of the court as far as the religious requirements were concerned. It is also possible that there were socioeconomic factors that led to the decline of the divorces that took place at that time, but this merits further inquiry.

The other very interesting point we notice in these documents is the number of *khul'* divorces that were registered between the two qadis. Qadi 'Abd ar-Rahman Muḥammad's *khul'* cases, when we put it in percentage compared to the total number of divorces was 69.7%. This percentage declined to 39.5% in the cases of qadi 'Abd ar-Rahman 'Umar. The *ṭalāq* cases for both court registrations were 15.8% and 48.2% respectively. The difference shows a decrease between qadi 'Abd ar-Rahman 'Umar's *ṭalāq* and *khul'* cases. In this case, the number of *ṭalāq* and *khul'* are not as prevalent as the ms. IES 955 of qadi 'Abd ar-Rahman Muḥammad. Therefore, the question is why is the *khul'* cases were more common than the *ṭalāq* cases in these periods.

The answer for this could be twofold. First, men in Islamic tradition do not need to come to the court. If we take Tucker's (2008: 104) reasoning that *ṭalāq* is the 'easiest' and 'not ordinarily registered' as mentioned earlier in this paper, the divorce cases here are much more than we observe, and more than half of the *ṭalāq* were not registered. This might not be the case, since we do not have a lot of divorces among the community according to oral as well as written sources, as mentioned earlier in this study, and assuming double the number of divorces already observed in the document would be out of the question. Additionally we know from the document that couples went to the qadi for the sake of divorce registration besides the need for the registration of ownership of the land which was given mostly as a dowry. For instance, in *khul'* cases, it is clear from the document that the divorce was completed before the case coming to the court and we see the couple getting registered though they did not need to go to the court. So, a large difference in prevalence is not expected.

Second, the opinion of Stitz (1975) who produced a paper on the same *dīwān* manuscripts, mentions that the husbands were 'patients' when he talks about why the number of divorces was low in Harar at the time. This could be true not only because the husband could feel responsible spiritually, but also because whenever a husband rushed into proclaiming the divorce phrases by initiating the divorce himself, he would lose the land and thus carried different financial burdens. However, this does not mean that the wives were impatient and the number of *khul'* might not necessarily show a big number of woman who initiate divorce. We identify some of the registered cases as *khul'* because of the returning of dowry by the wife, and we know divorce among the community was determined on different levels. Much litigation is not observed in the cases and this indicates that the divorces might have already been completed before the couple in question came to the court.

This means arbiters from both families joined the divorce settlement and a lot of negotiation must have taken not only the divorce to take place but also to whom the dowry goes. Especially the involvement of the families of both sides will have a close and fair decision rather than the couple (or family

members) who initiated the divorce probably with a lot of disagreement. The problem of the divorce might not necessarily have been the fault of one or the other partner, but rather the fault of their mismatched nature. Then, the divorce should not result in the economic disadvantage of one or the other. This divorce would be mitigated by people who knew the situation and the relatives of both parties well. After all, it was the Harari culture to give the bride farmlands as dowry, not the religion. With all these returning of the dowry settlements, still the 20th century Harari lands 75% were believed to have been owned by the women (Gibb, 1992: 242). Moreover, we know, in classical Islamic law, there are ways a *ṭalāq* type of divorce could also be ended by the husband receiving some compensation if the wife agreed (Sherbiny, 1997: 360). Thus, qadi ‘Abd ar-Raḥman Muḥammad’s court’s high number of *ḵhul’* has more reasons than the conclusion that woman in his period used to have initiated divorce more. In other words the divorce we considered as *ḵhul’* might not be *ḵhul’*.

4.2. The type of compensation

The registrations of both qadis show that the compensation that the wives gave to their husbands was overwhelmingly the dowry itself – even if its total value was a little less or a little more than its original. There are also cases where they gave part of the dowry. Other cases show that the wife returned gifts presented to them by the groom or his family at the wedding. There is also an exceptional incident where the wives took charge of covering the expenses of the children which was normally the responsibility of the husbands. The norm in *ḵhul’* divorces seems to have been returning the dowry. This is very different from the contemporary practice of the Sharia courts in the country. According to the president of the Federal Sharia Supreme Court (Kulsma, 2021: 53-54), a wife who comes to the court for a *ḵhul’* must compensate her husband with what he asks. He said: “The husband can state the amount of compensation he wants and then if she pays then she will get her divorce.” According to him, “Some husbands may ask 5,000 birr or 100,000 birr.” Regarding the role of the court in limited the amount, he said, “the court doesn’t have a limit as to the amount he may ask but of course it wouldn’t be fair if he asks her to pay 100,000 birr where she has no source of income.” When we compare the Harari practice to the contemporary statement made by the higher official of the Islamic court, we can conclude that divorce was simpler and more predictable during the time of the qadis mentioned in this article.

Compensation that was supposed to be given by the husband to the wife he was divorcing is mentioned very rarely in the manuscripts. In most of the cases it is not registered. When it is registered, the specific term for the most part does not appear. We simply observe the divorced women receiving

additional presents which were not dowries, loans, or gifts at weddings. *Mut'ah* is expected to be obligatory in a court that applies the Shafi'i school of thought.

4.3. *Triple divorce*

Triple divorce, as mentioned earlier, is not something common within Islam. It is an instant pronouncement of the triple divorce phrase by the husband instead of the divorce happening at three different times, both for *khul'* and *talāq* cases, which then makes the divorce irrevocable. The manuscripts mention the number of divorces as one or three to each case, or they do not mention the number at all. Those cases without numbers are most likely less than three because if there were triple divorces, mentioning it would make the divorces irrevocable. We find multiple divorces in both manuscripts, and in ms. IES 956 we find only one case that mentions 'two' divorces. However, it is not clear whether they were pronounced at once or happened at different times. It is most likely that the qadis registered them as three divorces regardless of the specific situations as both divorces become irrevocable at their conclusion. There is no observable hint that could differentiate the situations in the registrations.

Conclusion

The main purpose of the Harari divorce registration was to record the final action(s) of the divorce as well as any transfer of property between parties that occurred as a result of the type of divorce granted. As a result, we do not know the detailed procedures of the divorce, and we do not know much about other divorce related matters, such as of children maintenance and custody. These details are most likely left out because they are known to the parties as well as culturally allocated and thus there was no need to register the norms of the time.

Although the scope of the registration is limited, it still provides us with ample information. Divorces took place on individual, couple, family arbiter, or court levels. With these, we cannot precisely describe their frequency, but we know the types of the Islamic divorces and the ways they were applied amongst the Harari. The Harari have practiced Islam for centuries and there are consistent norms they seem to follow. *Talāq*, *khul'* and *faskh* emerge within the 19th century Harari documentation with their own trends that occurred immediately before the Egyptian conquest period and for forty-one years within two qadis' court records. Basically, for *talāq*, the husband handed over the dowry, which was mainly a promised one from the groom to the bride made at the conclusion of the marriage and paid some presents of *mut'ah* in some of the cases. For *khul'*, the husband took back the dowry, which was fixed in Harar: the land, in majority of cases, or the 100 or 200 *Ashraf*. *Faskh* was handled by the qadi with the involvement of the Amir, and mainly for women

who fulfilled the conditions set by the court, which was also very limited in occurrences in the document.

Comparatively speaking, the main difference between the 10 year span of registrations of qadi ‘Abd ar-Raḥman Muḥammad’s and the thirty year span of registrations of qadi ‘Abd ar-Raḥman ‘Umar’s is the number of *ḳhul’* or the divorces that are normally considered to be initiated by the wife and the number of *ṭalāq* or divorces that are initiated by the husband. For the first qadi, *ḳhul’* occurred 69.7% of the time and *ṭalāq* 48.2% of the time while for qadi ‘Abd ar-Raḥman ‘Umar, *ḳhul’* occurred 39.5% of the time and *ṭalāq* 15.8% of the time. For the second qadi, the numbers were somehow balanced. The divorce case that involved the returning of the dowry was very common and it might not be a proper *ḳhul’* that was initiated by woman. However, some women have to lose the land through the negotiation process of the divorce settlement. This might be the Harari culture of giving a dowry of land to the wife at the conclusion of the marriage and getting it back to the husband at the divorce even if it is not initiated by her. The dowry was mostly farming land and the divorce may have passed through a process of balancing to the community cultural norms.

The other difference that is discernable between the two qadis’ registrations is the declining number of divorces. Divorces in general, and *ḳhul’* cases in particular, went down during the second qadi, qadi ‘Abd ar-Raḥman ‘Umar. The declining of Harari divorce from what is visible in the registration, to know whether it is due to the lack of registration of the cases or has something to do with the socio-economic situations that led to the decline, it merits further study.

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When a quest for modernization meets French imperialist aspiration: The circumstances surrounding the establishment of the St. Anthony Leprosarium and the Ras Mäk^wännən Hospital in Harar (1901-1906)

Abstract

At the end of the 19th century, the Ethiopian state sought to become involved in the field of healthcare in order to fight against epidemics and to appear on the international scene as a “modern” and therefore powerful country. In 1898, the first hospital foundation in Addis Ababa emerged as a major health innovation that inaugurated the establishment of a public health system in Ethiopia. Following this Russian sponsored initiative, the healthcare field became a major stake for European powers who were driven to compete against each other in offering their cooperation in attempts to engender their influence in the country. If historians have pointed out the rivalries in the medical field between France, Great Britain, Italy, and Russia in Addis Ababa, work remains to be done for influences in Harar. In this Muslim city, which has formally been a part of Ethiopia since 1887, Governor Ras Mäk^wännən of Harar was as modernizing as Emperor Mənilək II in the capital in his support of the construction of two French projects. Indeed, in 1901, the French Capuchins built the country’s first leprosarium and Dr. Vitalien built the country’s second hospital in Harar. This article looks back at this contribution to the health care system and questions, while taking into account French diplomatic and missionary archives, the way in which France sought to respond to the “progressive” project of Mənilək. In the first and second parts of

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this article, I analyze what France expected from the Ras Mäkwännən hospital and the St. Anthony leprosarium. I then move on to examine the limits of the French investment in the health sector in Harar.

Keywords: Ethiopia, Missionary, Leprosy, Leprosarium, Medicine, epidemic, hospital, 20th century

Résumé

À la fin du XIX^e siècle, l'État éthiopien cherche à s'impliquer dans le domaine de la santé pour à la fois lutter contre les épidémies et apparaître sur la scène internationale comme un pays "moderne" donc puissant. En 1898, la fondation d'un premier hôpital à Addis-Abeba surgit comme une innovation sanitaire majeure qui inaugure la mise en place d'un système de santé public en Éthiopie. À la suite de cette initiative russe, le secteur sanitaire devient un lieu concurrentiel où les puissances européennes cherchent à offrir leur coopération pour déployer leur influence dans le pays. Si les historiens ont pointé les rivalités dans le domaine médical entre la France, la Grande-Bretagne, l'Italie et la Russie à Addis-Abeba, un travail reste à être mené pour Harar. Dans cette cité musulmane, éthiopienne depuis 1887, le gouverneur Ras Mäkwännən se montre aussi modernisateur que l'empereur Ménélik II dans sa capitale. En 1901, il soutient notamment la construction de deux projets portés par des Français : la léproserie St-Antoine (la première du pays) et l'hôpital Ras Mäkwännən (le second du pays), respectivement dirigés par les Capucins et le Dr. Vitalien. Cet article revient sur cette installation et interroge, au regard des archives diplomatiques et missionnaires françaises, la manière dont la France cherche à répondre au projet "progressiste" de Ménélik. Dans les deux premières parties de l'article, nous analysons les attentes de la France vis-à-vis de la léproserie et de l'hôpital. Dans la troisième, nous pointons les limites de l'investissement français dans le secteur sanitaire à Harar.

Mots-clés : Éthiopie, missionnaire, lèpre, léproserie, médecine, épidémie, hôpital, XX^e siècle

Introduction

Long before the introduction of "modern" medicine in Ethiopia, the country had a heterogeneous system of medical knowledge, therapists, and a remarkably extensive local pharmacopeia (Pankhurst, 1990; Slikkerveer, 1990; Mesfin Tadesse & Sebsebe Demissew, 1992; Dawit Abebe & Ahadu Ayehu, 1993; Vecchiato, 1993; Abbink, 1995; Hareya Fassil, 2003). Still, as Richard Pankhurst shows, this did not prevent Ethiopian leaders from being interested in foreign medicine and its doctors (Pankhurst, 1990). Yet, in Ethiopia it is religion rather than politics that provides the answers to the ill. Before the 19th century, state intervention in the medical field was very sporadic. I was able to identify two examples. The first appears in James C. McCann's study

of malaria in Ethiopia. He reports that in the 17th century, Emperor Susneyos moved the capital to higher grounds, to Gondar, in part to avoid the malarial fevers of Lake Tana (McCann, 2014: 15). The second example appears in Marie-Laure Derat's article on the plague's occurrence in the Horn of Africa during the medieval period. She reports that in the 15th century, King Zār'ā Ya'eqob (r. 1434-1468) issued a royal edict that forced the population to bury their dead following a likely plague epidemic (Derat, 2018: 14-15). Before the 19th century, the spread of some diseases prompted some Ethiopian leaders to intervene. However, it was not before Mənilək came to power that a public health system was intentionally set up in Ethiopia. Drawing upon European medical knowledge and skills, Mənilək promoted a state system that aimed to control the population by regulating mortality, birth, and morbidity rates.

At the end of the 19th century, the Ethiopian state's involvement in healthcare emerged within two particular contexts: the fight against epidemics and the rise of the imperialists. On the one hand, Mənilək II sought to control diseases such as smallpox, plague, and cholera to prevent them from decimating his armies.¹ On the other hand, the use of Western medicine also reflects Mənilək's desire to appear on the international scene as a "modern" and, therefore, powerful country. By opening his country up to the knowledge and practices of foreigners, the aim was to stand up to the colonial powers, namely France, Great Britain, and Italy, on border.

From Mənilək's perspective, the knowledge and techniques borrowed from Europe were meant to serve rather than enslave the Ethiopian state. Knowing that Great Britain, France, Italy, and Russia were trying to exert their influence in Ethiopia, he sought to engender European competition to circumvent any one country's grasping of power upon Ethiopia. Thanks to Richard Pankhurst's article, which lists the foreigners who came to Ethiopia during Mənilək's reign, we can clearly see the diversity of international actors who were involved in the "progressive" policies of the Ethiopian state (Pankhurst, 1967: 29-86). More recently, Ahmed Omer Hassen has further demonstrated how Mənilək instrumentalized European competition to build a modern state (2020: 145-152).

In 1898, the first hospital in Addis Ababa inaugurated the development of a rudimentary health system in Ethiopia (Rosenfeld, 1978: 12; Pankhurst, 1990: 170; Berhan, 2013: 19). The initiative was sponsored and undertaken

¹ In the nineteenth century, smallpox and cholera were among the most serious epidemics that Ethiopia suffered (Pankhurst, 1990: 24-26 and 32-37). Although the technique of variolization was introduced during the reign of Tewodros II (r. 1855-1868), it was not until the outbreak of 1896-1898 that the largest vaccination campaign was undertaken among the civilians and military populations (Mérab, 1912: 52-54). Also, the rinderpest epidemic of 1888 caused severe famine and depopulation in Northern Ethiopia, which probably made it easier for the Italians to take over the Eritrean region (Rubenson, 1991: 71-96). See also Marcus (1995: 135, 145).

by the Russian Red Cross who sent a medical team in 1896, following the Battle of Adwa, to assist the Ethiopians who had just won the war against Italy (Pankhurst, 1990: 170; Chowdhury, 2016: 116). According to Pankhurst, Russian humanitarian involvement is as much admired as it creates hostility amongst foreign powers, who in response integrate medicine into their diplomatic activities (Pankhurst, 1990: 173). Doctors Castro, Rousseau, Steinkuhler, and medical officer W.A.M. Wakeman settled in the Italian, French, German, and British legations, respectively (Castro, 1915: 364, 522; Mérab, 1922: 43, 63, 101; Pankhurst, 1965: 129-130; Pankhurst, 1990: 173-174). In 1898, the French authorities also sent a medical mission to Ethiopia under the direction of Dr. Wurtz, who was head of the laboratory of experimental pathology in Paris. The Italians, for their part, founded a clinic in the legation compound in 1901 under the direction of Dr. Domenico Brielli (Pankhurst, 1990: 173-174). During this period, the health domain had thus become a competitive arena where Italy, France, Germany, and Britain sought to offer their cooperation to get closer to Ethiopian power.

These rivalries between powers were not only observed in the capital but also in Harar. In this city, *Ras Mäk^wännən* (r. 1887-1906) was just as “progressive” as *Mənilək* in that he supported the construction of a leprosarium (the first in the country) and a hospital (the second in the country). The town, which had about 40,000 inhabitants at the beginning of the 20th century, was home to more than 350 Europeans, including many French people (Azaïs & Chambard, 1931: 8). They were mainly traders and entrepreneurs who had opened shops, import agencies, or companies to trade between the Horn of Africa, Europe, and Asia. But, there were also Catholic missionaries who had settled in the city since 1881 in order to spread the message of the Gospel to the “pagan” and Muslim populations that inhabited the region.² Between 1901 and 1902, it was the latter who built the leprosarium near the city, while one of their compatriots, a French doctor of Guadeloupean origin, Joseph Vitalien, set up and administered the hospital in the center of the city.

From a historiographical point of view, the action of this doctor in Harar has not yet given rise to any specific research. Historians have mainly focused on his involvement in Addis Ababa where he placed himself at the service of *Mənilək* from 1904 and where he directed a hospital from 1908 (Rosenfeld, 1978: 14-25; Prouty, 1986: 283-284, 292; Pankhurst, 1990: 185; Sohier, 2011: 3-4; Imbert-Vier, 2011: 168). Some works mention that he was involved in the education of *Ras Mäk^wännən*’s son, *Täfäri* (later *Haylä Šällase I*), in Harar

² In general, to distinguish the local population of Harar, the French use the following nomenclature: “Harari” (Muslims), “Abyssinians” (orthodox Christians), “Somalis” (Muslims) and “Gallas” (pagans converted to Islam).

(Marcus, 1995: 3-4). Others refer to the doctor when discussing the issue of Pan-Africanism in Ethiopia. While Vitalien's skin colour (black because of his Guadeloupean origin) may have played a role in his integration into the Ethiopian court, it also drew racial criticism from the European community (Prouty, 1986: 283; Lara, 2000: 185; Bonacci, 2008: 103). Recently, a biography on Joseph Vitalien has been published (Pinel, 2020). However, the work of Benoît Pinel should be treated with great caution. Only journalistic sources are referenced in this book, whereas the author quotes several exchanges of diplomatic correspondence and testimonies of the doctor. This is particularly the case when he talks about the *Ras Mäk^wännən* hospital in Harar (Pinel, 2020: 81-84). The same applies to the bibliographical references, which are not indicated in the body of the text but only mentioned at the end of the book. Lukian Prijac also wrote an article for the *Encyclopedia Aethiopica* (2010) on the life of this French doctor. He is conducting more detailed research on this doctor, and it is hoped that it will be published in the coming years.

St. Anthony's leprosarium has attracted the attention of historians such as Richard Pankhurst (1984: 57-72) and Mesele Terecha (2005, 2017). The fact is that in their general interest in the history of leprosy in Ethiopia, they could not ignore the establishment of the first leprosarium in the country. However, the settlement is not the main focus of their interest. Pankhurst uses mainly travelers' accounts to understand how leprosy was perceived in Ethiopia before the Italian invasion. Mesele Terecha, on the other hand, seeks to reveal the socio-religious and political considerations of Ethiopian Christians about leprosy and how the fight against the disease was organized in the 20th century. For his study, he particularly considered Ethiopian church sources as well as the chronicles of Ethiopian leaders, travelers' accounts, and the local archives of various humanitarian organizations. On St. Anthony's leprosarium, he quotes some articles from the *Semeur d'Éthiopie* (the magazine published by the Capuchins of Harar between 1906 and 1911) and from Dr. Féron (the doctor who arrived at the leprosarium in 1930), but he relies mainly on the booklet coordinated by Abba Ayele Teclehymanot (1981) and the thesis work of Abba Antonios (1998). The latter two authors both belong to the Franciscan Capuchin congregation. Their history of St. Anthony's leprosarium is more narrative and apologetic than analytical.

The work of Abba Antonios differs from that of Abba Ayele Teclehymanot in scientific terms. In the booklet, which was typed but not published and that celebrates *100 years of the Catholic Mission of Harar*, Abba Ayele Teclehymanot gathers several confreres to retrace the history of the mission. But they do not always quote their sources. We can see evidence of lack of sources in Father Roland's article devoted to the leprosarium of St. Anthony (Täklä Haymanot, 1981: 16-17). In contrast, Abba Antonios, who studied history at the Gregorian Faculty in Rome in the 1990s, masters the methodology imposed

by the discipline. He references his sources based on the general archives of the Capuchin order, those of the Propaganda Fide, the secret archives of the Vatican, and those of the French Foreign Ministry. Therefore, his work offers a more relevant study.

This article does not retrace the history of the Catholic mission in Harar (as Abba Antonios and Abba Ayele Teclehymanot have done), nor that of leprosy in Ethiopia (as Pankhurst and Mesele Terecha have done). Rather, by using both French missionary and French diplomatic sources, it seeks to understand what France's involvement was in the medical field in Harar by starting with a study of the circumstances surrounding the establishment of a leprosarium and hospital in Harar. Yet, the story of French medicine in Ethiopia remains untold. No clear link has thus far been made between the two facilities even though they were built at the same time and in the same town. In line with Rashed Chowdhury (2016), who examined Russian involvement in the health sector during the reign of Mənilək II, this article also questions the role of France in the medical field.

In methodological terms, the reports sent to the French Government by Doctor Vitalien, along with the diplomatic letters between Doctor Vitalien, the Plenipotentiary³ Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Colonies, and Djibouti's governor, are our primary sources of analysis. Missionary sources, in turn, consist of annual reports on the mission addressed to the *Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*⁴ or articles published in the Catholic press. This documentation is exclusively published in French. The Ethiopian archives (those of the Guebbi in Addis Ababa and those of the city of Harar) will undoubtedly provide perspective on the study I am presenting here. Let us hope that one day the Ethiopian government will agree to allow access to its archives to the public. For now, I am simply opening a line of research: to apprehend the history of Franco-Ethiopian relations through the lens of medical action. The analysis starts in 1901, when Vitalien and the French Capuchins initiated their projects in Harar. It ends in 1906, when *Ras Mäk^wännən*, the man who supported the installation of these two establishments, dies. In the first and second part of this article I analyze what France expected from the *Ras Mäk^wännən* hospital and the St. Anthony leprosarium. Then, I point to the limits of the French investment in the health sector in Harar.

³ This term refers to the official French representative in Ethiopia, later known as the French ambassador. ⁴ The "Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi" is a Catholic association based in Lyon (France) and engaged in the missionary effort since 1822.

1. A hospital to spread French influence in Ethiopia

In the mid-19th century, France took possession of a portion of land and sea in the Gulf of Tadjoura. However, it was not until the 1880s that it established this area as a colony from Obock. The zone of French influence, which extended from Loyada to Douméra, was then entrusted to Governor Léonce Lagarde, who sought to unite Obock with Šäwa to create “[...] a vast colony, almost an empire on the coast” (Prijac, 2012: 100). The railway project, which was supposed to link the Red Sea coast to the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, was intended to strengthen economic relations between France and Ethiopia (Shiferaw Bekele, 1982; Van Gleder de Pineda, 1995). Work began in 1896, not in Obock but in Djibouti, a port city located at the southern mouth of the Gulf of Tadjoura. Because of its more favourable economic conditions, this city became the new capital of the French Somali Coast (Imbert-Vier, 2011: 136).

Initially, the *Imperial Ethiopian Railway Company*, who oversaw the work, planned to run the railway through Harar,⁵ which had a much milder climate than Djibouti where the temperature averaged 36°-40° four to five months a year. In addition to facilitating the import and export of goods, the stopover in this merchant city was meant to allow French nationals posted in Djibouti to recharge their batteries. Sylvain Vignéras, editor at the Ministry of Colonies, and Gabriel Angoulvant, Secretary-General of the Colonies, supported this argument when they published their monograph on the French Somali Coast in 1902:

Harrar, situated about 300 kilometers from the coast, enjoys a delightful climate; the average temperature is 18°22 and the sky, in general, is very pure; the air one breathes there is lively and particularly salubrious. Its plateau would be ideal for establishing a sanatorium: via Addis-Harrar, the first terminus of the railway line, the Europeans of Djibouti could, in a few hours' journeys, go there to rest from the fatigue of the summer and taste a little freshness. In addition, convalescents from the hospital (passengers disembarking from liners, soldiers repatriated from the Far East and Madagascar) would quickly complete their recovery. Finally, by improving the living conditions of the colony, this creation would perhaps increase the length of stay of civil servants in Djibouti. (Angoulvant & Vignéras, 1902: 194-195)

These two French officials argued that Harar should become a rear base for Djibouti, and this is why they supported the installation of a sanatorium in this city.

In this perspective, Dr. Vitalien, who had been working since 1899 in the medical service of the *Imperial Ethiopian Railway Company*, proposed to

⁵ Faced with technical difficulties, the Company did not manage to reach Harar. It created the town of Dirre-Dawa, which became the terminal of the line from 1902 to 1912.

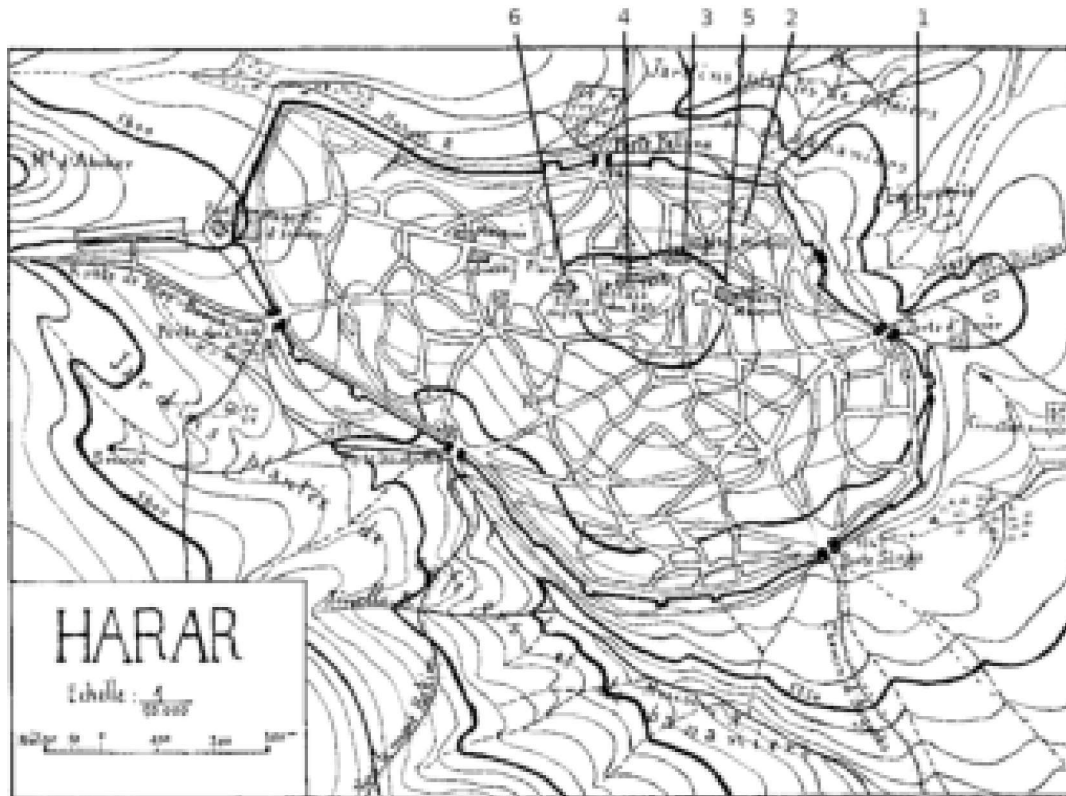
establish a medical mission in Harar to the French administration. Three buildings were included in Dr. Vitalien's project: 1) a sanatorium for the French in Djibouti to "recharge their batteries", 2) a hospital to treat and train Ethiopians, and 3) a leprosarium to control leprosy and conduct clinical and bacteriological research on the disease (MFA, nd).

Both the French Ministries of Colonies and Foreign Affairs offices approved of Vitalien's program and agreed to finance it, supplying him respectively with 5 thousand and 2,5 thousand francs (MFA, 1901; MFA, 1902a). Vitalien also reported that Mäk^wännən subsidized his installation (without specifying how much) and that he provided two separate spaces: one for the hospital and the other for the leprosarium (MFA, 1902b). For reasons yet to be determined, the sanatorium was never built. Only the other two establishments took their place in Harar's urban landscape.

Vitalien began his medical mission in January 1902. The first activity report he sent at the end of the year to the Ministry of Colonies gives an overview of the work he carried out in Harar (MFA, 1902b). According to this report, the doctor divided his day into two parts. Every morning, he conducted consultations in a house provided by the governor of Harar where he had opened a polyclinic. In the afternoons, he visited the homes of local people who requested his services.

The installation of a polyclinic was a preliminary step in the establishment of French medical service. In order to perpetuate its activities, Vitalien asked *Ras* Mäk^wännən if he could build of a hospital with around twenty beds. His 1902 report indicates that work began on this hospital at the end of the year in the heart of the town, on the site of the old Egyptian barracks. The site was described as "vast, well ventilated and occupying the highest part of the town" (MFA, 1902b). In this respect, it is interesting to note that in the French colonies, a spatial hierarchy was established at the level of health establishments. The most modern hospital was generally located on the ventilated highlands, where the settlers are, while the buildings in charge of infectious diseases were built on the margins of the settlements. The anthropologist Anne Bargès, who works on leprosy in Mali, has also shown this pattern exists in the city of Bamako (Bargès, 1995).

In Harar, a similar hierarchy seems to have emerged. However, it was not the result of colonial power but of local Ethiopian power. According to Dr. Vitalien, it was *Ras* Mäk^wännən who chose the location of the two French sanitary buildings (MFA, 1905a: 1). The hospital was thus built inside the walls, in the upper part of the city, while the leprosarium was built outside the city, near the eastern gate. The map below shows the location of these two structures in relation to the other religious and political buildings of importance in the city, namely the main mosque and the Ethiopian church as well as the Guebbi and the *Ras* Palace.



- 1 - St-Anthony leprosarium
- 2 - Catholic mission headquarters (since 1881)
- 3 - Ras Mekonnen hospital (which became the french hospital in 1907)
- 4 - Ras Mekonnen palace
- 5 - Harar's main mosque
- 6 - Ethiopian church of Medhane Alem (built in 1906)

Figure 1. Spatialization of administrative, religious, and health buildings in Harar in the early 20th century. Source: Gäbrä Šöllase Wäldä Aragay, 1930, map n°3.

In a letter to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vitalien attached the following two photographs to present the hospital.

Architectural designs decorated the facade, which were intended to give “the appearance of the ‘common houses’ of our small towns in France” (MFA, 1905a: 2). The second building, on the right, served as a clinic and had a waiting room, a consulting room, and a dressing room. The third building, opposite to this one, housed the pharmacy, the laboratory, and the pharmacist’s accommodation. The outbuildings (hydrotherapy, shop, kitchen, wash-house, and latrines) occupied scattered buildings in the second courtyard (*Ibid.*: 7). The general plan also provided different facilities: a building for Muslims, a public bath service, some isolation rooms for contagious patients, and staff accommodation. But these constructions were postponed for budgetary reasons. Despite this, *Ras Mäk^wännən* Hospital was the best-equipped health facility in Harar. For more than 20 years, it was the only one of its kind



Figure 2. Main building of *Ras Mäkännən* Hospital in Harar. Source: MFA, 160CPCOM – 74 [1902?].



Figure 3. Central courtyard and annex buildings of *Ras Mäkännən* Hospital. Source: MFA, 160CPCOM – 74 [1902?]

until the arrival of the Swedish Mission Bibeltrogna Vänner in 1924, who built another one (Norberg, 1977: 124). It turns out that France could have missed this opportunity as, according to Pankhurst, *Ras Mäkännən* had first asked the British for help in setting up a modern hospital in Harar (Pankhurst, 1990: 182). France was only his second choice.

In return for the land he received, Vitalien had to educate *Ras* Mäk^wännən's son, the young Täfäri (future Haylä Śəllase I). The governor also asked him to train the children of Ethiopian chiefs in nursing. This is what Vitalien claims in his 1902 report, in which he adds that he proposed to complete this medical training with a French language course (MFA, 1902b). He justifies the usefulness of this mission, which was not in his initial program, in these words:

[...] the Ras did me the honor of taking charge of his son's education. This task was not part of my program, but I have undertaken it devotedly, considering it an expression of great trust and liking from the Ras, as well as an opportunity to contribute to the development of French influence in Abyssinia [...] (MFA, 1902b).

Here Vitalien points to the influence he is likely to have with the Ethiopian leadership because of his status as a French doctor. He claims to have already received many marks of friendship and gratitude from the *Ras* and all of his lieutenants. In a letter to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, he also states that *Ras* Mäk^wännən himself promised to attend medical classes "to show his interest in the art of giving basic care to the sick" (MFA, nd).

Emperor Haylä Śəllase I (r. 1930-1936 E.C./1941-1974 A.D.) didn't deny the involvement of the Guadeloupean doctor in the education. Indeed, in his memoirs, he recalls that Dr. Vitalien gave him one hour of French lessons a day (Haylä Śəllase, 2003: 17). However, his father felt that this was not enough time for him to learn French, so he turned to Bishop Jarosseau, the head of the Catholic mission, to provide him with a tutor. The bishop sent one of his Ethiopian seminarians, Abba Samuel, to supplement the daily lessons that Vitalien gave him (*Ibid.*: 18). The historian Aleme Eshete has written about the influence the Catholic bishop had on Haylä Śəllase I (2017).

The French influence in Täfäri's education is undeniable but should not be overestimated. Vitalien and Jarosseau were not the only ones to train the young prince. Commanders of the Mäk^wännən army also played this role (Völff, 2013: 149). Also, from the age of 7, Täfäri received a classical education in the mastery of Amharic and Ge'ez languages (Haylä Śəllase, 2003: 15). Then, at the age of 14, he joined a German school in Addis Ababa before being sent to Mənilək School in 1908 (Aleme Eshete, 2017: 22).

Nevertheless, the fame that Vitalien acquired thanks to his medical skills delighted the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In an internal note from this ministry dating from 1905, it is written:

[...] Doctor Vitalien has shown in Abyssinia what a patriotic doctor can do: having become the friend of Ras Mäk^wännən and the tutor of his son as well as of several children of Abyssinian chiefs, he was able to make his services appreciated, especially during the last smallpox epidemic, which the Negus called upon him

to treat in Addis Ababa. Today, as the emperor's physician, he enjoys a personal position with him which allows him to serve French interests in Addis as well as in Harar. (MFA, 1905b)

Not only was Vitalien's work recognized by the governor of Harar, but also by the emperor of Ethiopia. Indeed, his reputation soon spread to Addis Ababa, and thus Mənilək II wanted to have him at his service. In 1904, Vitalien became the emperor's official physician. Although he settled in the capital, he continued his work in Harar for at least for a year, because the province was subject to a severe smallpox epidemic. If the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs was pleased with the work accomplished by Dr. Vitalien in Harar, what about the French Ministry of Colonies, the second authority that financed the doctor's project?

When we analyze the correspondence between the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the French Ministry of Colonies, it appears that the latter is no longer interested in the *Ras* Mäk^wännən hospital. Indeed, for the year 1903-1904, the Ministry of Colonies refused to renew its subsidy. The French Minister of Colonies, M. Doumergue, pointed out that the care, given free of charge to the Ethiopians, the education of Mäk^wännən's son, and the opening of a French-language course no longer fell within the remit of his ministry (MFA, 1903a, 1903b).

The Harar hospital contrasts with the French hospital in Djibouti or any other colonial establishment of the same type.⁶ It was indeed a hospital run by a Frenchman, but it was nonetheless reserved almost exclusively for Ethiopians. Only a few rooms were open to Europeans and only with a fee (MFA, 1902b; MFA, 1905a). Moreover, when Dr. Creignou (head of the health service of the French Somali Coast) visited the hospital in 1906, he noted in his report that the budgetary and administrative functioning of the hospital was unknown to him because Vitalien referred only to the *Ras* and that, "the French authorities in the region never knew anything about the matter" (MFA, 1906a). This confirms that the intention of the Ethiopian government was to appropriate European knowledge without losing its autonomy. In this regard, the notice mentions a disagreement between the doctor and the governor concerning the location of the hospital. Vitalien advised that the hospital should be built on a location outside of the city, "to respect the rules of modern hygiene" while Mäk^wännən wanted to attach his name to a hospital "intra-muros" (MFA, 1905a: 1). The former eventually gave in to the latter's demands since the latter personally covered most of the costs.

⁶ Before World War I, medical facilities established in the colonies were primarily intended to protect soldiers from epidemics and then eventually the local population to ensure their employability (Bradley, Sabben-Clare & Kirkood, 1980; Arnold, 1988; Illife, 1995: 108-111).

Only the plans to set up a sanatorium to help the “weakened of the Far Eastern possessions” and a leprosarium to protect Europeans from contagion were of interest to the Ministry of the Colonies (MFA, nd). These are the very projects that motivate the Ministry’s involvement in Vitalien’s medical mission in 1902 when the objective was for Harar to become a rear base to the French Coast of Somalis. When Vitalien, in his first yearly report, depicts his position as head doctor and educator as one of a good “protagonist” of French influence, the Ministry of Colonies considers that it was no longer its responsibility, but that of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to finance the program. Consequently, from 1903-1904, only the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided him with a grant of 2,500 francs (the same as in 1902).

Financially, Vitalien had limited means to cover the hospital’s expenses. According to the notice, these amounted to 10,000 francs for 1903-1904 (*Ibid.*). Although Mäk^wännən granted the land and personally covered most of the rehabilitation costs, Vitalien could not do without the sale of medicines to Europeans in the town and the support of some Ethiopian and foreign patrons. In this respect, when Dr. Creignou drew up a report for the governor of the French colony, Mr. Lagarde, following his visit to the hospital in 1906, estimated that the medical clientele of Harar, donations from Ethiopian dignitaries, and the contribution of the town’s commercial houses brought in between 5 and 6,000 francs per year (MFA, 1906a).

In the end, the hospital built by Dr. Vitalien did not function for more than four years. Stricken by an illness sometimes identified as typhoid (Marcus, 1995: 6) or dysentery (Pétridès, 1963: 275), the governor of Harar succumbed to his health issues in March 1906. Ras Mäk^wännən’s death put an end to the hospital’s activity, which was already weakened due to Vitalien’s extended absences since he had been involved in the emperor’s court in Addis Ababa. In August 1906, Dr. Creignou noted that “the hospital no longer received any patients” (MFA, 1906a). According to him, there was only one woman left to maintain the equipment and the linen room as Vitalien had taken with him “his pharmacist and the best of his native staff” (*Ibid.*). On November 30 1906, Vitalien finally announced the hospital’s definitive closure to M. Lagarde (MFA, 1906b).

The study of the Ras Mäk^wännən Hospital reveals that the French administration supported this initiative less for colonial reasons than it did for diplomatic ones. What about the leprosarium? What ambitions did France have for this place? To what extent were they feasible? Historians who focused on St. Anthony’s Leprosarium identify it as an exclusively Catholic institution (Pankhurst, 1990: 181; Mesele Terecha, 2017: 165). The presence of missionary staff and a cross atop the campanile only confirms their claim. But, when I cross the missionary records with those of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it appears that the leprosarium was the subject of a conflict of interest between

the Catholic mission and Dr. Vitalien. While the doctor was interested in the prophylactic dimension of the leprosarium, the missionaries were more interested in the religious benefits it represented.

2. A leprosarium: between prophylaxis and proselytism

In the 19th century, travelers viewed leprosy as a widespread disease in the Ethiopian highlands (Pearce, 1831, vol. 1: 297; Harris, 1844: 191; Lefebvre, 1845: 44; Rochet d'Héricourt, 1841: 307; Combes & Tamisier, 1848, vol. 1: 280; Rirk, 1843: 26; Soleillet, 1886: 244; Borelli, 1890: 247; Massaia, 1922, vol. 2: 134-135 & 1928, vol. 9: 62). In the southern lowlands, the presence of lepers was less noticeable than in the north. When the British traveler Richard Burton, the first and only European to visit Harar during the Emirate period (1647-1875), spoke about the sanitary situation of the city in 1855, he did not mention the presence of lepers (Burton, 1856). However, this does not mean that the city was free of the disease.

First, linguistic as well as genomic studies (Monot, 2005: 1040-1042) show an age-old presence of the disease in the area, and that it had a strong cultural link with the Middle Eastern world rather than the North-central Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia (Schneider, 1975: 105; Pankhurst, 1984: 58-59; Mesele Terecha, 2005: 22; Mesele Terecha, 2017: lii, 95-97). Secondly, Harar had strong socio-economic, political, and cultural relations with the North-central Christian Kingdom since the 16th century. Trade and wars between the Christian Kingdom and the eastern Muslim Sultanates must have brought the disease in the city.

The question that remains is why leprosy and leprosy-affected persons were visible to the European missionaries and travelers in the Christian Highland Kingdom but not in the Muslim Sultanates of Eastern Ethiopia. One possible answer to this question may be related to the prevailing district almsgiving traditions between the two places. In the Christian Highland Kingdom, almsgiving to leper beggars had immense spiritual, social, and political value and thus, encouraged the visibility of leprosy-affected persons to European travelers (Mesele Terecha, 2005: 23-37; 2017: 116-128). Whereas in the Muslim Sultanates, leprosy appears to have been considered disgraceful and thus the visibility of leprosy-affected persons in public spaces was discouraged.⁷ Therefore, in 1850, Burton did not see leper-beggars on the narrow streets of Harar because families did not let leprosy-affected persons go out and be seen by members of the society.

It was from 1887 that leprosy and leprosy-affected persons came to be visible to the European missionaries and travelers in Harar. The Ethiopian conquest opened the city to everyone, which included leprosy sufferers (Mesele

⁷ On the issue of leprosy in Islam see Dols (1983) and Hasnain et al. (2020).

Terecha, 2017: 168). It was at this point that the missionaries began to care for them (aside the Ethiopian charities) by distributing food and providing basic care (PMS, 1901: n°0087; PMS, 1902: n°05619; Bernardin, 1911: 257; Feron, 1957: 21; Alberto, 1998: 260; Roland, 1981: 16; Mesele Terecha, 2017: 168). As Mesele Terecha says, the Christian charities “undoubtedly encouraged leprosy-sufferers to flock into the town” (2017: 168). According to Vitalien, in 1902 the disease affected about 5% of the population of Harar, or about 1500 to 2000 people (MFA, 1902b). The percentage proposed by Vitalien should be treated with caution as it was a personal estimate. Furthermore, Vitalien had every interest in amplifying this number to attract the attention of the French Colonies Ministry who was the main funder of his medical expedition. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the disease was present in Harar. According to the report of the Russian Red Cross, the medical team treated 143 lepers around the town between 15 May and 18 June 1896 (Pankhurst, 1965: 124; Mesele Terecha, 2017: 169).

Dr. Vitalien was concerned about the risks of contamination that the “begging lepers” in the city posed to healthy people. In 1901, when he asked for the agreement and support of the French Ministry of Colonies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to carry out his medical mission in Harar, he explained that he wanted to study, in a clinical and bacteriological way, the skin diseases that were very widespread in Ethiopia, which, according to him, were syphilis and leprosy. The leprosarium project was to be the heart of his medical program in Harar. At least that was what he maintained when he writes:

I make the development of this work the first part of my program to conceive a great part of my efforts because by seeing the lepers circulating freely and without care, I became aware of the danger of contagiousness that could result not only for the natives but also and especially for the Europeans residing in this country or those who enter it following the railway. (MFA, nd)

From this point of view, the leprosarium was intended to reduce the risks of contagion while also serving as an observatory on leprosy. Together with the *Ras Mäk'ännən* hospital, it was meant to support the Djibouti health service in its efforts to prevent the invasion of diseases that could destabilize the construction of a railroad between Djibouti and Addis Ababa. In Harar, Vitalien feared contamination amongst the Europeans living in the city. He mentioned one or two examples “well known here” (MFA, 1902b). According to the rumors reported to Dr. Mérab (another French personal doctor of Mənilək) it was not a Frenchman but an Italian (Mérab, 1912: 31). The sources do not provide more information on the identity of this person.

From a European perspective, leprosy emerged as an urban, social, and health problem in Harar that motivated the establishment of a leprosarium outside of the city. However, it was not Vitalien who built and ran the first

leprosarium in the country, but the French Catholic mission. In 1901, *Ras Mäk^wännən* supported this initiative. As he did for the hospital, he provided the land and contributed financially to the leprosarium project. As Mesele Terecha says, the authors contradict each other on the amount of money he gave. Abba Ayele Teclehymanot speaks of 1,000 Maria Theresa thalers (1981: 14) while Schneider speaks of 5,000 (1975: 75-76). When I look at the sources, it appears that the missionaries gave different values. Bishop Jarosseau wrote in his financial report to the Propagation of the Faith that the *Ras* gave him 2,400 francs for the construction of the leprosarium (PMS, 1901: n°0097). For his part, Father Charles, director of the leprosarium from 1910, raised the amount to 5,000 Maria Theresa thalers when he wrote in the *Missions Catholiques* (1920: 281-282). It would be interesting to know the actual amount granted by the *Ras Mäk^wännən* to Vitalien for the hospital to see if the governor favored or prioritized some projects over others. Harar's archives could probably help us on this point.

It took less than a year for the missionaries to build the leprosarium. According to the chronology established by Bishop Jarosseau in a report addressed to the Propagation of the Faith in 1902, Father Marie-Bernard arrived in Harar in February 1901 to dedicate himself to the “work” of the lepers (PMS, 1902: n°05619). In September of the same year, he was “legally put in possession of the necessary land to build the first leprosarium” (*Ibid.*). At the time Jarosseau wrote, on April 13 1902, “the work of this establishment is well advanced; a few more months, and with the help of Catholic Charities, which we cannot lack, the full installation shall be completed” (*Ibid.*). Indeed, it took less than a couple of months for the building to be finished. On June 13 1902, Bishop Jarosseau inaugurated the leprosarium, which was named after the Holy Patron St. Anthony of Padua (Jennings, 1905a: 42; Féron, 1957: 21; Roland, 1981: 16; Antonios Alberto, 1998: 261). To assist Father Marie-Bernard, Father Bernardin, Brother Theotime, and the Franciscan Sisters Gervasie, Gertrude and Zoé were also appointed (Jennings, 1905a: 42-43; Antonios Alberto, 1998: 161). In 1902, Bishop Jarosseau gave the following description of the space under construction:

The plan of our leprosarium includes two large buildings, 25 meters each, which follow one another in the same alignment and on the same level. They are united at their junction by an elegant belltower rising over four columns with a resplendent cross standing out from its conical extremity, conveying the distant illusion of a giant monstrosity. In front of the facade, on the east side and its slightly lower side, are distributed at regular intervals: the main street runs in the middle to which other small alleys end symmetrically. On both extremities, wings will rise to accommodate the Fathers on the northern side and the Sisters on the southern one. (PMS, 1902: n°05619)



Figure 4. St. Anthony leprosarium. Source: Bernardin, 1911: 257.

A photograph published a few years later, in 1911, in the *Missions Catholiques* allows us to visualize the morphology of the leprosarium that was located outside of the city.

In addition to running the hospital and training Ethiopians, Vitalien seems to have overseen the dispensary of the leprosarium where he examined the patients who showed symptoms of leprosy. However, none of the reports that he sent to the two French Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Colonies provide more details on this point. Likewise, the French diplomatic and missionary archives do not make it possible to identify either the frequency of consultations or the origin of the patients and are even less clear on the type of medication that he administered to them. Only a letter from the Governor of the French Somali Coast, Mr. Lagarde, addressed to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Pichon, implies that Vitalien instituted this dispensary in agreement with *Ras Mäkwännən* (MFA, 1907a).

He was nevertheless probably not regularly involved in the leprosarium. First, Vitalien was a busy man. He managed the hospital in Harar, treated patients, trained nurses, and took care of the emperor's health from 1904 onwards. Second, he seemed to be at odds with the missionaries. In an article published in 1911 in *Missions Catholiques*, Father Bernardin explains that Bishop Jarousseau originally planned to establish “a similar center of charity,” in other words, a “hospital center as important as that of Harar” in each province of the empire but that this plan was destroyed by “insufficient

resources” and “enemy” attacks (Bernardin, 1911: 283-284). In particular, he accused Vitalien of having sought to “hinder and discredit a work whose glory, after all, reflects as much on France as on Catholicism” (*Ibid.*: 284). Bishop Jarosseau’s biographer, Guillaume Bernoville, reports on this conflict of interest between the Catholic mission and Dr. Vitalien. According to him, one of the consequences of the financial instability of the Catholic mission was that “the leprosarium could not afford a doctor,” which provoked strong criticism:

[It was] a wonderful opportunity for foreign governments (schismatic, heretical or atheist) to raise a chorus of interested complaints so that the leprosarium, instead of subsisting miserably on the miracles of evangelical charity, was taken away from the mission and entered the consortium of scientifically conducted and powerfully remunerated establishments, such as those hospitals and dispensaries with a political and anti-Catholic aim, whose foundation Russia, England and, Germany hasten to favor. The unfortunate thing is that France enters into this game, not the one represented by Mr. Lagarde, but the officially atheistic France. Doctor Vitalien became its coryphaeus in Abyssinia. (Bernoville, 1950: 197-198)

Indeed, when we look at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ sources, it appears that Vitalien claimed the paternity of the establishment. According to the first report that the doctor sent to the Ministry of the Colonies, he promoted the foundation of a leprosarium at *Ras Mäk^wännən* and asked the Catholic mission to take charge of its construction and management (MFA, 1902b). However, he did not believe in the sustainability of this project. He recognized the usefulness of St. Anthony but considered it more as a “sort of emergency infirmary” or the first embryo of a network of isolation centers that he wished to establish in each region of Ethiopia (*Ibid.*). In his report sent to the French Minister of Colonies, he wrote in 1902:

A missionary father has just left for France to gather resources for the development of his work. I do not think it would be very prudent to try to extend this village on its present site, which is too close to the city; it would be preferable, in my opinion, to consider it as a sort of infirmary where the sickest patients would be gathered. Mainly those from the city of Harrar itself. (*Ibid.*)

As soon as it was founded, the leprosarium already lacked prophylactic interest. Too close to the city, it did not sufficiently remove the “contagious” from Harar. That’s why Vitalien preferred to conceive of it as a dispensary to welcome the most affected patients while waiting for the construction of several adapted centers. However, he had neither the time nor the means to conceptualize and organize the preventive fight against leprosy in this region. In 1904, Mənilək called him to Addis Ababa. The leprosarium thus remained the only French “medical” establishment in Harar.

Missionaries are not doctors.⁸ They provide nursing care but from a proselytizing perspective. For them, Harar was much more than a station. It was the episcopal city of the vicariate and a base to plan the evangelization. However, the local authorities did not allow direct preaching to the people. Therefore, to legitimize their presence, the Capuchins and Franciscans (present since 1896) preached indirectly through social and health sectors (Abba Ayele Teclehymanot, 1981; Antonios Alberto, 1998; Bahru Zewde, 2002: 103). Their investment in the leprosarium was part of this dynamic. The missionaries seized the opportunity offered by the Ethiopian government to care for the leprosy-sufferers. This allowed them a way to promote the benefits of their assistance and thus to consolidate their position in the region. In 1910, Father Charles spoke to the readers of *Le Semeur d'Ethiopie* to justify the usefulness of the leprosarium. He explained that the material and medical support they gave to the residents had the ultimate objective of strengthening the spiritual aspect of the place:

Lepers have immortal souls and, while making their life on earth less painful, we want to assure them the joys of eternity. We, therefore, take care of their religious instruction. We evangelize them by caring for them. With the material bread, we give them the bread of the word which comforts them, strengthens them, and enlightens them. (Charles, 1910: 687)

At St. Anthony's, the idea was to create a village of Catholic leprosy-sufferers. When we look at the economic model of the leprosarium during its first six years, it appears that it essentially relied upon French institutional charity. On average, it appears that Bishop Jarosseau received about 15,000 francs per year from the *Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi in Lyon* (PMS: n°0097, n°0102, n°0109, n°0113, n°0014). This amount was a tiny fraction (0.23%) of the overall budget (about 6,500,000 francs per year) raised by the *Œuvre* to support Catholic missionaries throughout the world.⁹ In addition, Jarosseau received about 10,000 francs per year from the Holy See in Rome (PMS: n°0097, n°0102, n°0109, n°0113, n°0014).

Moreover, the financial reports sent to the *Œuvre* by Jarosseau allow us to see how the bishop distributed his subsidies (PMS: n°0097-0014). It turns out that he dedicated a large part of this money to the St. Anthony leprosarium. For example, in 1905, the leprosarium required an annual expenditure of

⁸ Since the Lateran Council (in 1139), the Pope forbid clerics to practice medicine outside the cloisters. Fearing that priests would stray from their primary goal of caring for souls, the papacy confirmed this prohibition in 1243 and required that the orders even forbid their members from all medical studies (Guillaume, 1990: 17). ⁹ The distribution of the sums collected appears in the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, a bulletin published by the *Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*. It serves as a liaison between the association, the contributors, and the missionaries.

12,000 francs. This was almost a quarter of the total expenditure for the entire vicariate (PMS: n°0113). This was a significant amount compared to previous years when the share of the budget allocated to all constructions did not exceed 10,000 francs.¹⁰ The running cost of St. Anthony's put a strain on the overall budget of the Catholic mission. Concerned by this economic situation, Mgr Jarosseau drew the attention of the *Œuvre de la Propagation de la Foi* in Lyon, in 1906, in order to support the leprosarium (PMS: n°0014).

At that time, Father Marie-Bernard sought to find a printing press to meet the exclusive needs of the lepers of St. Anthony. In 1906, the French Capuchins installed press machines in the leprosarium and began producing paid publications. In the first year, they created the *Bulletin de la léproserie d'Harar*, which later became the *Semteur d'Éthiopie*. According to the financial statements sent to the *Œuvre*, the printing works only began to make a profit ten years later.¹¹

Besides the St. Lazare printing press, private charity (patrons, dignitaries, family, friends), whether French or Ethiopian, supported the work of the missionaries. To arouse compassion, the missionaries showed the leper colony to foreigners passing through or living in Harar. In a letter to the *Missions Catholiques*, Father Marie-Bernard rejoiced in having created an "atmosphere of peace and happiness amid the most intolerable pain" and added that it "often struck European officials, ambassadors, ministers, consuls, etc." (Bernardin, 1911: 275). Jean Duchesne-Fournet, sent by the French Ministry of Education to carry out a topographical, geological, and ethnographic study in Ethiopia, was particularly moved by the work of the missionaries when he visited the leprosarium between 1901 and 1903 (Duchesne-Fournet, 1909: 22-23). In 1903, when Father Marie-Bernard came to collect money in France, the French explorer introduced him to his entire network (*Ibid.*: 23).

Yet, the staff of St. Anthony did not receive any official subsidy from the French government, at least not until 1917.¹² To explain this lack of subsidy from the French government, the French explorer Henry de Monfreid, who

¹⁰ Expenditure on buildings under construction amounted to 10,000 francs in 1901 (PMS: n°0097) and 8,000 francs in 1903-1904 (PMS: n°0109). For the year 1902, Mgr Jarosseau does not give any amount for buildings. ¹¹ It is only in his report from the year 1916 that Mgr Jarosseau mentions that the printing house is beginning to make a profit (PMS: n°0153) ¹² From this date, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs recognized the leprosarium as a "French organization" and granted it an annual subsidy of 1,000 francs. This financial contribution is part of the budget allocated to the French hospital of Harar.

spent many years in Harar between the 1910s and the 1930s, offers the following interpretation:

He can hardly help it [the French government], at least not in the way that it would be possible for Monseigneur [Jarosseau] to accept. He could certainly have obtained, often enough, subsidies for works, but he would have been forced, according to him, to give them a political character, and that he does not want; his work is above such conceptions because this old bishop is a saint and his work must remain unique and above all, Christian. (Monfreid, 1933: 179-180)

According to De Monfreid, Bishop Jarosseau wanted to preserve leprosarium's autonomy by not seeking support from the French government. However, following the departure of Vitalien in 1906, the bishop took advantage of the visit of Mr. Lagarde to Harar, then Minister of France in Ethiopia, to ask him for a subsidy to maintain the dispensary of the leprosarium. The Foreign Affairs office gave an annual allowance of 4,000 francs to Doctor Vitalien. In April 1907, Lagarde proposed that this Ministry grant Jarosseau 3,000 francs (MFA, 1907). The Ministry's answer does not appear in the diplomatic archives of Paris nor in those of Nantes. Also, no sum allocated by the French government appears in the financial report that Jarosseau sent each year to the *Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*. He probably never received the grant from the French government. The St. Anthony leprosarium remained an independent establishment whose primary goal was to convert the residents to Catholicism.

3. The limits of French investment in Harar in the health sector

At the beginning of the 20th century, Dr. Vitalien's hospital and the Capuchin leprosarium became instruments of French influence in Harar. In their own way, the different French protagonists introduced new health practices to the local population. But, if the Ethiopian authorities supported their work, did the users appreciate the benefits?

Each society's definition of "well-being" or "good health" differs from country to country (Augé & Herzlich, 1983). In Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Church holds a significant place amongst the producers of knowledge. Since the 4th century, the Church has accompanied the construction of the Christian kingdom, notably, by providing it with powerful symbolic and ideological frameworks. In the 19th century, the Orthodox Christian religion became the official religion of the country. Nevertheless, in Harar, it is mainly Islam that influences the population by proposing its perception of the world while orienting the practice of the faithful. In general, in Ethiopian cosmology, it is supernatural entities that are at the origin of diseases and not micro-organisms (Molvaer, 1990: 26; Kebede Deribe Kassaye, 2006: 129). The notion of "good

health” is significant because the person experienced it as a “gift from God” or as the “will of God.”

In Europe, the “Pasteurian revolution” of the 1870s modified the way Europeans thought about hygiene and health. Living germs replaced miasmas at the source of epidemic diseases. More significantly, hygienic concerns (healthiness of cities, homes, and the moralization of individual behavior in terms of hygiene) permeated the public sphere (Jorland, 2010; Frioux, Fournier & Chauveau, 2011; Thénard-Duvivier, 2012). For the historian Olivier Faure, during this period, “the fear of disease gradually turned into a fear of the microbe” and “the idea eventually took hold that illness and health were the sanction of a way of life” (1994: 221). Little by little, disease lost its unpredictable and accidental character and became a prerogative of the states, which henceforth looked after public health. Outside European borders, this new conception of disease did not diminish but, on the contrary, intensified. As the colonial empires expanded, their leaders felt invested with a mission of public interest in the colonies as they did in their own countries.

In Ethiopia, despite the country’s independence, France sought to contribute to the development of the health sector and to carry out a “civilizing mission” that would enable it to increase its influence with the Ethiopian authorities. In Harar, Vitalien’s objective with the hospital was to inculcate rules of hygiene within the Ethiopian population. The hospital’s notice stated that “the patients are required to undergo regular cleanliness” (MFA, 1905a: 4). He added that he insisted on this “because the Abyssinian is in the habit of neglecting the most elementary hygienic care” (MFA, 1905a: 4). In Europe, doctors considered people like “children” who needed to be educated and guided (Faure, 1994: 226). In Harar, patients admitted to the hospital had to leave their clothes at the laundry and put on the hospital’s clothes. Once treated, they received a certificate indicating their state of health and the reasons for discharge (MFA, 1905a: 5). Experiencing the hospital implied confronting an explanation for the illness other than asking the divine to alleviate the illness. In this sense, France undoubtedly contributed in significantly altering the relationship between the body and hygiene by proposing a new way of providing care.

However, we should not understand this as the establishment of a revolutionary health structure to which everyone adhered. If the reports mention relaxation of the rules, maybe it’s because the hospital staff was encountering local resistance. On this point, the hospital’s notice states:

[...] To avoid the Abyssinian offending, which completely ignores the use of hospital facilities and has a fierce conception of his independence and freedom, we had to make some concessions to the country’s customs by softening the rigid rules of the ordinary hospitals. Thanks to the natives’ elasticity, they acquired the habit of accepting our care and even requesting it. We have had the greatest chiefs

among our hospitalized clientele [...] the hospital has become a rational cog in the administration of Harar (MFA, 1905a: 6).

Without this adaptation, Vitalien would not have been able to offer French knowledge and skills. However, the cancellation of a project for a ward reserved exclusively for Muslims raises questions about the actual audience of the hospital. Although reports indicate the possibility of accommodating any type of emergency, they mainly highlight the attendance of Ethiopian Christian leaders, whereas majority of the inhabitants of Harar and the region were Muslims.

At *Ras Mäk^wännən* Hospital and St. Anthony's Leprosarium, Vitalien requested no financial compensation in exchange for the treatments and medicines he provided. He justified this choice to his financiers by evoking the ignorance of the Ethiopian population to the idea of paying for care and by insisting on the competing action of other Western powers in the field of health. In this regard, he reminded that in Addis Ababa and Harar, the Russian hospital and the Italian doctor treated Ethiopians respectively free of charge. According to him, free services were a *sine qua non* condition to develop French influence in this region. If the competitive argument seems intelligible, the argument of the so-called Ethiopian incomprehension of the monetization of care does not hold. Access to preventive or curative therapies in Ethiopia was not without its counterparts (Pankhurst, 1990: 119). For example, in 1888, the Italian explorer Luigi Robecchi Bricchetti found talismans¹³ being sold in the markets of Harar that could be bought to protect against disease or the evil eye (Bricchetti, 1896: 151).

On the contrary, the novelty for the Ethiopians was the accessibility of a new care service, entirely free of charge, that came with the arrival of Western medicine. It was indeed the Russians who inaugurated this new form of assistance in Ethiopia. In the spring of 1896, when the medical corps of the Russian Red Cross landed in Djibouti, they first reached Harar where they stayed from May 27 to June 18, before continuing their journey to Addis Ababa (Pankhurst, 1965: 219; Chowdhury, 2016: 220). During the Russian Red Cross's stay in Harar (until November 8th for one part of the group), the mission gave almost 16 000 free outpatient consultations.¹⁴ The Italians were also active in the medical field in the city. The medical mission under Dr. Angelo de Martini sent by the Italian Government in 1897 treated both Italian prisoners and local people between January and May 1897 (Pankhurst, 1965: 129). By providing free care, the French followed the example of the Russians and Italians.

¹³ In Ethiopia, the use of phylacteries is a practice shared by both Christians and Muslims. Among the former, they are generally made by *däbtära*, and among the latter by *kalichas*. ¹⁴ The number of sick and wounded treated by the Russian Red Cross Mission may be seen in Pankhurst (1965: 124-126; 1990: 193-203).

According to Pankhurst, it was clear that the “diplomatic entry into the medical field marked a significant development in the history of Ethiopian medicine” for it “began to familiarize the public with free treatment” while it “increased the people’s consciousness of modern medicine” (Pankhurst, 1965: 130).

In the context of the leprosarium, Abba Antonios states that almost all lepers accepted the religious instruction and medical care provided by the staff of St. Anthony’s (Abba Antonios, 1998: 261). However, the leprosarium was not all that successful. Several factors (namely the conversion to Catholicism, celibacy, family separation, and isolation) contributed to the discontent of the residents (Féron, 1957: 19; Roland, 1981: 16; Mesele Terecha, 2005: 47).

Indeed, the founders of St. Anthony admit, not without dismay, that the beginnings were difficult because they encountered opposition they had not counted on: “that of the lepers themselves” (Azaïs & Chambard, 1931: 15). These are the words of Father Azaïs when he explains that the residents had difficulty adapting to the rules:

They [the boarders] had agreed to be clothed, housed, and fed, but when we proposed to separate them from the lepers, to create two separate villages, one for the men and one for the women, there was a real revolt. The governor of the city had to be called in. It was a futile intervention. They [the lepers] declared that they did not recognize any authority, left the leper colony with great shouts, and went under a big tree near Bab el Rahima, where, during a whole night, they made bonfires, dancing, shouting, getting drunk with mead, in a rut of debauchery and insults towards the Abyssinian and European authorities. Suffering from hunger, they returned to the leprosarium and accepted the separation of the sexes. (*Ibid.*: 15-16)

The St. Anthony residents appear here as lustful. They celebrate their freedom by getting drunk and indulging in the pleasures of the flesh. According to Azaïs, the festive gathering of the fugitives emerged as a rebellion against both the staff of St. Antony and the Ethiopian power.

By forbidding intimate relations between the residents and forcing them not to leave the establishment, the Capuchins took power over their bodies. Furthermore, the inmates experienced the confinement negatively because it did not correspond to their way of life. Indeed, the installation of a leprosarium in Ethiopia was a surprising fact considering the Ethiopian socio-cultural values with regards to leprosy. On the one hand, Christians believed leprosy to be a divine and hereditary disease that made confinement unnecessary and inappropriate (Mesele Terecha, 2017). On the other hand, Muslims had an ambiguous relationship with the concept of contagion. *Hadiths* provide as much justification for those sensitive to the transmissibility of leprosy (which implies social distancing) as they do for those who adhere to the principle

of non-contagion and deem the isolation of affected persons for the disease obsolete (Dols, 1983; Hasnain, Queijo, Laher & Sandahl, 2020). In other words, while Christians could move freely from village to village, Muslims could only stay with their families. In any case, the prophylactic response of confining leprosy-affected persons to specific facilities did not exist in Ethiopia before the St. Anthony Leprosarium.

The governor of Harar shared responsibility in this confinement. As a matter of fact, *Ras Mäk^wännən* authorized the Catholic mission to enclose leprosy-sufferers by providing the plot of land and a financial contribution. The missionaries spoke of him as a governor involved in the implementation of the leprosarium (PMS, 1902: n°0096; Bernardin, 1911: 257). However, he never invested himself too closely to the missionaries. He was an orthodox Christian and cautious in his relationship with the Catholics. The historian Benjamin Volff, who has studied Mäk^wännən's life through his biographies, explains that manifestations of his devotion are ubiquitous in the sources he studies (2013: 169). Besides, he missed the inauguration of the leprosarium on June 13 1902. During this ceremony, during which Jarosseau dedicated the leprosarium to Saint Anthony of Padua, he was already on his way to Europe to attend the coronation of Edward VII. In May, he left Harar to travel to Djibouti and then to Aden (Pankhurst, 2003: 237). In any case, he was unable to attend the inauguration. As Mesele Terecha has already pointed out, Mäk^wännən certainly authorized the opening of a leprosarium in Harar, but his prolonged absences did not allow him to get involved in the administrative affairs of the city, nor in those of St. Anthony (2017: 170).

What about Mənilək? When we study the missionary archives, the emperor seems to have appreciated the “selfless dedication” of the staff of St. Anthony. This is at least the impression given by Father Marie-Bernard when he recounted his September 17 1907 interview with the emperor to the French journalist Marcel de Duminy (PMS, 1908: n° 0117). According to him, Mənilək “received him in the most courteous manner” and thanked him “particularly for the work of the lepers of Harar” (*Ibid.*). This meeting took place in a context of diplomatic rapprochement between Mənilək and the Holy See. Following the difficulties encountered by Catholic missionaries in Ethiopia, especially in the Kaffa region and in Harar, Bishop Jarosseau decided to draw the Pope's attention to his vicariate so that he would intercede with the emperor. Between 1906 and 1907, an exchange of letters began between Pope Pie X and Mənilək II.¹⁵ It was Father Marie-Bernard's responsibility to deliver the letters and gifts to the two sovereigns.

¹⁵ This exchange appears in a letter Jarosseau addresses Countess Marie-Thérèse Ledóchowska on February 21st 1907, published on March 26th 1907 in *L'Univers'* newspaper in the section “feuilleton de l'Univers” (“The Universe's saga”), p. 2 and 3.

Ten years later, when the missionary retraced his career in a letter addressed to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, he devoted a long passage to the leprosarium whose, according to him, “fame and benefits have spread throughout the Empire” (MFA, 1916: n°1636). In this regard, he affirmed that Mənilək decorated him in order to value his work with leprosy-sufferers. Indeed, the emperor solemnly thanked him on November 24 1907, by awarding him the Order of the Star of Ethiopia (*Ibid.*).

The interest that Mənilək seems to have had towards the leprosarium deserves to be qualified. First, it was a French missionary’s point of view. Mənilək’s physician did not share their opinion. Indeed, according to Dr. Mérab, Mənilək did not seem inclined to confine the leprosy-sufferers by claiming that to the emperor this task was as much “arduous” as “cruel” (Mérab, 1921: 166). Secondly, the establishment of St. Antony’s leprosarium was an isolated initiative. The ambition to establish this kind of structure on a national scale appears to have been illusory. In the 19th century, Addis Ababa, as the capital and new political center of the country, was the scene of administrative, political, and sanitary innovations undertaken by Mənilək as part of his “modernist” policy. He brought in engineers, craftsmen, and other experts to build water mills, bridges, canals, hospitals, pharmacies, etc. (Pankhurst, 1967: *passim*). However, he did not ask anyone, not even the Catholic mission in Addis Ababa, to build a leprosarium in the capital.

In a country as rural as Ethiopia, where no hospital existed before the Russian one (Addis Ababa) and the French one (Harar), the expenses to build a leprosarium in each region could only suffocate the national budget. For more than thirty years, the Harar leprosarium remained the only establishment of its kind in Ethiopia.

Conclusion

According to the French missionary and diplomatic sources, we can draw three conclusions regarding the establishment of a hospital and a leprosarium in Harar.

First, the French government did not initiate the *Ras Mäk^wännən* hospital and the St. Anthony leprosarium. Dr. Vitalien and the Catholic mission did and through the agreement of *Ras Mäk^wännən*. Nevertheless, the French administration had diplomatic interest in both structures. By demonstrating the benefits of French medicine, the long-term objective was to gain the sympathy of the local authorities and thus preserve and develop French economic advantages in the country. In the context of competition between European powers, free health care appeared to have been less of an effort to help Ethiopians but rather an attempt to remain attractive as foreign power in Ethiopia. Both Vitalien’s and the Fathers’ work in Harar contributed to the spread of French influence in Ethiopia. Moreover, their work brought them

to Mənilək's court. Vitalien became the emperor's physician, while Father Marie-Bernard became his messenger to Pope Pie X.

Secondly, the study reveals that the interests of the French Ministry of Colonies failed by confronting the distrust of the Ethiopian power. The *Ras Mäk^wännən* hospital was indeed reserved more for Ethiopians (and especially political and military leaders and their families) than for the French. Concerning the hospital's activities, it appears that Vitalien was more accountable to *Ras Mäk^wännən* than to French authorities.

Thirdly, despite free health care, it appears that sanitary and hygienic innovations did not take hold without resistance in Harar. As Vitalien was forced to adapt the rules of his hospital to local practices, the missionaries were confronted with fleeing residents. Above all, the model of confining lepers to reduce the risk of contagion did not appeal to Mənilək enough for him to apply it to the whole country. St. Anthony's Leprosarium remained a Catholic institution, far from the capital, with the primary goal of converting residents. It housed no more than 50 lepers, which was not enough to curb the disease.

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Héloïse Mercier*

Le *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī* et la compilation des listes d'émirs de Harar : premiers résultats d'enquête

Résumé

This field note presents initial research findings on the *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī* (“Shāsh and Shāmī’s List”), an Arabic text written around the mid-twentieth century by a scholar from Harar (eastern Ethiopia) named Ahmed Shamie. I was able to see the manuscript in which this text is found in Addis Ababa, in the spring of 2021, thanks in part to financial support from the CFEE. This article, drawing on ongoing research, shows that the *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī* is a late historiographical construction that compiled numerous sources from different historiographical regimes. There is a great deal of continuity between this text and lists of emirs, the historiographical genre that dominated in Harar during the 17th to early 20th centuries. However, the writing of this text marked a turning point in the historiography of Harar: whereas previous lists only began in the seventeenth century, the *Jadwal* enforced a “metanarrative” that gave the city a linear, exhaustive, and over-ten-centuries-long past.

Keywords: Harar, lists of emirs, compilation, historiography

Abstract

Cette note de terrain présente des premiers résultats d'enquête concernant le *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī* (« Répertoire de Shāsh et de Shāmī »), un texte en arabe écrit vers la mi-xx^e siècle par un lettré de Harar (Éthiopie orientale) nommé Ahmed Shamie. Le manuscrit dans lequel figure ce texte a pu être consulté à Addis Abeba au printemps 2021, grâce notamment au soutien financier du CFEE. Cet article, s'appuyant sur des recherches en cours, montre que le *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī* est une construction historiographique tardive qui compile des sources nombreuses et issues de régimes historiographiques

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différents. Il s'inscrit dans la continuité d'un genre historiographique qui domine à Harar au cours de la période moderne : les listes d'émirs. Mais la composition puis la diffusion de ce texte entérine un tournant dans l'historiographie de Harar : alors que les listes antérieures ne débutaient qu'au xvii^e siècle, avec le *Jadwal*, un « métarécit » s'impose qui dote la ville d'un passé linéaire, exhaustif et long de plus de dix siècles.

Mots-clés : Harar, listes d'émirs, compilation, écriture de l'histoire

De mars à mai 2021, je me suis rendue à Addis Abeba grâce au soutien du Centre français des études éthiopiennes (CFEE) et du collège des Écoles doctorales de l'Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, afin d'étudier des manuscrits arabes et des mémoires de recherche conservés à l'Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES) de l'Université d'Addis Abeba. En étudiant les manuscrits arabes de l'IES, pour la plupart originaires de Harar, un de mes objectifs était d'identifier des textes historiographiques (chroniques, annales, chronologies, etc.) inédits ou de nouvelles leçons de textes historiographiques déjà connus. J'ai ainsi obtenu des copies de plusieurs textes qui font, avec d'autres, l'objet de mes recherches doctorales. Celles-ci portent sur les écritures de l'histoire, les mémoires et les processus d'islamisation au sein des sociétés musulmanes de l'Est éthiopien, du xvii^e siècle à la mi-xx^e siècle. Ces recherches sont en cours, et ne seront publiées avec plus de détails qu'ultérieurement. Cette note de terrain ne présente donc que quelques résultats préliminaires de mes recherches sur les manuscrits consultés Addis Abeba au printemps 2021. Malgré leur caractère provisoire, l'importance de ces travaux pour la compréhension des discours sur l'histoire de Harar justifie qu'ils soient publiés dès à présent, dans ce volume des *Annales d'Éthiopie* consacré à Harar.

1. Le *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī*

Un des principaux textes que j'ai étudiés à Addis Abeba est le *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī* (« Répertoire de Shāsh et de Shāmī »), composé vers la mi-xx^e siècle par Ahmed Shamie¹, un lettré de Harar. C'est un texte d'une soixantaine de pages qui présente une histoire de Harar et de l'Islam éthiopien, du vii^e au xix^e siècle. Il figure dans le manuscrit 276 de l'IES, qui est décrit par Alessandro Gori dans son catalogue des manuscrits arabes de l'IES (2014 : 9), ainsi que par la base de données en ligne IslHornAfr, créée par le programme de recherche ERC « Islam in the Horn of Africa » qu'A. Gori a dirigé entre 2013 et 2018 (<https://islhornafr.tors.ku.dk/backend/manuscripts/398>). Ewald Wagner, un chercheur allemand spécialiste de la littérature de Harar, est le premier à avoir étudié le *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī*, dans un

¹ C'est ainsi qu'il orthographie son nom lorsqu'il l'écrit en caractères latins, dans le ms. Addis Abeba IES 291.

article de 1974, à partir du même manuscrit. Mais ce philologue se contente de brièvement décrire le *Jadwal* et ne reproduit et ne traduit en anglais que de courts extraits de ce « Répertoire ». Récemment, en 2020, Abdulaziz Shek a soutenu un mémoire de master en philologie à l'Université d'Addis Abeba portant sur l'introduction (la *muqaddima*) du *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī*. Lui aussi n'édite et ne traduit en anglais qu'une partie de ce texte. Il fournit également quelques éléments biographiques sur Ahmed Shamie, à partir d'articles publiés dans un journal de Harar (*Yäkatit*) en 2007 E.C./2014-2015 et d'entretiens réalisés à Harar, Dire Dawa et Addis Abeba (Abdulaziz Shek, 2020 : 10, 13-14).

Abdulaziz Shek indique qu'Ahmed Shamie serait né à Harar en 1885, d'un père commerçant originaire de Syrie (Shām) – d'où son nom d'ash-Shāmī (« le Levantin »). Il venait d'une « famille bien connue qui occupait une position de premier plan dans le commerce et le savoir » (*Ibid.* : 10). « Un de [ses] informateurs déclare [...] [qu'il] avait pour habitude d'accompagner les Allemands, les Français et tous les détenteurs de connaissances qui venaient à Harar. En conséquence, il apprit leurs langues et leur savoir. » (*Ibid.* : 11) Cela expliquerait pourquoi Ahmed Shamie maîtrisait non seulement le harari, l'arabe, l'amharique, l'afaan oromoo et l'argobba, mais connaissait aussi des langues européennes comme le français, l'anglais et l'allemand (*Ibid.* : 12-13). La discipline qui captiva la première son intérêt est la géologie :

Il traversa la plupart de la région à pied et collecta des milliers de spécimens de minéraux et de roches [se déplaçant] à l'ouest jusqu'à Asbe Tafari, à l'est jusqu'à Jigjiga, au nord jusqu'à Legamite, et au sud jusqu'à Mitae Golola. Ses fréquentes visites et enquêtes dans la région pour les spécimens géologiques le mirent en contact avec d'autres domaines d'étude. (*Ibid.* : 15)

Ainsi, il explora au cours de sa vie d'autres disciplines comme l'histoire, l'archéologie, la numismatique, l'ethnologie et la poésie (*Ibid.* : 12). Il composa le *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī* alors qu'il avait déjà plus de 60 ans. Comme il le précise lui-même dans l'introduction de ce « Répertoire », il en écrivit une première version en 1946 pour le comte suédois Björn von Rosen, il le révisa en 1946 et 1948, puis en rédigea la quatrième et dernière version en 1954 pour l'orientaliste néerlandais A. J. Drewes. C'est cette version – offerte par A. J. Drewes à l'IES – qui est aujourd'hui conservée à Addis Abeba (Wagner, 1974 : 213) et que j'ai pu consulter. Ahmed Shamie est mort dans les années 1970, entre 1976 et 1979 (Abdulaziz Shek, 2020 : 18).

En dépit des travaux d'E. Wagner et d'Abdulaziz Shek, une édition et une traduction complètes du *Jadwal* attendent toujours. Mais, surtout, c'est une analyse historiographique du *Jadwal* qu'il est aujourd'hui essentiel d'entreprendre : il faut envisager ce texte dans son contexte de production et en rapport au corpus de textes dont il s'inspire. Le *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa*

ash-Shāmī est en effet une compilation. Comme il le précise en introduction, Ahmed Shamie s'appuie sur de nombreuses sources pour composer son texte :

[...] des livres imprimés en arabe, en amharique et en français, des textes manuscrits en arabe tels que des lettres, des documents et le *Fath Madīnat Harar* de Yaḥyā Naṣrallāh². La plupart des lettres et des documents ont été offerts à Aḥmad Ash-Shāmī par son ami Ash-Shāsh al-Hājī Aḥmad Abrāmū (mort en 1367 A.H./1947-1948), d'où la mention par l'auteur du nom d'Ash-Shāsh dans le titre du *Jadwal*, en plus du sien. (Wagner, 1974 : 213)

Ahmed Shamie puise notamment dans des chroniques islamiques éthiopiennes médiévales comme le *Dhikr at-Tawārīkh*, datant de la fin du XIII^e siècle et qui concerne entre autres territoires le Shawah³, le *Ta'rikh 'Umar Walasma'*, sur les

² Le *Fath madīnat Harar*, « La conquête de la ville de Harar », est un texte d'une vingtaine de pages écrit par un certain Yaḥyā b. Naṣrallāh et conservé dans plusieurs manuscrits de Harar et un manuscrit copié au Somaliland, datant tous du XX^e siècle (cf. Wagner, 1978 : 6-11). Il contient un récit légendaire de l'histoire de Harar au XIII^e siècle. Il raconte l'arrivée en 1216 à Harar d'Abādir 'Umar ar-Riḍā, accompagné de 405 autres saints venus de la Mecque. Après leur arrivée, tous les groupes de la région – des Oromo, Argobba et des Somali – se réunissent à Harar et choisissent leurs chefs parmi les saints. Ces groupes s'engagent alors à fournir de la nourriture et du bois à Harar. Le texte décrit ensuite de nombreuses batailles qui adviennent dans les décennies suivantes contre les chrétiens, principalement les dits « Portugais » et, dans une moindre mesure, les « Italiens ». Plusieurs dirigeants se succèdent à la tête des musulmans, menant des guerres contre les « infidèles ». Finalement, l'un d'entre eux se rend à Mogadiscio pour demander de l'aide au sultan de la ville, un certain Aḥmad b. Adam, qui lui accorde un soutien logistique. Cela permet à Abādir de défaire les chrétiens et de distribuer les terres conquises aux musulmans. Le texte se termine par une prophétie d'Abādir qui prédit la conquête de Harar par les Éthiopiens du royaume chrétien puis par les Italiens (Wagner, 2005). Le *Fath madīnat Harar* a sans aucun doute été composé à Harar au XX^e siècle, probablement dans les années 1930. En effet, bien qu'il se présente comme médiéval, c'est sûrement en raison du contexte de l'occupation italienne de Harar, de 1936 à 1941, que Yaḥyā b. Naṣrallāh a choisi de mettre au cœur de son texte l'enjeu de l'affrontement avec des chrétiens, et notamment les « Italiens ». En outre, on peut relever dans le *Fath madīnat Harar* une description d'un chemin de fer, ce qui permet de le dater clairement comme étant postérieur au chemin de fer franco-éthiopien reliant Djibouti à Addis Abeba, construit entre 1897 et 1917 et inauguré en 1917 (Gast, 2010). ³ Ce texte nous a été transmis par un manuscrit de Harar, daté de 1280 A.H./1863 et aujourd'hui conservé à la Bibliothèque apostolique vaticane (ms. Vat. ar. 1792). Sur ce manuscrit cf. Labadie, 2019. Sur le *Dhikr at-Tawārīkh*, cf. Chekroun & Hirsch, 2020 : 93-95.

musulmans de l'Awfāt puis du Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn (Est éthiopien), et le *Ta'riḳh al-Mulūk* sur Harar dans la seconde moitié du xvi^e siècle⁴.

Après une introduction dans laquelle l'auteur présente la genèse de ce texte, ses sources et ses objectifs ainsi que certaines observations générales sur l'histoire de l'Islam éthiopien, le *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī* consiste en une longue liste des dirigeants musulmans éthiopiens : dans un tableau et selon un modèle de phrase qu'il reprend pour chaque dirigeant, Ahmed Shamie donne le nom et les dates de règne de 73 dirigeants musulmans éthiopiens, de l'émir Ḥabūba aux ix^e-x^e siècles à l'émir 'Abdallāh à la fin du xix^e siècle. Avant cela, les six premières lignes du tableau, numérotées par des lettres arabes, concernent l'épisode bien connu dans la littérature islamique de la *hijrat ilā al-Ḥabasha*⁵ au vii^e siècle, ainsi que la prétendue arrivée au pouvoir de la famille Makhzūmī au ix^e siècle, telle qu'elle est décrite dans le *Dhikr at-Tawāriḳh*. Par ailleurs, Ahmed Shamie reproduit en notes de bas de page les sources sur lesquelles il s'appuie pour chacun des dirigeants cités dans le tableau principal. Ainsi, les textes traduits par E. Wagner dans son article de 1974 sont en fait des documents relatifs à des émirs de Harar des xviii^e et xix^e siècles qu'Ahmed Shamie avait copiés en notes de bas de page du *Jadwal*.

2. Les listes d'émirs de Harar

Le *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī* s'inscrit dans la lignée d'un genre de littérature historiographique harari préexistant : celui des listes d'émirs de la ville. Ces textes sont produits et circulent à Harar depuis au moins le xix^e siècle. De nombreuses listes ont ainsi été publiées, parfois éditées, parfois directement traduites, par des voyageurs ou des chercheurs étrangers entre la fin du xix^e et la mi-xx^e siècle. Les premiers à en avoir publié, dès le xix^e siècle, sont le général égyptien Mohammed Moktar (1876 : 389-391), le Français Gabriel Ferrand (1884 : 290-291), le voyageur autrichien Philipp Paulitschke (1888 : 512-515) et le voyageur et commerçant français Alfred Bardey (1897 : 29-30). Ensuite, en 1914, l'orientaliste français René Basset édite une nouvelle liste à partir d'un manuscrit ramené d'Éthiopie par C. Mondon-Vidailhet et conservé à la BNF – aujourd'hui numéroté Arabe 6628 (cf. Fig. 1). Il traduit cette liste et la

⁴ Sur ces deux derniers textes, cf. respectivement Chekroun, 2013 : 135-169 et Mercier, 2020. ⁵ "Several sources speak of a Muslim presence in Ethiopia even before the great Hijra to Medina in 622 CE with which the Islamic calendar begins. These sources include the *Sīra* (biography of Muhammad) by Ibn Ishāq (ca. 760) and completed by Ibn Hishhām (d. 830), and two biographical dictionaries of the Prophet and his Companions: the *Ṭabaqāt al-ḳubrā* by Ibn Sa'd (d. 845) and the *Ansāb al-ashrāf* by al-Balādhurī (d. 892). They recount that in 615, seven years before the Hijra to Medina, some of the Prophet's Companions (*ṣaḥāba* or *aṣḥāb*) were forced to flee Mecca and find refuge with the Ethiopian king, called *naḳāshī* in the Islamic documentation, in what is called "the first hijra to Abyssinia" (*al-hiḡra al-ūlā ilā arḍ al-ḥabasha*). The *naḳāshī* is said to have welcomed the new Muslims. Some traditions relate that he converted to Islam." (Chekroun & Hirsch, 2020 : 88)

compare avec celles publiées précédemment par G. Ferrand, P. Paulitschke et A. Bardey. Puis, dans un article de 1942, l'orientaliste italien Enrico Cerulli compare la liste éditée par René Basset avec quatre autres listes qu'il a lui-même identifiées dans des manuscrits de Harar. L'historien Salvatore Tedeschi a, lui, édité et traduit en italien en 1972 une liste qu'il avait identifiée dans un manuscrit de l'IES, aujourd'hui numéroté 370⁶. En outre, j'ai moi-même identifié plusieurs listes inédites dans des manuscrits de Harar conservés dans des bibliothèques éthiopienne et européennes. J'ai ainsi trouvé une liste dans le manuscrit 300 de l'IES (f. 3r-4v), deux autres dans un manuscrit de la Bibliothèque apostolique vaticane⁷ et deux autres encore dans deux manuscrits de Berlin – conservés respectivement à la Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften (BBAW) et à la Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (SBB)⁸. Le manuscrit de la Vaticane a été acquis par E. Cerulli à Harar dans les années 1920 ; le manuscrit de la BBAW copié à Harar en 1926 par l'orientaliste Hans Schlobies, celui de la SBB en 1964-1965 par un copiste inconnu ; et le manuscrit de l'IES a été copié par Ahmed Shamie en 1970.

Toutes ces listes d'émirs, publiées ou inédites, se ressemblent énormément : elles présentent la même succession d'émirs, de 'Alī b. Dā'ūd à la mi-xvii^e siècle jusqu'à Muḥammad b. 'Alī 'Abd ash-Shakūr à la fin du xix^e siècle, et elles fournissent des dates de règnes relativement proches. 'Alī b. Dā'ūd, qui est le premier émir cité dans ces listes, est le fondateur de la dynastie qui règne à Harar de 1647 à la conquête de la ville par les Égyptiens en 1875. Dans les listes d'émirs, l'histoire de Harar coïncide donc avec celle de cette dynastie. Les listes collectées par M. Moktar et G. Ferrand, une de celles publiées par P. Paulitschke, celle d'A. Bardey ainsi que la liste « A » de l'article d'E. Cerulli de 1942⁹ s'arrêtent au règne de l'émir Muḥammad b. 'Alī 'Abd ash-Shakūr (r. 1866-1875), qui est destitué lorsque Harar est conquise par les Égyptiens en 1875. La seconde liste publiée par P. Paulitschke s'arrête, elle, au règne de son prédécesseur, l'émir Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr (r. 1852-1866). Pour ce qui est de celle éditée par R. Basset ainsi que de celles que j'ai identifiées dans les manuscrits

⁶ Notons que cette liste-ci se présente sous forme de texte – et non pas une simple énumération de noms, de dates et de durées de règne. Ainsi, le texte édité par S. Tedeschi donne les mêmes informations que les autres précédemment cités, mais avec quelques détails supplémentaires, indiquant par exemple que tel ou tel émir fut emprisonné, déposé ou assassiné. ⁷ Ms. Vatican Vat. ar. 1796 (f. 20-21v). ⁸ Ms. Berlin BBAW NL Schlobies 6d et ms. Berlin SBB Hs. or. 10454 (f. 28v). Pour un catalogue des manuscrits cités ci-dessus, cf. Mercier, 2020 : 194-230. ⁹ Il est impossible de savoir s'il en était autrement dans les autres listes consultées par E. Cerulli car, le cas échéant, il ne semble pas qu'il l'aurait précisé : bien que la liste de R. Basset soit prolongée jusqu'au règne de l'émir 'Abdallāh b. 'Alī, cela n'est pas relevé par E. Cerulli.

FIG. 1. La liste des émirs de Harar du ms. Paris BNF Arabe 6628 (f. 2r).

conservés à l'IES, à la Vaticane et à Berlin, elles ont été prolongées au-delà du règne de l'émir Muḥammad b. 'Alī 'Abd ash-Shakūr : elles mentionnent l'occupation de Harar par les Égyptiens entre 1875 et 1885 – donnant même parfois les noms et les dates des mandats des différents gouverneurs –, puis, pour la plupart, le règne de l'émir 'Abdāllah b. 'Alī entre 1885 et 1887. Ce court règne marque le retour au pouvoir de la dynastie de 'Alī b. Dā'ūd. Certaines de ces listes signalent aussi l'occupation de Harar par le royaume chrétien éthiopien à partir de 1887 – listant même parfois les noms des différents rois et gouverneurs éthiopiens. Ces ajouts dans les manuscrits les plus récents signifient que les listes d'émirs devaient être complétées, au fur et à mesure des événements politiques, par les lettrés de Harar.

Je ne m'attarderai pas ici sur les possibles modes de compilation de ces textes au cours de la période moderne. J'indiquerai seulement que les listes d'émirs semblent avoir été le genre historiographique privilégié à Harar pendant la période de la dynastie de 'Alī b. Dā'ūd (mi-xvii^e-xix^e s.). Elles sont produites par un pouvoir qui met en scène sa propre stabilité en effaçant, à mesure que les règnes se succèdent, toute forme de crise, toute concurrence intra-dynastique. Cette nouvelle forme d'historiographie officielle traduit la constitution d'une mémoire dynastique. Et ces listes plaisent aux orientalistes, voyageurs, puis aux chercheurs qui les publient, dans la mesure où elles donnent des noms et des dates, ce qui correspond assez bien à la perception qu'ont ces derniers de l'histoire comme un récit ordonné de « faits » et de dates. Ces listes ont ainsi servi de squelette à la construction d'un récit linéaire, qui ne s'est pas basé sur une critique de ces sources, mais plutôt sur une doxa qui voudrait que Harar,

grâce à ce pouvoir incarné par la dynastie des émirs, ait fait office d'unique conservatoire de l'Islam dans la région et qu'elle ait dominé l'ensemble des populations voisines tout au long de la période moderne¹⁰.

3. La compilation du *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī* et la construction d'une histoire de Harar longue de dix siècles

Pour ce qui est d'Ahmed Shamie, il s'appuie sur ces listes et s'en inspire. Mais il produit à partir de ce modèle un répertoire bien plus long : il inscrit l'histoire de Harar dans un passé très lointain. Alors que les listes d'émirs de Harar « classiques » ne débutaient qu'à la mi-xvii^e siècle, Ahmed Shamie plonge dans toutes les sources à sa disposition, en tire des éléments d'information (des noms et des dates) et les met bout à bout pour donner à voir une histoire continue de l'Islam éthiopien de la fin du ix^e siècle à la fin du xix^e siècle. Ce faisant, Ahmed Shamie compile ensemble des sources de nature différente. D'une part, il s'appuie sur des chroniques médiévales écrites peu après les événements dont elles témoignent – le *Dikr at-Tawārīkh*, le *Ta'rikh 'Umar Walasma'*, le *Ta'rikh al-Mulūk* –, sur les listes d'émirs de la dynastie de 'Alī b. Dā'ūd ou sur des documents datant des règnes de ces émirs. D'autre part, il puise dans des récits qui ont été mis à l'écrit au xx^e siècle mais qui sont issus du répertoire légendaire de Harar. C'est par exemple le cas en ce qui concerne l'émir Ḥabūba, le premier des 73 dirigeants listés par Ahmed Shamie : il est connu grâce à un texte intitulé « Histoire du Lām-Jiy et du Harar-Jiy », probablement écrit dans la première moitié du xx^e siècle, qui raconte le conflit qui l'aurait opposé à un dirigeant chrétien au x^e ou xii^e siècle, selon les

¹⁰ Cf. en particulier Cerulli, 1936 : 39 : “Si forma così un nuovo Stato musulmano, l'emirato di Harar che dura più di due secoli. Ben poco ci resta della sua storia, oltre le liste cronologiche degli emiri. Se anche, però, non possiamo oggi seguire i singoli avvenimenti, vediamo bene il risultato complessivo dell'azione politica svolta dall'emirato di Harar. I Galla [Oromo] invasori sono accettati nel territorio dell'emirato e vengono gradualmente convertiti dal paganesimo all'Islām ed inquadrati nell'organizzazione amministrativa hararina. È questo un successo importantissimo degli Emiri di Harar, i quali così non solo riescono a conservare in piedi il loro Stato (unico superstite dell'antico regno musulmano di lingua semitica [...]), ma lo rinnovano con le nuove forze delle tribù Galla islāmizzate. A questa abile politica si deve la resistenza di Harar ed insieme la conservazione del prestigio della città stessa come centro religioso musulmano.” E. Cerulli, le pionnier des études sur Harar, énonce là les tenants d'une vision de l'histoire de la ville durant la période moderne qui s'est maintenue dans une grande partie de l'historiographie académique, jusqu'à aujourd'hui.

versions¹¹. La rédaction de ce texte correspond à un moment de mise à l'écrit de récits qui circulaient jusque-là à l'oral. Cela survient dans un contexte de crise et de rupture dans les modes d'écriture de l'histoire à Harar, du fait des occupations successives de la ville par les Égyptiens, les Éthiopiens chrétiens puis les Italiens (entre 1936 et 1941 pour ces derniers). L'écriture du *Faḥḥ Madīnat Harar* s'inscrit dans ce même moment d'historicisation et de mise à l'écrit des légendes qui donne à Harar un passé lointain. Celui-ci fait l'objet de mes recherches doctorales, et je l'étudierai plus en détails dans d'autres publications. Retenons seulement ici qu'Ahmed Shamie met dans son *Jadwal* toutes ses sources au même niveau : le hiatus entre les sources médiévales – qui ne mentionnent pas l'existence de Harar avant le xvi^e siècle (Chekroun, 2022) – et les sources de la première moitié du xx^e siècle n'est pour lui pas un problème. Il accorde autant de fiabilité aux sources historiographiques au sens strict – les listes d'émirs « classiques », les chroniques ou annales médiévales – qu'à des récits légendaires ou mythiques comme le *Faḥḥ madīnat Harar* ; il fait feu de tout bois pour présenter une histoire exhaustive de Harar et de l'Islam éthiopien. L'histoire de sociétés musulmanes de la région tout entière est d'ailleurs engloutie dans son « Répertoire » et fondue avec l'histoire de Harar.

Le *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī* est l'aboutissement d'un programme de vérité qu'on voit émerger dans la littérature de Harar vers les années 1930, dans le *Faḥḥ madīnat Harar* notamment. Apparaît alors dans l'écriture de l'histoire de Harar l'impératif de produire un récit unifié et cohérent ainsi qu'une chronologie précise et linéaire. C'est ainsi que, se pliant à ces nouveaux critères de vérité et y ajoutant le modèle formel fourni par les listes d'émirs de Harar, Ahmed Shamie produit un texte à la fois concis et exhaustif. Il ne retient de toutes les sources à sa disposition que des noms et des dates, qu'il fait même parfois concorder en calculant des dates à rebours. Le basculement qu'il opère est considérable : alors que la cohérence des listes « classiques » était dictée par la succession des émirs de la dynastie de 'Alī b. Dā'ūd, le *Jadwal* fait se succéder des dirigeants qui gouvernaient des espaces et des États différents¹² et

¹¹ Ce texte inédit figure dans les mss. Berlin SBB Hs. or. 10451 (f. 27r-27v), Berlin SBB Hs. or. 10452 (f. 23r-23v) et Vatican Vat. ar. 1796 (f. 3r-3v). Il est aussi reproduit en note de bas de page du *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī* (ms. Addis Abeba IES 276, f. 1r). Dans le ms. SBB Hs. or. 10451, il est intitulé « Histoire de Jiy' et du Harar-Jiy' dans laquelle [il est question de] notre maître émir Ḥabūba [et de son affrontement] avec le maudit démon Ṭ.f.b.lūl ». Dans le ms. SBB Hs. or. 10452, il porte le titre similaire d'« Histoire du Lām-Gey et du Harar-Gey dans laquelle [il est question de] notre maître émir Ḥabūba [et de son affrontement] avec le maudit démon Ṭ.f.b.lūl ». La version reproduite par Ahmed Shamie porte, elle, le titre d'« Histoire du Lām-Jiy et du Harar-Jiy du jihad de notre maître émir Habūbā contre le maudit démon Ṭ.n.b.lūl ». Quant au texte du ms. Vat. ar. 1796, il est intitulé : « Histoire bénie parmi les histoires des rois harari ». ¹² Comme le Shawah, l'Awfāt ou le Barr Sa'd ad-Dīn.

dont les règnes couvrent un millénaire tout entier – voire plus, puisqu’Ahmed Shamie mentionne en prélude à sa liste la *hijrat ilā al-Ḥabasha* et des prétendus dirigeants du IX^e siècle. Par ce renversement historiographique, il dote Harar d’un passé très lointain...

4. L’émergence d’un « métarécit » officiel à partir du *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī*

Le *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī* a connu un succès important. De nombreuses listes inspirées du *Jadwal* – ou des premières versions « brouillons » qu’Ahmed Shamie avait composées antérieurement – figurent ainsi dans des manuscrits de Harar. On en trouve dans les manuscrits Addis Abeba IES 300, Addis Abeba IES 794b, Addis Abeba IES 1926, Addis Abeba IES 2071, Berlin SBB Hs. or. 10451 et Berlin SBB Hs. or. 10452¹³. Elles reprennent les données chronologiques du *Jadwal* mais éliminent les éléments introductifs de ce texte ainsi que ses notes de bas de page. Ces listes « compilatoires » inspirées du travail d’Ahmed Shamie sont devenues la trame d’un « métarécit » linéaire et hararo-centré. Celui-ci est mis en avant par différents acteurs mémoriels de Harar, qui y trouvent des avantages politiques, financiers ou de prestige, dans un contexte de patrimonialisation de la ville liée à l’intervention d’institutions internationales, au tourisme, à l’influence de la diaspora, mais aussi aux enjeux de l’État ethno-fédéral éthiopien depuis les années 1990. Le *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī* a contribué à figer une chronologie et à sanctuariser un certain récit historique, qui est devenu une sorte de récit officiel, un monument mémoriel. Une « Liste des émirs du Harargey » s’appuyant sur les données du *Jadwal* est ainsi affichée au musée Abdallah Sharif de Harar – qui s’intéresse au patrimoine et à l’histoire de la ville (cf. Fig. 2). Alors qu’Ahmed Shamie citait parfois d’autres territoires qu’avaient gouvernés les dirigeants qu’il listait – comme l’Ifāt ou le Shawā –, cette liste associe clairement tous les dirigeants de Ḥabūba jusqu’à ‘Abdallāh au territoire du « Harargey ». Les noms et dates issues du *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī* ont aussi été repris dans une *Histoire de Harar et des Hararis* publiée en 2015 par le Harari People Regional State Culture, Heritage and Tourism Bureau (Wehib M. Ahmed, 2015 : 105-107

¹³ Les manuscrits Addis Abeba IES 794b, Addis Abeba IES 2071, Addis Abeba IES 1926, Berlin SBB Hs. or. 10451 semblent avoir été copiés par la même main. Or, Ewald Wagner (Wagner, 1997 : 33) indique que le ms. SBB Hs. or. 10451 a été copié à Harar en 1972 par un certain Adam Abū Bakr Shaykh. Celui-ci est donc vraisemblablement le copiste de tous ces manuscrits. Il aurait donc contribué à la diffusion des listes « compilatoires » basées sur le *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī* dans la littérature de Harar. Toujours d’après Wagner – qui a collecté ce manuscrit à Harar –, le ms. SBB Hs. or. 10452 a été copié par un certain Aḥmad ‘Abd ar-Raḥman à Harar en octobre 1972 (*Ibid.* : 162). Le ms. IES 300, comme indiqué ci-dessus, a lui été copié par Ahmed Shamie en 1970.

FIG. 2. « Liste des émirs du Harargey » affichée au musée Abdallah Sharif de Harar.
Photo : Amélie Chekroun, 2014.

LIST OF AMIRS OF HARARGEY					
NO	NAMES	YEARS	NO	NAMES	YEARS
1	HABOBA		39	CARAD ABON	1522-1525
2	UMAR ALRIDA SHEKH ABICHA	1000-1020	40	S. ABUBAKAR B. SHAHAMAD	1528-1529
3	UMARDIN I	1020-1033	41	IMAM AHMAD B. IBRAHIM	1529-1543
4	NASIR I	1033-1038	42	S. UMARDIN	1529-1553
5	F. NASROY	1038-1038	43	NUR I	1551-1559
6	NASIR BINI GARALDIN	1038-1038	44	S. ALI B. UMARDIN	1553-1553
7	MUHAYADIN YOUSUF I	1038-1038	45	S. BARAKA B. UMARDIN	1559-1559
8	UMAR AR'IDA II	1065-1066	46	NUR II	1559-1567
9	MUHAYADIN YOUSUF II	1066-1067	47	USHAN B. BADLAY	1567-1569
10	IDAL (ABDAL)	1067-1086	48	S. TALHA	1569-1571
11	MAYA LAMA	1086-1105	49	S. NASIR	1571-1572
12	TADIN BINTI MAYA	1105-1128	50	S. MAHAMAD VI	1572-1577
13	S. HARHAR (HAZBA'IZ)	1128-1183	51	MA'YEUR B. MAHAMAD	1577-1577
14	S. HUSSEN	1183-1202	52	IMAMAH AHMAD	1577-1583
15	S. ABDALLA I	1202-1216	53	SAAD ADI III	1583-1617
16	S. UMAR WALASHA I	1216-1293	54	ABRO B. ALLAM	1617-1646
17	BAZ YAWI B. WALASHA I	1293-1313	55	SADDIK B. YAHYA	1646-1646
18	HAKKADIN B. WALASHA I	1313-1320	56	P. ADAM B. SADDIK	1646-1646
19	SABRADIN B. MAHAMAD	1320-1324	57	AHMAD II	1647-1662
20	GAMALADIN B. MAHAMAD	1324-1331	58	ALI B. DAWID	1662-1670
21	QAT ALI B. SABRADIN	1331-1364	59	HASHIM B. ALI DAWID	1670-1699
22	AHMAD B. QAT ALI	1364-1366	60	ABDALLA BALI DAWID	1699-1721
23	HAKKADIN B. MAHAMAD II	1366-1386	61	TALHA B. ABDALLA...	1721-1732
24	S. SAADADIN B. MAHAMAD	1386-1415	62	ABUBAKAR B. ABDALLA...	1732-1733
25	SARBADIN B. SADIN	1415-1424	63	KHALID B. ABUBAKAR...	1733-1747
26	GAMALADIN B. SAADIN II	1424-1432	64	HAMO B. ABUBAKAR...	1747-1755
27	S. BADLAY B. SAADIN	1432-1445	65	DAWID B. ABUBAKAR...	1755-1782
28	S. MAHAMAD B. BADLAY	1445-1471	66	AHMAD B. ABUBAKAR... VI	1782-1783
29	IBRAHIM B. MAHAMAD I	1471-1471	67	AHMAD B. YOUSUF...	1783-1784
30	SHAHADIN B. MAHAMAD	1471-1487	68	ABDUSHAKUR B. YOUSUF...	1794-1821
31	IBRAHIM B. DAT NASRADIN	1487-1488	69	AHMAD B. MAHAMAD...	1821-1825
32	MAHAMAD AZHARADIN	1488-1518	70	ABDURAHMAN B. MAHAMAD	1825-1834
33	S. MAHFUZ	1492-1517	71	ABDUKAIM B. MAHAMAD...	1834-1852
34	S. MAHAMAD III	1518-1519	72	ABUBAKAR B. MAHTAL... III	1852-1856
35	IBRAHIM B. AHMAD II	1519-1519	73	AHMAD B. GARAD DAWID...	1856-1875
36	GARAD MAHFUZ	1519-1519	74	MAHAMAD B. GARAD DAWID...	1875-1885
37	MANSUR I	1519-1519	75	AdminstreLon of Egypt	1885-1885
38	IBRAHIM MAHFUZ B. MAHAMAD	1519-1520	76	ABDULLAHI B. MAHAMAD...	1885-1885

en particulier). Une *Histoire de la vie des émirs, sultans et imams de Harar (de 896 à 1887)* en amharique a également été publiée en 2013 à Addis Abeba par Bätäshomä Bərhanu Kāmal. Je n'ai pas encore traduit et analysé ce livre, mais l'on peut déjà observer dans le sommaire que chacun de ses chapitres porte sur un dirigeant dit « de Harar », et que leur ordre de succession correspond à celui proposé par Ahmed Shamie dans son *Jadwal*. Cela illustre à quel point les listes issues des compilations de la mi-xx^e siècle constituent aujourd'hui un patrimoine historique qu'il est difficile de remettre en question. Elles forment la base d'un discours historique qui nourrit le nationalisme harari.

Mais ce manque de critique est aussi apparent dans la littérature académique, où de nombreux historien-ne-s n'ont pas questionné la construction de ces fictions historiographiques. On doit cela d'abord à une manière de faire de l'histoire que l'on pourrait qualifier de « cumulative ». Celle-ci cherche à amasser les textes, puis à effacer les divergences entre eux pour les faire parler d'une seule voix ; elle met de côté les « erreurs » pour tirer des sources un soi-disant noyau de vérité historique. Cette historiographie fait l'économie d'une critique historique qui seule peut nous permettre de comprendre les textes. Par exemple, Ewald Wagner, dans un article de 1976, choisit de comparer le *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī* ainsi qu'une autre liste similaire¹⁴ à d'autres sources comme le *Fath madīnat Harar* et le *Dhikr at-Tawārīkh*. Il annonce clairement

¹⁴ Il s'agit de la liste qui figure dans le manuscrit aujourd'hui conservé à Berlin, à la Staatsbibliothek, sous la cote Hs. or. 10451. C'est E. Wagner qui a légué ce manuscrit à la Staatsbibliothek.

dans son introduction vouloir faire une « synthèse » de ces sources. Son objectif principal est de mettre le *Fath madīnat Harar* en parallèle avec d'autres textes, afin de vérifier son prétendu « noyau historique » relatif au XIII^e siècle. Le *Jadwal* d'Ahmed Shamie et l'autre liste basée sur ses données ne donnent pas les mêmes dates que le *Fath madīnat Harar* : Ahmed Shamie a utilisé les noms qui figuraient dans ce texte mais a modifié les dates pour qu'elles s'insèrent dans la chronologie de son « métarécit » linéaire. Néanmoins, pour E. Wagner, « malgré leur approche chronologique différente, [les listes] confirment la succession des souverains donnée dans le *Fath* et en partie aussi la durée des règnes. » Or, comme je l'ai dit plus haut, le *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī* est compilé à partir du *Fath madīnat Harar*, entre autres sources – et tous deux ne sont écrits qu'au XX^e siècle. À ne pas vouloir critiquer les sources et étudier l'histoire de ces textes, E. Wagner est ainsi pris au piège de son érudition « cumulative » : que la même succession d'évènements soit répétée dans plusieurs textes ne la rend pas plus vraie...

Une autre explication à l'absence de critique dans la littérature académique sur Harar pourrait être qu'il s'agit là d'une société africaine, et que l'historicité de ces dernières est souvent niée (Fauvelle, 2018 : 5-8). Ainsi, des éléments du « métarécit » formé à partir du *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī* sont transmis par des informateurs locaux puis repris par des chercheurs, sans aucune critique. Cela donne notamment des dates de fondation de Harar tout à fait surprenantes qui fleurissent dans la littérature. Pour ne citer qu'un exemple : Camilla Gibb, anthropologue spécialiste de Harar, affirme dans deux articles datés de 1998 et 1999 que la ville aurait été fondée au IX^e siècle par Abādir – le personnage central du *Fath madīnat Harar*. Or, dans aucune source à ma connaissance Abādir n'est considéré comme un personnage du IX^e siècle : le *Fath madīnat Harar* le date du XIII^e siècle, le *Jadwal ash-Shāsh wa ash-Shāmī* du X^e siècle. Qui plus est, ces deux textes sont très récents, et il n'existe en fait aucune mention de Harar dans les sources médiévales avant le XVI^e siècle. Ainsi, C. Gibb – comme d'autres chercheurs – n'a pas pris la peine de vérifier l'information qu'on lui a donnée. Elle n'a pas entrepris d'observer qu'il existe de multiples récits de fondation de Harar, ni de questionner leur origine. Elle ne les a pas non plus mis en parallèle avec les chroniques médiévales que nous connaissons pourtant depuis 1931 et leur publication par E. Cerulli et qui datent l'émergence de Harar du XVI^e siècle. Peut-être a-t-elle supposé que cette date du IX^e siècle, alors qu'elle ne lui a vraisemblablement été donnée que par un informateur local – la figure du « vieillard africain » –, correspondait à une « tradition orale ». Dès lors, bien que remontant à plus d'une dizaine de siècles, celle-ci pouvait être directement considérée comme véridique, sans qu'il y ait besoin de critique historique. Certain·e·s chercheur·e·s sont ainsi persuadé·e·s que la transmission de l'histoire dans les sociétés africaines se fait toujours de manière orale, linéaire et fidèle. Ils se retrouvent alors

aveugles aux manipulations du passé qui adviennent dans ces sociétés, comme ailleurs¹⁵. À ce sujet, Bertrand Hirsch (2015) a montré comment et pourquoi les approximations, les erreurs et les raccourcis hasardeux sont davantage tolérés lorsqu'il s'agit d'Afrique.

Pour toutes ces raisons, il est aujourd'hui essentiel d'étudier les listes issues du travail d'Ahmed Shamie de manière critique, et en les mettant en relation avec l'ensemble des listes des émirs de Harar ainsi qu'avec les autres textes sur l'histoire de la ville composés entre la fin du XIX^e siècle et la mi-XX^e siècle¹⁶. Cela permettra d'éclairer l'histoire intellectuelle et politique de Harar durant cette période, à un moment où l'identité historique de la ville souffre de profondes remises en cause. Mais déconstruire cette strate historiographique est aussi essentiel pour pouvoir aborder l'histoire de Harar et de l'Islam éthiopien du Moyen-Âge au XIX^e siècle en s'extrayant du discours qui s'est imposé par la suite. Cela suppose que l'on soit prêt·e·s à renoncer au désir une histoire linéaire et « complète » : sous le voile du « métarécit », le passé se découvre parcouru d'incertitudes et de silences...

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¹⁵ Cf. Fauvelle, 2018 : 7-8 sur le primitivisme et l'immobilité dans lesquels sont projetées les sociétés africaines – l'idée d'une « Afrique immémoriale ».

¹⁶ C'est ce que je m'efforce de faire dans le cadre de mes recherches doctorales en cours.

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Thomas Osmond*

Mawlūd Tradition, Reformist Dynamics and State Policies in East Ethiopia

The Controversial Celebrations of Prophet Muḥammad
in Harar and among Its Oromo Neighbours

Abstract

This contribution questions the socio-historical dynamics of *Mawlūd* celebrations in Harar and its rural vicinity in the Oromiya Eastern Hararghe Zone. This work is the result of ethnographic investigations conducted in the first half of the 2010s while Ethiopian authorities attempted to impose a state version of Islam that was based on the controversial *al-Ahbash* doctrine. From the theological ambivalence of the *Mawlūd* corpuses in the Harari city and its rural Oromo surroundings, to its contemporary revivals in a regional context marked by ethno-national competition and Islamic reformism, this study reveals the plural stakes and still debated practices of Prophet Muḥammad's celebrations in these eastern territories of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Keywords: *Mawlūd/Mawlid* celebrations, Prophet Muḥammad's Companions, Muslim legacies, reformist dynamics, Harari/Oromo ethnic representation, religious state policies

Résumé

Cette contribution propose d'interroger les dynamiques socio-historiques des célébrations du *mawlūd* à Harar et dans ses environs ruraux de la zone Est Hararghe de la Région Oromiya. Ce travail est le résultat d'enquêtes menées dans la première moitié des années 2010, lors de la tentative des autorités éthiopiennes d'imposer une version étatique de l'Islam basée sur la doctrine controversée *al-Ahbash*. De l'ambivalence théologique des corpus du *mawlūd* dans la ville harari et son environnement rural oromo, à ses renouveaux contemporains dans un contexte régional marqué par la compétition ethno-nationale

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et le réformisme islamique, cette étude révèle les enjeux pluriels et les pratiques encore débattues des célébrations du prophète Muḥammad dans ces territoires orientaux de la République fédérale démocratique d'Éthiopie.

Mots-clés : célébrations du *mawlūd* / *mawlid*, compagnons du Prophète Muḥammad, héritages musulmans, dynamiques réformistes, représentation ethnique Harari / Oromo, politique religieuse de l'État

Introduction

Ethiopia's rich Muslim legacies are mainly embedded in the historical trajectories of Prophet Muḥammad's Companions, from their early arrival in the northern part of Tigrāy (615 A.D.) to the foundation of Harar in the east and the successive missionary campaigns conducted since the 13th century (Gori, 2007). These regional and local legacies of the Prophet's missionaries have been closely related to the *Mawlid* or *Mawlūd*¹ literary corpuses. Written in Arabic or in *Ajami* local languages,² these manuscripts mainly compile verses of the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, and poetic panegyrics (*manzūma* or *qaṣīda* in Arabic) that are dedicated to Prophet Muḥammad and the genealogical chain (*silsila*) of his devoted Companions (*ṣaḥāba* or *awliya al-nabiy*). Though these *Mawlid* or *Mawlūd* corpuses are generally held in public to commemorate the Prophet's birth and the major holidays of the Muslim year, they are also performed amongst neighbours to celebrate important family events.³

Today, as in several other parts of Ethiopia, *Mawlid* remains a living and very popular tradition in Harar and its rural vicinity in the present Oromiya Eastern Hararghe Zone. However, far from performing the same religious heritage, these local celebrations rather stage plural ceremonial practices and theological legacies that reflect the controversial history of Islam in and around Harar. Indeed, the local *Mawlid* traditions tend to reveal the historical shift from ancient Sufi Qadīri legacies to more contemporary – and today dominant – Shāfi'i Sunnī reformism that moderates the so-called cultural 'innovations' (*bad'a* in Arabic, sing. *bid'a*) of the old Sufi interpretations (Osmond, 2014).

¹ In Arabic, *Mawlūd* literally means 'what is procreated, delivered' or 'the new born child,' and underlines 'his/her native location' or 'genealogical descent.' In the Islamic-Arabic tradition, while *Mawlid* focuses on the very birthday of Prophet Muḥammad (*mawlid nabīyy muḥammad*), the *Mawlūd* corpuses rather designate the celebrations of 'Allah's elected man'—*Mustāfa*, the name frequently given to the Prophet in this corpus, his close Companions and their descendants or truthful heirs (Fuchs & Knappert, 2007; Gori, 2010). ² *Ajami* is the regional adaptation of the Arabic word *ajam*, which literally means 'stranger, foreigner, non-Arab'. In the Horn of Africa, *Ajami* designates the Muslim texts using the Arab alphabet to write in local—Amharic, Oromo, Tigrean, Somali or Afar—languages (see Pankhurst, 1994). ³ See Hussein Ahmed, 1988; Braukämper, 2002; Tarsitani, 2007/2008; Gori, 2010; or Abbebe Kifleyesus, 2014.

The growing popularity of these more puritan *Mawlid* corpuses seems to foster the historical ethno-religious cleavages between the Harari and Oromo ‘nationalities’ (Zitelmann, 1993; Osmond, 2014) within the current Ethiopian federal regime. Moreover, to contain the regional threat of Islamist extremism in Ethiopia, Harar and the *Harari Mawlūd* have been recently promoted as the national symbols of the ‘peaceful’ Muslim heritage in the country.⁴ Like in several countries of West Africa, the recent reformist revival of *Mawlid* celebrations in Ethiopia may become a central issue, “both for the state and the nation” (Holder, 2009: 128).

The regional trajectories of the *Mawlid* traditions in East Ethiopia – as in the Middle East or Asia (Kaptein, 1993a & 1993b) – unveil plural historical dynamics and political legacies. As in Mali or Senegal (Dozon, 2005; Holder, 2009), the current mobilization of the Harari and Oromo *Mawlūd* corpuses in local and national identity debates seems to illustrate the emergence of state devices that promote Islam in Ethiopia as part of the national cultural heritage.

Almost three decades after the implementation of the 1994 Federal Constitution, this article examines the controversial legacies of the local *Mawlūd* corpuses in Harar and the surrounding Oromiya Eastern Hararghe Zone. From the ongoing (re)constructions of the Harari and Oromo ‘nationalities’, to the popularity of contemporary reformist entrepreneurs of Sunnī Islam, this study of the local and national dynamics of *Mawlid* in East Ethiopia offers a concrete perspective that questions the interactions between ‘religious public modernity’ (Holder, 2009), state policies, and the development of competing ethno-regionalist claims within the Ethiopian Federation. This work on the controversial celebrations of Prophet Muḥammad’s birth also provides another look on the blurry Islamist infiltration of *Salafī/Wahhabī* ‘terrorist’ groups in this Eastern part of Ethiopia.

1. The Ambivalent Theological Tradition of *Mawlūd* Corpuses in Harar and Its Rural Vicinity

It is still commonly assumed that the regional history of Harar opposes the Muslim ‘civilization’ of the Harari city dwellers to the ‘pagan’ or ‘traditionalist’ Oromo peasants inhabiting its rural vicinity.⁵ However, the urban elites of Harar and the Oromo farmers and cattle herders of Eastern Hararghe have instead existed as two competing and complementary sides of the same coin where the regional dynamics of the Muslim city/countryside dichotomies and the changing socio-economic networks have bound them together for more than eight centuries (Desplat, 2008; Osmond, 2014). In this perspective, the

⁴ Harar received the “Unesco Cities of Peace Prize” in 2002-2003. ⁵ Until recently, these Oromo populations have been generally depicted as ‘foreign’ and ‘pagan tribes’ that recurrently threatened the existence of the Muslim city, since the 16th century (Barker, 1842; Burton, 1856; Caulk, 1977).

competing Hanāfi, Qadīri, and Shāfi'i reformist legacies of the local *Mawlid* tradition reveal the historical stakes around the controversial identity of Abadir, the Saint Sharīf missionary of Islam who is often presented as the founder of Harar around the 13th century.

1.1. *The Harari Mawlūd: A Shāfi'i Siddiqi Fiction Emerging from the Political History of East Ethiopia?*

Despite the heteroclitic texts and theological influences found in literary collections within the present Ethiopian federal regime, the manuscripts and the recitations of the *Mawlid* tradition in Harar are still generally presented as a homogenous corpus that is embedded in the immutable cultural heritage of the Harari city dwellers (Gori, 2010).

After the controversial Ethiopian elections held in 2005 and, one year later, the recognition of Harar's walled *madīna* (locally called *Jugol*) as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the local Harari authorities have increasingly valued the Muslim tradition of the city (Desplat, 2008). Nevertheless, to fit with the 'authentic' features of this state-sponsored religious heritage (Kabha & Eirlich, 2006), the current re-arrangements of the Harari *Mawlūd* corpuses fail to fairly represent the diverse and ancient Muslim legacies of Harar and Eastern Hararghe.

Indeed, the recent philological studies conducted on the literary compilation of the Harari *Mawlūd* – locally called *mawlid sharaf al-ʿalamin* or 'the Respectable Birth of the World' in Arabic – have partially unveiled "the complex and variegated nature of the influences (...) that were at work in the process of (its) formation and development" (Gori, 2010: 51). These studies suggest that this compilation of manuscripts in Harar was probably based on the classical poetic praise of the Prophet and rooted in the ancient Hanāfi and Qadīri interpretations of Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373), such as al-Būshīrī's famous poem in the *Burdat al-madhī*, 'the Mantel of the Prophet' (Gori, 2010: 52, 59). In addition, the philological works on the Harari *Mawlūd* point out the later insertion of other texts that are embedded in the more puritan Shāfi'i interpretations of Egyptian theologians like Ibn Suyūtī (d. 1505), such as the verses attributed to Abū Bakr al-Hanbali or the *Mawlid sharaf al-anām*, which is attributed to 'Abd al-Karīm al-Barzanjī (d. 1763).⁶

In Ethiopia, as elsewhere, though both the Hanāfi and Shāfi'i doctrines consider the celebration of Prophet Muḥammad's Birth as a tolerated practice (worded through the expression *bid'a hasana*, 'a good innovation' in Arabic), these two schools of Islamic hermeneutic articulate several differences in their

⁶ See Becker, 1932: 93-94 and Kaptein, 1993a: 126, quoted in Gori, 2010: 55, 61.

respective interpretations of the *Mawlid*.⁷ The ancient Hanāfi legacies of the Harari *Mawlūd* remind the literary compilations centred on ‘The Book of the Lights of the Respectable/Enlightened’ (*kitāba ‘anwar al-sharīf* in Arabic) that celebrate the mystic night of Prophet Muḥammad’s Birth align with the Qadīri hermeneutics on the natural creation/animation (*tajallī*) of the world.⁸ Close to Ibn Kathīr’s exegesis, these ancient compilations of the *Mawlid* also comprise religious verses, poems, and panegyrics on Prophet Muḥammad’s teachings and the miraculous deeds of his most devoted Companions and regional heirs (*Awliyā*), such as ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī or the local descendants of Hasān and Husayn who were related to Baghdad and the Sufi Qadīri theologians of the 12th-13th centuries.

The Shāfi’i doctrinal features of the texts that were probably more recently incorporated into the Harari *Mawlūd* corpuses tend to follow the now famous compilations mobilized within the *Mawlid* celebrations in East Africa and Indonesia and that are attributed to ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Barzanjī (d. 1763).⁹ Along these more puritan Shāfi’i legacies of the Harari *Mawlūd*, the celebration of Prophet Muḥammad instead commemorates the birth of ‘Allah’s Elected Man’ (*mustāfa* in Arabic). Unlike the Hanāfi interpretations on the Prophet’s mystic birth, the Shāfi’i doctrines celebrate the more legal side of the Islamic Tradition (*sunnī al-islamiyya*). Centred on the biography of the Prophet, the religious texts and poetic panegyrics of these Shāfi’i registers of the Harari *Mawlūd* corpuses rarely mention the most prestigious regional *Awliyā*, but often remind of the devotion of the former Prophets, such as Noah, Musa or Yusuf as well as the heirs of Prophet Muḥammad’s contemporary Companions (*ṣaḥaba al-nabiyy*), such as Abū Bakr and ‘Umar who were the first and second Caliphs of Islam.

⁷ For an overview of the main *Hanāfi*, *Shāfi’i* and *Hanbāli* interpretation on the *Mawlid*, see <https://www.makingsenseofislam.com/the-birth-mawlid-of-the-prophet/>, consulted in January 2022. ⁸ “*Mawlid* texts almost invariably convey and spread a very refined theological message that can be considered the main intellectual background of their structure: the light of the Prophet (nūr Muḥammad; nūr muḥammadī) was created by God before the entire universe came into existence. Once the world was created, the light of the Prophet passed through the generations of the prophets until it was finally revealed to mankind in Muḥammad himself. The earth was thus honoured by the manifestation of the nūr Muḥammad and the human beings were enlightened by this divine gift” (Gori, 2010: 52). For a more general presentation of the Sufi mystic hermeneutics on the manifestation of all things through the Divine Light or Creation, see also Wilson, 1993: 143 and the on-line English translation of *Imam Ibn Kathīr, Al-Bidayah wa’an-Nihayah (the Beginning and the End)*. ⁹ See note 6.

The sanctuary of Abadir is located within Harar's old, walled medina – the *Jugol* – and it is argued that Abadir 'Umar ar-Ridha as-Sadīq, who was from Mecca-Medina and who was related to the Prophet through his close Companions Abū Bakr and 'Umar, was the founder of the city of Harar. Descendant of Abū Bakr and, after his death, the second Caliph of Islam, 'Umar was a close relative and contemporary Companion of Prophet Muḥammad and is remembered for his literary knowledge of the true Islamic Tradition.¹⁰ In the rural territories of Harar's vicinity in the Eastern Hararghe Zone of the Oromiya Regional State, the local historical narratives argue that Harar was founded by forty Sharīf Qadīri missionaries who arrived from Baghdad. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 1166), 'the Reviver of the Religion' (*sayyid muhyidīn* in Arabic), was a descendant of Husayn, the second son of 'Ali and Fatima, the daughter of Prophet Muḥammad.¹¹ 'Abd al-Qādir was a highly respected religious figure of the Abbasid capital, where the Persian founder of the famous Qadiriyya orders spread one of the major missionary movements in the history of Islam. His exceptional erudition was based on the long studies of the Qur'ān he conducted according to the Hanbālī tradition as well as his deep knowledge of the *tasawwūf*, 'the Science of Heart', taught by the classical Sufi masters (Muhammad Riyaz, 2000).

Beyond current ethnic distinctions between the Harari and the Oromo, these rural and urban narratives on the ancient history and founding of Harar and its contemporary Oromo hinterland tend to pit two competing Sharīf legacies along city/countryside dichotomies, which are close to those described by Ibn Khaldun in the 14th century Muslim world (Rosenthal, 1958). In this local configuration, the religious cleavage between the Harari urban elites and their rural neighbours historically opposes the Qurayshi Siddīqī tradition of the former (in the line of Abū Bakr as-Sadīq) and the Ḥusaynī Qadīri heritage of the latter (Osmond, 2014).

As in the competing representation of Prophet Muḥammad's Companions among the local *Mawlūd* corpuses, the controversial narratives on the regional history of Harar tend to oppose the Shāfi'i legacies of the close Siddīqī Saḥāba claimed by the dwellers of Harar, to the Hanāfi heritage preserved in the senior shrines of the local Qadīri *Awliyā*, located in the surrounding countryside of Eastern Hararghe. In this perspective, the local *Mawlūd* celebrations held for

¹⁰ The final transcription of the Qu'rān and the most famous compilations of *ḥadīth* were mainly achieved during his Caliphate. Among the first four Caliphs of Islam, 'Umar is then often considered as one of the senior Muslim followers in Medina (*salāf al-madīna*). ¹¹ Though 'Abd al-Qadīr's father, Abu Salih Musa, was a paternal descendant of Hasan (the eldest son of 'Alī and Fatima), the local historical narratives around Harar rather emphasize his Ḥusaynī heritage through his charismatic mother, Umma al-Khayr Fatima, whose father was a paternal descendant of Ḥusayn (see Muhammad Riaz, 2000).

‘*Āshūrā*’ and the ceremonial cycle around Prophet Muḥammad’s Birth seem to illustrate and even concretely perform the urban/rural duality of the plural historical memories on Harar’s foundation and original Muslim heritage.

1.2. *The Almost Forgotten Hanāfi Qadīri Corpuses That Founded the Urban/Rural Duality of Regional Polity*

In the early and more contemporary history of the local Islamic Community (*umma al-islamiyya*), these ancient doctrinal oppositions have been mirrored through the *Mawlūd* celebrations performed for ‘*Āshūrā*’ in Harar and its rural vicinity. The yearly celebrations of ‘*Āshūrā*’ are often associated with the famous Shiite ceremonies commemorating the battle of Karbala in present Iraq when the then Umayyad Caliph, Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiya, killed his rival Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī, the grandson of Prophet Muḥammad. Apart from this Shiite interpretation, the present dominant Sunnī doctrines tend to consider ‘*Āshūrā*’ as the day celebrating the liberation of Moses and his People from the yoke of the Egyptian Pharaoh.¹² Beyond this current formal Shiite/Sunnī distinction, ‘*Āshūrā*’ presents several regimes of historicity from Jewish to ancient and more contemporary Muslim legacies.¹³

Though the history of Islam around Harar remains understudied, several elements suggest that the earliest and most respected Muslim communities established in the rural Oromo territories surrounding the old *madīna* are rooted in regional Sufi tradition and local Ḥusaynī Qadīri descents. In addition to the numerous ruins of old shrines that date from the 13th century at least, different local genealogical narratives reveal the existence of ancient Ḥusaynī Qadīri congregations (*turuq*, sg. *tariqa*) and chains of Muslim theologians (*silsila*). According to these local narratives, these Saint missionaries of Islam (generally called *Awliyā*, but also *Aw* or *Sheikh*) came from Baghdad, Karbala – through the Yemeni region of Hadramawt – and were considered as the senior regional descendants of ‘Alī, Ḥusayn and ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī in the Horn of Africa (see Bardey, 2010; Braukämper, 2002; Desplat, 2008; Osmond, 2014).

¹² This Sunnī interpretation of ‘*Āshūrā*’ is based on the *ḥadīth* found in the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, stating that Prophet Muḥammad saw one day some Jewish individuals fasting around Mecca. After asking them why they did so, they answered him by narrating this event about Moses’s liberation from Egypt. Then, Prophet Muḥammad ordered that the Muslims had to fast the 10th of Muḥarram too, because he said his people was closer to Prophet Moses than the Jewish (Brown, 2007). ¹³ Recent studies reveal the diversity of the regional commemorations and their close relations with the local political history of the mostly Shiite communities inhabiting Iran, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Pakistan, America or European towns (Korom, 2003; Chelkowski, 2005; Mervin, 2007 and 2010; Monsutti, 2007).

In the northwestern vicinity of Harar, about 20 kilometers from the old city, the rural shrine of Aw Nugus is often considered as one of these earliest Ḥusaynī Qadīri communities in the region.¹⁴ According to the local historical narratives, the founder of Aw Nugus originated from Karbala and settled around Harar around the 15th-16th century. Though almost nothing is known about his parents, he is generally portrayed as a Sharīf Ḥusaynī master of Sunnī-Sufism, and as someone who devoted his lonely life to the study of the Qur’ān in a cave. In Eastern Hararghe, he was adopted by one of the most influent local federations of Oromo farmers, named *Noole*, that controlled the rich agricultural lands in the northwestern surrounds of Harar. His descendants regularly married the daughters of the influent figures of the *Noole* federations. Through these matrimonial alliances, the successive leaders of Aw Nugus became wealthy local landowners. Above all, the founder of this Sunnī Ḥusaynī community is considered as one of the major local heirs of the Qadīri missionaries who came from Baghdad to teach Islam and found the city of Harar around the 13th century (Osmond, 2014).

Among the community of Aw Nugus and as is found amongst the other senior Ḥusaynī Qadīri shrines located in the rural territories of Eastern Hararghe, such as Aw Sôfi or Aw Hakim, the celebrations of ‘*Ashūrā*’ tend to share common regional Qadīri interpretations and Sunnī Ḥusaynī traditions. Indeed, at the Aw Nugus shrine, ‘*Ashūrā*’ is the celebration held on the 10th of Muḥarram to end the nine fasting days observed for the beginning of the Muslim New Year, the 1st of Muḥarram. ‘*Ashūrā*’ is also closely related to the day when Allah forgave Adam for his faults, saved Noah from the Great Flood, Moses from the Egyptian Pharaoh’s yoke, rescued Issa from crucifixion, Prophet Muḥammad from the persecution of Mecca-Medina, and Ḥusayn from his agony on the battlefield of Kufa. Beyond the simple remembrance of Allah’s mercy, justice and love towards his Prophets and the most devoted servants of Prophet Muḥammad’s Companions (*sahaba* and *awliyā al-nabawiyy*), the 10th of Muḥarram is rather a day of examination, the ‘Day of Salvation’ (*yum al-falāh* in Arabic), or the ‘Day of the New Year to obtain God’s assistance’ (*guyyaa rabbi amaata hariyatti dirmaccuu keenyaa nu basa* in Oromo language): in order to save them from hazards and maintain Divine protection insuring peace and prosperity for the New Year, the members of the Aw Nugus community have to solve their divisions, reconcile themselves, and beg God to forgive them for the sins they committed in the previous year.

¹⁴ The information presented in the following paragraphs on Aw Nugus are based on the fieldwork I conducted in and around this shrine, as well as in Harar between 2010 and 2014. For an overview, see Osmond, 2014.

Rooted into the classical Qadīri tradition, though already mentioned in the *ḥadīth* compilation of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (Brown, 2007), this interpretation of ‘*Āshūrā*’ as the closing celebrations of the Muslim New Year, associated to the ‘Day of Salvation’ (*yum al-falāh*) and the annual test it carries is attributed to ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī in his book *Al-Ghunya li-talibi’ tarīq al-haqq wa al-dīn* (“Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of Truth and Religion”), which is a collection of *ḥadīth* and hermeneutic texts (see Rothental, 1952). This commemoration of ‘*Āshūrā*’ is also linked to the thirteenth verse of *Suratu ash-shūrā* (42, ‘The Surah of the Consultation’) in the Qur’ān, which insists on Noah’s mission to remind that the Islamic Community (*umma al-islamiyyia*) must not be threatened by internal divisions. Moreover, this rural commemoration of ‘*Āshūrā*’ is associated with Imam Ibn Kathīr’s hermeneutic (*tafsīr*), which stresses that right before the Great Flood, Prophet Noah warned the humans that they had to remain united and ask Allah to forgive their sins in order to obtain his assistance and protection (*falāh* in Arabic).¹⁵

At Aw Nugus, the celebrations of ‘*Āshūrā*’ include the commemoration of Ḥusayn’s assassination. Nevertheless, contrary to Shiite organizations, this Ḥusaynī commemoration neither promotes the political revenge of ‘Alī’s followers against the usurpers of the Caliphate, nor mobilizes any esoteric leading Imam. By interpreting the day of ‘*Āshūrā*’ as the Divine Salvation provided to Allah’s Prophets and devoted servants, the community of Aw Nugus re-proclaims the unity of the local community *umma al-islamiyyia*. In this Sunnī Ḥusaynī Qadīri commemoration of ‘*Āshūrā*’, the rural neighbours of Harar are affirmed as the legitimate local heirs of ‘Alī, whereas the elites of the city are associated with the descendants of Ḥusayn’s murderers. By associating the urban elites of Harar with the descendants of Mu‘āwiya and the surrounding rural Oromo federations of Eastern Hararghe with those of ‘Alī, the ceremonies of ‘*Āshūrā*’ perform a regional adaptation of the fratricide conflicts opposing the Umayyad and the Alid Sharīf descent (Osmond, 2014).

The religious poems (*manzūma*) recited in the shrine of Aw Nugus during the night celebration of ‘*Āshūrā*’ sound like those performed for the same

¹⁵ Ibn Kathīr reports that Prophet Noah said: “Ask forgiveness from your Lord, Verily, He is Oft Forgiving; He will send rain to you in abundance, and give you increase in wealth and children, and bestow on you gardens and bestow on you rivers” (Imam Imaduddin Abul-Fida Ismail Ibn Kathīr, circa 14th century AD, *Stories of the Prophets*: 25).

celebration in the main shrines of Harar.¹⁶ However, in the rural compound of Aw Nugus, these religious recitations are spatially and linguistically cleaved along two distinct houses that represent the two conflicting and complementary regional legacies of Islam in Eastern Hararghe. During this ceremonial night amongst the community of Aw Nugus, the pilgrims coming from Harar stay in a house called *mana mawlūd*, ‘the House of the *Mawlūd*’, and recite *manzūma* in Arabic and Harari languages from their diverse compilations of manuscripts, such as the *Fath al-Raḥman* – ‘The Glory of the Merciful’ – or *Mustāfa*, which focuses on Prophet Muḥammad, Abū Bakr, ‘Umar and to a less extent, ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. The local peasants mainly spend the ceremonial night inside another house, named *mana manguddo*, ‘the House of the (local) Elders’ in Oromo language. They also perform religious songs about the Prophet and his *Ṣaḥāba* but tend to privilege the local biographic narratives on the wide erudition, miraculous deeds, and religious devotion of their regional servants (*Awliyā*), such as the successive Sheikhs who led the Ḥusaynī and Qadīri community of Aw Nugus.

Through complex musical techniques, which mirror the circular effect cultivated in *zhiḳr* practices, the *manzūma* recited in the Oromo language inside the *mana manguddo*, ‘the House of the Elders’, mobilize metaphoric registers of love and passion. Closely related to the classical tradition of the – mostly Persian – Sufi masters like Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī (Barks, 2003) or Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 1240), these poetic narratives involve male and female singers, accompanied by drummers:

<i>Salaam halikum Husseiniya</i>	Salaam halikum, Husseiniya
<i>Salaam halikum anna ḳiya</i>	Salaam halikum, my relative
<i>Inarina wal inarsinu</i>	Don’t get upset, we will not provoke each other
<i>Hanga balaa ḳhana qarsinu</i>	Until we overcome these hard times
<i>Aw Nugus ya walyie</i>	Aw Nugus, the Saint Companion (of Prophet Muḥammad)
<i>Jeggol ijaranifi</i>	They (the dwellers of Harar) built the fence of your shrine

¹⁶ Despite their current decline, the ceremonies of ‘*Āshūrā*’ are still one of the major celebrations performed among the community of Aw Nugus. To emphasize the local religious seniority of this Ḥusaynī community, the night of ‘*Āshūrā*’ in Aw Nugus is celebrated one day before the ceremonies held in the other historical shrines of Harar and Eastern Hararghe. Embedded in Sunnī and mostly Persian Ḥusaynī legacies and ancient Qadīri traditions, this celebration in the sanctuary of Aw Nugus also reflects its historical position of privileged middlemen between the city and the countryside. ¹⁷ Extracts of my own recordings in the shrine of Aw Nugus during the celebrations of ‘*Ashūrā*’ in 2011-2012.

<i>Rabbuma accuma ma'yna banifi</i>	So that the Divine opens the source of blessings
<i>Rabbuma shume ma'yna hindabanifi</i>	So that the Divine blessings granted to Allah's chosen servant never fade
<i>Aw Nugusso,</i>	Aw Nugus,
<i>Khiqhma adi (rassul) qabu,</i>	He inherits the wisdom of justice (from Prophet Muḥammad's 'White Knowledge')
<i>Kottaa duga</i>	Come and drink
<i>Ka dhebuun qabu</i>	You who are thirsty (of the Prophet's Tradition) ¹⁷

During the night of 'Ashūrā' in the shrine of Aw Nugus, these *manzūma* often recall the historical conflicts between Harar and its rural neighbours. They also narrate the alliances binding the founders of Aw Nugus – who came from Karbala – to both the elites of the city and the Oromo *Afraan Qaalloo* coalitions of its rural hinterland.¹⁸ Nevertheless, neither the extracts of the Harari *Mawlūd*, nor the inspired narratives and *manzūma* performed by the elders of Aw Nugus, formally oppose the dwellers of Harar to their rural neighbours. While among the Shiite orders of 'Alī's Party – found from present Iraq to Indonesia – promote their scission from the Umayyad usurpation of the Caliphate, the Sunnī Ḥusaynī Qadīri tradition followed by the community of Aw Nugus rather privileges the reconciliation of the two urban and rural components of the local *umma al-islamiyya*.

¹⁸ For about five centuries, Aw Nugus has been one of the major sites of relay between Harar and the rural federations of Eastern Hararghe as it fosters matrimonial alliances and partnerships with the political and religious ruling elites of the Muslim city (Osmond, 2014). In the local historical tradition, the founding character of Aw Nugus' community is intimately related to the history of Harar in the 16th century. The local narratives report that, in 1559, Emir Nūr – who succeeded to Aḥmad "Gragh" and ruled the city from 1550 to 1567 – managed to defeat the Christian King Galawdewos, whose troops attempted to conquer the Muslim city of Eastern Hararghe. It is said that Emir Nūr's victory was facilitated by the blessing he received from Hasān Bashīr, the founder of Aw Nugus. This famous historical narrative suggests that obtaining the blessing of this influential Ḥusaynī community was precious for the rulers of Harar, and aided in efficiently mobilizing their local partnerships with several military coalitions and agro-pastoral and trade federations of the *Afraan Qaalloo* coalition that used to control the surrounding rural territories of Eastern Hararghe (Osmond, 2014).

Like *Ashūrā*, the monthly cycle of *Mawlūd* celebrations initiated on the day of Prophet Muḥammad's birth in the main Muslim sanctuaries of Harar and Eastern Hararghe tends to carry the same priority given to the unity of the Muslim Community in the regional Qadīri legacies. The local historical narratives report that Harar's founding pact aimed to implement a sustainable peaceful relationship that bound together the fate of the city dwellers and the rural populations of Eastern Hararghe (Osmond, 2014). This founding pact of Harar would be incarnated into two graves (*qub'a*) dedicated to 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī that were erected and that are still visible in the compounds of the shrines to Abadir 'Umar ar-Ridha and Sheikh Gatur, respectively located inside and right outside the *Jugol* or the old *madīna* (Bardey, 2010).

While Aw Nugus and a few other senior rural congregations of Eastern Hararghe still celebrate the Prophet's birthday (*mawlid al-nabiyy*) on the 17th of Rabī' al-Āwwal – like the local Persian Ḥusaynī communities around the present-day Iraqi city of Karbala (Kaptein, 1993b) – most of the Muslim communities of Harar and its historical hinterland hold a *Mawlūd* for the Prophet's Birthday on the 12th of Rabī' al-Āwwal. One month later, on the 11th of Rabī' ath-Thānī, several shrines located close to the wall of Harar perform a second *Mawlūd* celebration on the day of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī's birth. Another month later, on the 11th of Jumādā al-Āwwal, a third *Mawlūd* is held from Harar to the most remote shrines of its rural vicinity in Eastern Hararghe, such as Aw Nugus. Rooted in the classical Sufi Persian tradition, this kind of annual 'All *Awliyā* Celebration Day' is dedicated to all of the Companions of the Prophet or local Saint Protectors – though this celebration remains centred on their historical regional leader, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, 'The Imam of the Awliya' (*imām al-awliyā*).¹⁹ Locally, this holiday is commonly called *Juma'a Barkelle*, 'The Blessed Friday' in Harari language, commemorating the founding Qadīri pact federating the urban elites of Harar and the political federations of its rural vicinity (Osmond, 2014).

Finally, a fourth *Mawlūd* is organized in Harar and Eastern Hararghe two months later, on the 27th of Rajab, for the *Mir'aj* or the elevation of Prophet Muḥammad across the skies and the mystic experience of his extreme proximity to the Divine. By providing the Prophet with esoteric levels of

¹⁹ In these two *Mawlūd* dedicated to the most charismatic figure of Islam in the ancient regional history, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī tends to incarnate the two main qualities of the *Awliyā*, i.e., 'the Companions – or those whose missionary life follows the Islamic Tradition – of Prophet Muḥammad' and 'the Protectors – or those who accompany and provide assistance – holders of the Divine *Baraka* or blessing'. These two legacies inherited from the Tradition of the Prophet are also emphasized through the several prestigious titles attributed to 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī – like 'The Mightest Succor' or 'The Supreme Helper' (*al-Ghawth al-A'zām* in Arabic).

knowledge, the *Mir'aj* is considered as the final step of the Prophet's birth, which occurred before He became the fully procreated or accomplished 'Allah's chosen man', *Mustāfa*. Throughout this final stage of the Muslim – and mostly Hanāfi – tradition on the Prophet Muḥammad's birth, the local *Mawlūd* celebrations held for this event end the ceremonial cycle initiated four months before with the *mawlid al-nabawiyy*.²⁰

Almost one generation after the collapse of the former communist and military regime of the *Derg*, the recent return of Islam to the public scene within the Ethiopian Federal regime still performs the founding cleavage between Harar and the contemporary Oromiya Eastern Hararghe Zone. However, from the former competition between the rural-traditionalist-Hanāfi and urban-reformist-Shāfi'i projects, the present confrontation of the local *Mawlūd* celebrations mostly involves Oromo or Harari entrepreneurs of Shāfi'i reformism, both in the city and the countryside.

2. The Contrasted Trajectories of the Oromo and Harari *Mawlūd* Revivals in Present Ethiopia

Though several popular regionalist movements marked the 1980s and 1990s in Hararghe, the present entrepreneurs of the Muslim Sunnī puritan ethic of Islam in these eastern territories of Ethiopia are deeply attached to the institutional legality of the federal regime – especially with regards to its articulation of religious freedom and separation of state and religion that were implemented by the 1995 Constitution. However, by criticizing governmental policies or federating too many adepts within local non-governmental – and especially Oromo – Muslim gatherings, these reformist entrepreneurs of Islam in Eastern Hararghe can become a potential threat for the Ethiopian authorities and thus easily labelled as Salafī or Wahhabī 'terrorists'.

2.1. *The Oromo Mawlūd: State 'Terrorist' Threat or 'Native' Religious Modernity?*

To cope with the threat incarnated by the Islamist groups established around Mogadishu, the Ethiopian authorities implemented the 2009 Anti-Terrorism Proclamation. In the same perspective, all individuals or Muslim organizations condemning the celebration of Prophet Muḥammad's birthday are systematically labelled as potential terrorists promoting the Jihadist Wahhabī or Salafī doctrines. In addition, the Harari *Mawlūd* has been officially promoted as one of the main official symbols of Islam in Ethiopia (Dereje Feyissa, 2013). Its state

²⁰ "In the twelfth year of his mission, the Prophet made his night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, and thence to heaven. His journey, known in history as Miraj (Ascension) was a real bodily one and not only a vision. It was at this time that Allah ordered the Muslims to pray the five daily prayers" (the online English translation of Ibn Kathīr, *Stories of the Prophets*, circa 14th century AD: 200).

promotion thus values the religious equality of Islam that was enshrined in the 1995 Constitution as well as emphasizes the concrete ideological rupture with the previous centralized regimes that almost denied full Ethiopian citizenship for the Muslims of the country (Desplat, 2005).

As a devoted ally of its Western partners in the worldwide containment of the Islamist terrorist threat, the Ministry of Federal Affairs has strengthened the centralized control of the Ethiopian State over the Muslim associations in the country through the implementation of the Islamic Supreme Council of Muslim Affairs – often called *Majlis*. At the end of 2010, the *Majlis* organized a long series of seminars in the main towns of the Ethiopian Federation in order to impose the doctrine of *al-Ahbash*, which was developed by the late Sheikh Abdullahi al-Harari, as the official Sufi and Sunnī legacies of Islam in Ethiopia (Nizar and Hrair Dkmejian, 1996; Desplat, 2005; Dereje Feyissa, 2013).

Since the launching the state campaign to impose the *al-Ahbash* doctrine as the official national legacy of Islam in 2011, the Ethiopian authorities have closed several Muslim Oromo associations. The arrest of their leaders is officially justified by the state through the claim of financial support they obtained from the Jihadist Salafī/Wahhabī networks established in the Middle East in order to spread political violence within the democratic institutions of the Ethiopian Federal Republic and replace them with a radical Islamist regime based on the Shari'a (Desplat & Østebø, 2013). In Addis Ababa, this anti-terrorist campaign generated tensions around the main mosques of the capital, whose apex was reached in July 2012 during the month of Ramadan with the brutal arrests of Awolia School's main figures.²¹ They were officially denounced as a 'Salafī terrorist organization' that was supported by foreign Arab Islamist governments to condemn the celebrations of the *Mawlid* and impose the Islamist Wahhabī doctrines. In this very tense context, these arrests and the controversial elections of September 2012 – which designated the members of the local and federal Ethiopian Islamic Councils (also locally called *Majlis*) – started to raise doubt amongst the population and erode the credibility of governmental claims of Salafī terrorist infiltration in Ethiopia (Dereje Feyssa, 2013).

²¹ Founded by famous religious notables of Harar during the reign of Emperor Hayle Selassie, Awolia School constitutes one of the earliest and most respected centres of Qur'anic studies in the country. As most of the emblematic representatives of the Muslim communities in contemporary Ethiopia – like the rulers of the Afar Hausa Sultanate or the current Ethio-Saudi investor close to the Ethiopian ruling coalition, Sheikh al-Hamudi – Awolia School founders have developed strong socio-economic solidarities and education programs (especially in management and computer science) with Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, or the Emirates of the Persian Gulf. However, these mostly economic networks bridging the two shores of the Red Sea have not entailed massive conversions to the Hanbālī-Wahhabī doctrines promoted by the Saudi Kingdom (Aramis Houmed Soulé, 2011 & 2013).

In the Oromiya Eastern Hararghe Zone surrounding Harar, several similar arrests of local religious figures were justified with the same ‘terrorist’ logic. By citing the same accusations of forbidding the *Mawlid*, some of the wealthiest merchants inhabiting local towns such as Haramaya or Awwadhay – the major centre of *qat* in Ethiopia – are assumed to have become Wahhabī supporters, members of blurry ‘terrorist’ groups, supporters of al-Qaeda’s networks, or related to the Oromo liberation fronts. Insisting rumour fostered by governmental officials and media claimed that they were trained to become Salafī Islamic fanatics in Saudi Arabia or other neighbouring countries in the Middle East. However, the gap between the cliché of the Islamist ‘terrorists’ broadcast in state newspapers, radio, or TV programs,²² and the current promoters of the Oromo *Mawlūd* in Eastern Hararghe remains striking.

Since the second half of the 1970s, it is true that the popular founding figures of the Oromo – and mostly Muslim – liberation movement in Hararghe often strengthened and matured their ethno-regionalist projects in the neighbouring countries and the Middle East after they fled the *Derg* persecution of religious elites.²³ However, instead of attending Islamist training within Wahhabī or other Salafī extremist units, those who then became the emerging Oromo leaders in Eastern Hararghe rather frequented the political gatherings of the heteroclite regionalist activists, where the issues on national-state liberation were generally more favoured for consideration as compared to religious matters (Lewis, 1996). For the different Harari, Somali, or Oromo liberation movements that blossomed in the eve of the 1974 Socialist Revolution, the main priority was to rebel against the central authority of the former Ethiopian and Somali regimes of Mengistu Haile Maryam and Syad Barre (Zitelmann, 1993).

When the Federal Constitution was promulgated in 1995, the new Ethiopian authorities in Addis Ababa had already dismantled these Oromo liberation movements and forced their leaders into exile. As the senior Western Somali Liberation Front and Oromo Liberation Front, the Oromo Islamic Front (OILF), founded in 1985 by Sheikh Jaaraa, was labelled as a ‘terrorist organization’, which forced the Sheikh to move to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (Zitelmann, 1993; Lewis, 1980). Despite his conflicting relations with the Federal Government, Sheikh Jaaraa neither promoted

²² See Davison, 2013 and other additional references quoted in Abbink, 2014.

²³ The *Derg* oppression of the local Muslim *Awliyā* communities and their leaders forces many of them to leave Ethiopia, accompanied with their children and close relatives and descendants—including those who are today among the famous local reformist Oromo Sheikh.

the use of political violence, nor intended to engage in Wahhabī or Salafī ‘terrorist’ activities. As the present Oromo entrepreneurs of Islam in Eastern Hararghe, Sheikh Jaaraa was not a Wahhabī, but rather followed the moderate Shāfi’i doctrines – though his religious convictions were merely mobilized to incarnate the Muslim autochthonous legacy of the Oromo nation in Hararghe.²⁴

Embedded in the singular exile trajectories of its present promoters during the *Derg*, the emergence of Muslim Oromo reformism in Eastern Ethiopia is also largely linked to the ethno-regionalist policies implemented by the Ethiopian federal regime. Nowadays, as the close descendants of the ancient Muslim families and as prosperous landowners of Haile Selassie’s regime, the current Oromo promoters of this ethno-regionalist Muslim modernity are generally amongst the wealthiest economic actors of Eastern Hararghe. Through land redistribution, installation of access to electricity, or with the development of health infrastructures in rural areas, the federal regime has attempted to counter the policies of ‘discrimination’ that were implemented by the former imperial and *Derg* regimes.²⁵ Moreover, the recent boom of *qat* cultivation in Eastern Hararghe is generating important financial incomes for the local farmers (Lesourd, 2019).

During their stays in Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia, the Arabian Peninsula or farther in the West, most of the contemporary popular Oromo figures of Islam attended the *D’awwā* sessions – or ‘conversion campaigns’ – and *Mawlūd* celebrations held amongst the Sunnī puritan bourgeoisie of local notables and international merchants. Since their return to Hararghe in the 1990s, these Oromo Muslim entrepreneurs often represent the new local economic elites in part due to their involvement in transregional trade networks.²⁶ Though they often ascribe value to their religious heritage through their

²⁴ Throughout his several stays in Mogadishu, Khartoum, Jeddah, and Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Jaaraa was involved in the main local organizations that emerged in Bale, Somalia, and Hararghe since the end of the 1960s. Far from imposing a radical and intolerant interpretation of the Shari’a, his political project was rather based on the creation of an autonomous administration in Hararghe and then for the whole territories of Oromiya, ruled by the so-called ‘democratic’ principles of the Oromo *Gadaa* system (see Zitelmann, 1993; and <http://oromialandinfo.wordpress.com/2013/03/05/jara-abba-gadaa-oromo-freedom-icon-dies-at-77/>, consulted in April 2014).

²⁵ After sharp fights against the Oromo liberation fronts in the beginning of the 1990s (Zitelmann, 1993), the federal government has rather attempted to seduce the local farming populations. Most of the rural groups inhabiting around Harar in Eastern Hararghe got back their lands that were nationalized by the *Derg* in the 1970s. ²⁶ These Oromo entrepreneurs are mainly involved in the production and sale of agricultural and cattle stocks, through their family networks bridging the farms to the local towns like Haramaya or Awwadhay.

descent from the ancient Sufi Qadīri communities founded by the senior Sharīf Alid missionaries, the new local Oromo entrepreneurs of Islam also openly distinguish themselves from the Hanāfi tradition of their ancestors. By claiming to follow the Shāfi'i doctrines, the present generation argue that they must correct the cultural innovations and deviant practices of their prestigious – but today controversial – Qadīri or Ḥusaynī ascendants.

In the rural Oromo dominated vicinity of Harar, the Qadīri and Ḥusaynī *mānzuma* or other poetic narratives dedicated to Prophet Muḥammad are still performed in the local *Awliyā* shrines, but their audience is increasingly limited. The mobilization of the Oromo language appears as a means to achieve the almost reconversion of the local populations to the both 'authentic' and 'modern' Shāfi'i tradition of Islam through the current revival of the Oromo *Mawlid* initiated by Sheikh Muḥammad Rashaad's local interpretation (*tafsīr*) of the Qur'ān.²⁷ Nevertheless, in this puritan re-birth of Oromo *Mawlid*, references to Hanāfi, Qadīri or Ḥusaynī legacies tend to be avoided in order to prevent any association with what is currently considered a 'backwards' veneration of Prophet Muḥammad's Saint Companions (*Awliyā*), which is embedded in the local Sufi heritage.²⁸ From the *Kitabā anwar al-sharīf* of the Hanāfi *Mawlid* tradition, to the narratives of Imam al-Shāfi, al-Suyūṭī, al-Qurtubī or Yusuf al-Qaradawī on the Prophet's teachings and deeds, the Oromo translations and interpretations of the Arabic texts of these diverse

²⁷ In these Muslim reconversion programs, the position of Saudi Arabia seems ambivalent. Indeed, the interpretation of the Qur'ān in the Oromo language performed by Sheikh Muḥammad Rashad – and its diffusion since the end of the 1980s through tapes and CDs in all music shops – has had a great impact around Harar. Born in Gara Mulata, in the southwestern vicinities of Harar, Sheikh Muḥammad (1933-2013) produced this interpretation of the Qur'ān after obtaining the official agreement and the financial support of Saudi *Ulama* from Mecca-Medina, where he spent more than a decade to study the Qur'ān. Far from being Hanbāli-Wahhabī, his rather Shāfi'i interpretation often illustrates the verses of the Qur'ān with local examples staging the heroic – and Oromo labelled – leaders, like Aḥmad "Gagn" or Emir Nūr, the two charismatic rulers of Harar in the 16th centuries. ²⁸ The new Oromo promoters of reformist Islam in Eastern Hararghe argue that the veneration of the local saints holds too much importance over the 'real' way of being a Muslim believer. Many uneducated peasants almost worship the leaders of these *Awliyā* shrines as Allah, which is a capital mistake in Islam. In addition, these *Awliyā* leaders promoted ignorance by founding their authority on exuberant narratives or staging the miracles of local sheikhs instead of generalizing the literate teaching of the Qur'ān initiated by their missionary ancestors. These huge mistakes are used to explain the coming of the *Derg* regime as a form of divine punishment.

theologians constitute the ongoing compilations of this Oromo reformist *Mawlid* tradition around the city of Harar.²⁹

Beyond the revival of this literary corpus, the plural recitations of this *Mawlid* tradition in Oromo tend to be its most dynamic device. Since the second half of the 2000s, these poetic celebrations have been performed in the major mosques and Muslim communities of the country and sometimes in European cultural centres. They are also massively broadcast on local mosques' loudspeakers, radios, tapes, CDs, websites, and even mobile phones.³⁰ Though the revival of this Shāfi'i Oromo *Mawlūd* corpus has largely blossomed within the current Ethiopian regime of the ethno-linguistic 'nationalities', its recitations by the present entrepreneurs of Islam in Eastern Hararghe have largely shaped their local and regional popularity. As the putative descendants of both the Oromo autochthonous populations and the senior Muslim missionaries of Hararghe, these new reformist Oromo sheikhs who design and perform the contemporary Oromo *Mawlūd* claim to represent the local descendants of the indigenous heirs of Prophet Muḥammad's Companions in the Horn of Africa. By shifting from the Hanāfi to the more puritan Shāfi'i doctrines, these both 'native' and 'modern' leaders are now attempting to challenge the 'foreign' Sunnī hegemony of the Harari and Arab elites with an 'indigenous' model of Oromo Muslim reformism.

Nevertheless, though these current religious notables of Eastern Hararghe have been seduced by the socio-economic success of the regional networks of Sunnī reformist Arab traders, they have never strictly forbidden the celebration of Prophet Muḥammad's Birth.³¹ On the contrary, the new Oromo

²⁹ Along the same reformist dynamic, the Arabic texts of these contemporary and mostly Egyptian theologians have been published in Oromo and Amhara languages and largely distributed in Ethiopia by Nejashi Printing Press, the private printing company that is closely related to Awolia Muslim Missionary School in Addis Ababa. ³⁰ Beyond the local promoters of the Oromo Sufi Qadīri or rather Shāfi'i puritan *Mawlūd*, Sheikh Raya Abba Macha (born in the town of Jimma, but very famous in Eastern Hararghe) tends to mix the local Hanāfi and regional Shāfi'i traditions. He is today the leading figure of the *Mawlūd* performers in the whole Oromiya Regional State. ³¹ By condemning the commemoration of the regional Qadīri and Ḥusaynī *Awliyā*, the present Oromo entrepreneurs of reformist Islam rather promote the Shāfi'i erudite interpretations and puritan celebrations of the *Mawlid*, which are recentred on the *Salaf al-madīna* and the two first Caliphs of Islam – Abū Baker and 'Umar. Among the ancient Hanāfi tradition, these Oromo reformist entrepreneurs particularly reject the recitation of poetic verses in the Oromo language that are performed by local Muslim clerics during the *hadra* night ceremonies and the annual celebrations of the *Mawlid al-nabawiy*. However, these statements constitute severe judgements on these ancient Sufi and generally Hanāfi brotherhoods as their sanctuaries were active missionary centres of Qur'anic studies for centuries (see Minako, 1996; Zitelmann, 2005; and Osmond, 2014).

sheikhs – and local businessmen – now wish to duplicate the puritan ethic of their development models through the promotion of the modern Shāfi'i *Mawlūd* corpus in Oromo language. Defined as a 'native' version of Ibn Suyūti's Shāfi'i interpretations, this Oromo reformist tradition of the *Mawlid* seems to perform the symbolic access of the Oromo 'people' (*'umrān* or *umma*) to the socio-economic success and religious legitimacy of the regional – Harari, Yemeni, Egyptian, Turkish, or Indian – representatives of the puritan Sunnī communities leading the contemporary Muslim world.

Unfortunately, though this Muslim reformist project fully respects the constitutional and legal order of the Ethiopian Republic, it does not easily fit within current state cultural policies that define the official nature and position of the 'Oromo Afro-traditionalist society' as within the irenic Ethiopian federation of the ethno-linguistic 'nationalities'.³² By legitimating the liberation of the Oromo 'nationality', enshrined in the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution, and by containing the local development of Muslim Oromo regionalist movements, the functionalist cliché of the 'Oromo traditional society' remains a central issue in keeping the political balance of the federal edifice.

2.2. The Puritan Ethic of the Reformist Mawlūd Entrepreneurs in Harar Today

Today, the old *madīna* of Harar represents a small part of the modern city, which has been overwhelmed by numerous suburbs that are inhabited by quite heteroclitic populations (Bosredon, 2008). Though its markets are still famous for the availability of manufactured items and for smuggling activities, Harar has lost its hegemonic position and rather focuses on tertiary activities and the touristic promotion of its official worldwide cultural heritage – like the production and the sale of cultural clothes, baskets, other local handicraft souvenirs, or the restoration of the ancient Muslim manuscripts of the Harari *Mawlūd* (Hecht, 1994; Desplat, 2008). Inside the *Jugol*, though the community of Abadir still performs the *Mawlid*, the erudition and the intensity of these celebrations have largely decreased. They even seem much less popular than the more artistic *Mawlūd* shows, which are performed by several Harari

³² The local administrations of the Oromiya Regional State actively promote the 'liberation' and the official recognition of Oromo populations. Through the recurrent organization of local meetings, selected elders are invited to expose the regional Oromo genealogies, whereas the diverse social partnerships binding together the history of these Oromo, Somali and Harari neighbours, clients or allies are almost always eluded. The local authorities also try to attract, with more or less success, the local farmer elites and the new entrepreneurs of Islam, by involving them in the local *Majlis* or appointing them Imams of the new mosques built in the towns located between Harar and Dire Dawa.

bands and dancers at Ethiopian and Western cultural centres in Ethiopia.³³ Moreover, right outside the walls of Harar's *madīna*, the community of Abadir is now challenged by the growing popularity of the peripheral congregations that used to bind the city to its former rural hinterland and farther partners.

Like their Oromo alter egos in Eastern Hararghe, the present puritan actors of the Harari *Mawlūd* neither want to create an Islamic political party nor impose the *Shari'a* in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, these new religious entrepreneurs in Harar are often amongst the members of the local and national religious assemblies (*Majlis*) that represent the several Muslim communities of the country. They generally support the *al-Ahbash* doctrine founded by Sheikh Abdullahi al-Hararī in Lebanon. His personal life trajectory and the modern religious organization he founded seem to represent a success story for them. Beyond his formal objective to contain the Saudi Wahhabī hegemony, Sheikh Abdullahi also emphasizes the historical status of Harar as the fourth holiest place in Islam, right after Mecca, Medina, and the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.³⁴

Sheikh Muḥammad Gatur is among the current emerging figures of the *Mawlid* in Harar. He is the leader of the well-known shrine of Sheikh Gatur, his father. Located about two hundred metres from *shawā bar*, the Shāwa Gate of the *Jugol*, behind the bus station of Harar, this shrine is closely associated with the sanctuary of Abadir inside the *Jugol*, as they together incarnate the two rural and urban 'Peoples' (*'umrān*) federated by the Qadīri pact that would lead to the foundation of Harar in the 13th century (Bardey, 2010; Osmond, 2014). Before succeeding his father in the beginning of the 1990s, Sheikh Muḥammad Gatur spent fourteen years in Djibouti, where he took refuge during the religious persecutions of the *Derg*. There, he managed to enter different international economic networks by working with Senegalese jewellers and fostering family connections with several Somali traders. He also completed his religious training by frequenting the mosques of the transregional Shāfi'i and Malīki communities, which are well established on the two shores of the Red Sea.

³³ The group of *manzūma* singers led by Sheikh Eliyas Ahmed Adus is today one of the most popular (see the DVD *Menzuma Concert*, November 2010). ³⁴ Among the emerging Harari elites, the *al-Ahbash* doctrine is often considered as "a clear alternative to the powerful Islamist trend and, as such, are likely to attract a considerable following among those Sunnī Muslims who are searching for a middle way out of the bloody conflict between the Arab regimes and the Islamist societies" (Nizar & Hrair Dkmejian, 1996). In a way that could be partly compared to other modern Sufi organizations in Egypt or Turkey, *al-Ahbash*'s transregional economic networks and the Sufi legacies are also seen as a good opportunity to develop local economic activities along the state promotion of the 'Harari cultural heritage' (Desplat, 2008; Dereje Feyissa, 2013).

In 1993, when Sheikh Muḥammad Gatur moved back to Harar after his father's death, he was probably more skilled in business and regional trade than in theology. As most of the present descendants of the local *Awliyā* shrines in Eastern Hararghe, he could not compete with the depth of Islamic knowledge and general erudition of his late father and ancestors. Today, a large part of his everyday life is devoted to the management of his economic activities, which are agricultural production and regional trade, or the mediation that he provides to the diverse entrepreneurs of his religious community with the state authorities of Harar. Sheikh Muḥammad Gatur is also a member of the Harari Islamic Affairs Council (*Majlis*) and a well-known notable of the city. Nevertheless, whereas he strongly respects its Harari founder, he formally refuses to join any political party or publicly promote the *al-Ahbash* state doctrine. Despite his socio-economic status and local notoriety, Sheikh Muḥammad Gatur neither considers himself as a businessman nor as a politician, but rather as the religious leader of a respected Muslim community that is devoted to the celebration of and teachings of Prophet Muḥammad for centuries.

Like Sheikh Muḥammad Gatur, the Harari theologians (*ustad* or *imām*) and religious entrepreneurs are now largely following the puritan ethic of the mainly Shāfi'i reformist doctrines. Along the promotion of their Shāfi'i legacy, they perform the regional figures of socio-economic success whom they are supposed to incarnate through concrete behaviours – smart clothes, austere attitude, males and females separation, or proselyte manners – staging their status as both local and transregional representatives of the dominant Sunnī puritan modernity.³⁵ Though the present literary corpuses of the Harari *Mawlid* remain embedded in plural doctrinal legacies, they are now formally presented as a Shāfi'i legacy. Inside and around the old *madīna* of Harar, the most popular *Mawlūd* celebrations are performed at the end of the month of Ramaḍān for 'Aīd al-Fiṭr and then forty days later for 'Aīd al-Adḥa (locally called *Arafa*) and finally, for the Prophet Muḥammad's birthday (*Mawlid al-nabawiy*). In addition, other minor *Mawlūd* are also held in the main shrines of the city for 'Ashūrā', *Juma'a Barkelle*, the annual day dedicated to the regional *Awliyā*, and the *Mir'āj*, the mystical Ascension of the Prophet (Foucher, 1994; Gori, 2010).

The celebrations of these today minor holidays are formally associated with the Shāfi'i tradition. Nevertheless, they still more or less implicitly stage the ancient Hanāfi and Qadīri legacies of Islam in Harar and its regional

³⁵ During his childhood in Harar, he was familiar with the ancient Sufi Qadīri legacies of his patrilineal ascendants. Throughout his exile in Djibouti, Sheikh Muḥammad Gatur followed the current revival of the *Salaf al-madīna* promoted in the local reformist *D'awwaa* – or 'proselyte missionary campaigns' – led by mainly Shāfi'i and Malīki theologians.

hinterland. According to the representatives of Abadir's community, the *Mawlūd* performed for 'Ashūrā' commemorates the same event – the liberation of Moses from the Egyptian Pharaoh's yoke (Brown, 2007) – in most of the regional *Sunnī* communities. Closely related to Prophet Moses' liberation, the narratives of the *Mawlūd* recited among Abadir's community for 'Ashūrā' celebrate the Divine Salvation (*al-falāh*) of Abadir 'Umar ar-Ridha, the most devoted local servants of the Islamic Tradition (*sunnah al-islamiyya*). Through the same Shāfi'i bricolage of its ancient Qadīri legacies, the *Mawlūd* held for *Juma'a Barkelle* commemorates Abadir as the patron saint of Harar and a descendent from the most truthful missionaries and Companions of Prophet Muḥammad (Tarsitani, 2007 & 2008).

Among Sheikh Gatur's community, the plural Qadīri, Ḥusaynī and Hanāfi legacies of the today Shāfi'i proclaimed *Mawlūd* held for 'Ashūrā' and *Juma'a Barkelle* seem more visible, though these celebrations are based on the same literary corpuses as those used at Abadir's shrine. Indeed, one day before holding the *Mawlid* of 'Ashūrā' in his family compound in Harar, Sheikh Muḥammad Gatur is among the Harari who still often attend and actively participate in its early celebration amongst the rural community of Aw Nugus inside the 'House of the *Mawlid*' (*mana mawlid*). As a good disciple of the Shārifi'i school (or *madab*), Sheikh Muḥammad Gatur considers that some of ancient Sufi Qadīri practices found in the celebration of 'Ashūrā' in Aw Nugus' sanctuary are cultural innovations (*bid'a*).³⁶ However, these putative 'innovations' do not prevent him from attending this ceremony in the rural shrine of this Ḥusaynī community, whose historical leaders have always been the matrilineal ascendants of Sheikh Muḥammad Gatur and his patrilineal ancestors. Both historically and contemporarily within the Ethiopian federal regime, the communities of Sheikh Gatur and Aw Nugus have maintained shared Qadīri genealogical legacies that remind of their shared responsibility to maintain peace amongst the dwellers of Harar and their rural neighbours (Osmond, 2014).

After celebrating the *Mawlid al-Nabiyy*, the 12th of Rabi al-Awal, Sheikh Gatur's community also performs the three monthly *Mawlūd* that are still held in the ancient Qadīri sanctuaries of Harar's vicinity, such as Aw Nugus, Aw Hakīm, and Aw Sofi. Openly Shāfi'i both in its form and content, the

³⁶ Among these 'innovations', Sheikh Muḥammad Gatur often mentions the *Shuuroo* (the porridge of sorghum covered with melted butter) given to the hyenas of the neighbourhood during the night of 'Ashūrā' at Aw Nugus' shrine for the New Year's test or the Salvation Day, *yūm al-falāh*. Locally associated with the Hanāfi narratives on Noah's salvation from the Great Flood, the result of this hyenas' feeding ritual is interpreted as a sign that evaluates if Allah is providing the local community with his assistance or protection for the beginning of the New Year (Osmond, 2014).

two monthly *Mawlūd* organized by Sheikh Muḥammad Gatur after Prophet Muḥammad's Birthday paradoxically coincide with 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī's Birthday and the annual Hanāfi-rooted celebration (*Juma'a Barkelle*) of the regional and mostly Qadīri *Awliyā*. Beyond this formal doctrinal paradox, the plural legacies, and practices of the *Mawlūd* celebrations led by Sheikh Muḥammad Gatur rather implicitly unveil the conflicting reformist dynamics of the regional history. These *Mawlūd* largely consist of reciting poetic narratives on the deeds of Prophet Yusuf, Abū Baker, 'Umar, Abadir 'Umar ar-Ridha and, of course, Prophet Muḥammad; but the name of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī is also smartly mentioned whereas Husayn or Aw Nugus are never uttered.

As did his ancestors, Sheikh Muḥammad Gatur tends to mobilize the celebrations of the local *Mawlid* tradition to coalesce the different actors and potential partners gravitating around Harar. Within the current Ethiopian federal regime, Sheikh Muḥammad Gatur has become a leading figure of the present entrepreneurs of Islam in Harar by preserving the historical partnerships between his family and the local federation of the Oromo Eastern Hararghe Zone and by claiming its loyalty to the present constitutional order and state policies that counter the Islamist 'terrorist' threat.³⁷ As their patrilineal ascendants acted as the main historical middlemen between the city-dwellers and their rural neighbours, Sheikh Muḥammad Gatur and the current actors of this emerging Muslim bourgeoisie have also expanded their relationships with other regional socio-economic elites and have even reinvented the former historical solidarity that was shared among the regional Silt'e, Wällänne, or Wälloye 'Peoples of the Muslim City' (*umrān al-hadhariy*) along the ethno-national contingencies provided by the 1995 Federal Constitution.³⁸

Throughout this peripheral revival of these Harari *Mawlūd* celebrations and the transregional networks of Muslim urban notability they federate, the 'native' linguistic claim does not seem as central as the Oromo *Mawlūd* in Eastern Hararghe. Most of the members of Sheikh Muḥammad Gatur's

³⁷ According to Sheikh Muḥammad Gatur, there are a few 'Wahhabī' mosques in Harar, Dire Dawa, and in the surrounding countryside. Their leaders would be Oromo intellectuals trained in the 'Salafi' networks of the Middle East. However, these so-called 'Wahhabi' preachers are rather followers of the Shāfi'i or Malīki schools that condemn the active collaboration of Harari Muslim leaders like Sheikh Muḥammad Gatur in the offensive religious policies implemented by the Ethiopian authorities during the last decade. ³⁸ From the putative shared Muslim and linguistic legacies of the local sultanates gravitating around Harar, to the present development of business partnerships, Sheikh Muḥammad Gatur is reactivating the former urban connection between the city and the emerging entrepreneurs of the Wällāne or Silte identity projects that inhabit the eastern fringes of the present-day Guraghe Zone (see also Desplat, 2009: 161).

community are neither Harari, nor Oromo of Hararghe, but are from former Gurague or Wällo Amhara territories. To cope with the diversity of this audience, the main language used during the celebrations of the *Mawlid* in the leading reformist community of Sheikh Gatur is neither Harari, nor Arabic, but Amharic, the national language of the Ethiopian Federation.³⁹

Conclusion

Though the plural local celebrations of the Prophet's birth still contain sharp theological debates, whether or not there are Muslim organizations in Ethiopia that would strictly reject them remains quite controversial. In Harar and its Oromo dominated vicinity – as in most parts of the historical and contemporary Muslim world – the local *Mawlid/Mawlūd* compilations of panegyrics dedicated to Prophet Muḥammad and his Saint Companions have been closely related to the regional political history (Kaptein, 1993; Gori, 2010; Desplat & Østebø, 2013). However, in the Horn of Africa as elsewhere, the mobilization of the ambivalent Salafī/Wahhabī 'terrorist' categories is often blurry (Knysh, 2004; Mouline, 2011; Samson, 2012).

Since the 1990s, reformist promoters of Islam have been active in several parts of Ethiopia and in the Oromiya Regional State in particular. However, their growing social visibility does not seem to inaugurate the imminent rise of Wahhabī or al-Qaeda terrorist networks in the region.⁴⁰ In the historical *longue durée*, the main fluxes of Muslim reformist trends in the Horn of Africa have been identified since the 16th century (Pouwels, 1987) and the contemporary Shāfi'i doctrinal shift during the Egyptian Ottoman occupation of Harar in 1875-1885.⁴¹ Nowadays, the puritan developments of Islam

³⁹ In March 2014, the *Mawlūd* held in Sheikh Gatur's ceremonial compound was led by a special guest, Sheikh Muḥammad Awal, the most popular singer of *manzūma* in Amharic in Ethiopia today. He comes from the town of Kombolca in Northern Wällo, close to the ancient Muslim centre of *Jamanugus* (see Husein Ahmed, 2010). ⁴⁰ In the 1930s, a few local Wahhabī training centres appeared in the Ethiopian regions of Bale, Jimma, Wollo and Hararghe (Østebø, 2009 & 2012). In the town of Fadith, near Harar, the Hanbālī principles promoted by these Wahhabī organizations have managed to seduce a small number of the local notables and rich merchants who are involved in the business networks of the Arab Peninsula. Nevertheless, their involvement in Ethiopian public affairs remains very limited (Østebø, 2012). ⁴¹ During the second half of the 19th century, the growing influence of the Egyptian and Turkish Ottoman authorities fostered the doctrinal shift from the traditionalist Hanāfi corpuses to the more puritan and rational principles of the doctrines (*madhāb* in Arabic) promoted by Imam ash-Shāfi'i. The Ottoman rulers facilitated the coming of numerous sheikhs from Yemen, Sudan, or Egypt in several regions of present Ethiopia, like Wollo, Jimma, Bale, and Hararghe (Braukämper, 2003).

in Eastern Ethiopia are intimately embedded within the promulgation of the 1995 Federal Constitution that institutionalizes the recognition of the Ethiopian ‘nationalities’ and equal rights for Muslim citizens (Assefa Fiseha, 2006; Dereje Feysa, 2013). Similar to the rise of the Protestant entrepreneurs in Europe as described by Weber (1905) on the eve of the 20th century, the present actors of the *Mawlūd* in Harar and the surrounding Oromo territories of the Eastern Haraghe Zone tend to reflect the emergence of a heteroclitic – but very legalist – bourgeoisie of Muslim reformism in the region.

For centuries, the political uses of the historical Qadīri and more contemporary Shāfi’i *Mawlūd* celebrations have staged the competing regional legacies of Islam along city/countryside dichotomies. More than two decades after the fall of the *Derg*, the current Harari/Oromo cleavage within the Federation of the Ethiopian ‘nationalities’ seems to perform the ethno-regionalist version of the ancient urban/rural regional dynamics. However, in Harar and Eastern Hararghe, the revival of the *Mawlid* tradition exacerbates the local competition between the Harari and Oromo ethno-regionalist promoters of Muslim reformism.

Finally, the historical and contemporary dynamics of *Mawlid* celebrations stress the wide gap between the growing visibility of this modern reformist bourgeoisie – who are deeply attached to the Ethiopian constitutional legality that provides the Muslim Ethiopians with full citizenship – and the interventionist state policies implemented in cultural and religious fields. Though such policies towards these emerging Muslim bourgeoisie are not limited to Ethiopia, they might foster frustration and radicalization in a regional context marked by the Jihadist rhetoric of the Somali organization, *al-Shabāb*.

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