



Aethiopia 27 (2024)

International Journal of Ethiopian and
Eritrean Studies

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Dissertation Abstracts

*La destrucción patrimonial durante la guerra entre el sultanato de
Bar Sa'ad ad-Dīn y el reino cristiano de Etiopía (1529–1543)*

Aethiopia 27 (2024), 354–356

ISSN: 1430-1938; eISSN: 2194-4024

Edited in the Asien-Afrika-Institut
Hiob-Ludolf-Zentrum für Äthiopistik
der Universität Hamburg
Abteilung für Afrikanistik und Äthiopistik

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tradition. As an initial probe into this question, I present and offer brief analysis to all the marginal comments to Daniel 8 from MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Éthiopiens d'Abbadie 35.

MARIO LOZANO ALONSO, *La destrucción patrimonial durante la guerra entre el sultanato de Bar Sa'ad ad-Dīn y el reino cristiano de Etiopía (1529–1543)*, PhD Dissertation in History and Archaeology, Faculty of Geography and History, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, defended on 6 March 2024.

The war between the Bar Sa'ad ad-Dīn Sultanate and the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia (1529–1543) is considered the event marking the end of the Middle Ages in the Horn of Africa. *Imām* Aḥmad b. Ibrahīm managed to galvanize a diverse mix of nomadic and sedentary peoples for his jihadist project, which began with border raids in 1527 and eventually evolved into the conquest of the Christian country in 1531. From that year onwards, *Aṣe* Ləbnā Dəngəl decided to retreat and escape from the advancing army of 'Adal, which aimed to Islamize the region. However, in 1541, the Portuguese military intervention changed the situation, defeating *Imām*'s army on several occasions. The participation of the Ottomans, who assisted the Muslim army with 900 musketeers, was key to defeating the Ethiopian-Portuguese army in 1542, during which their leader, Christovão da Gama, was killed. However, the *Imām*'s decision to dismiss most of the Ottoman musketeers proved to be a mistake, as the Christian army quickly reorganized and confronted the Muslims in 1543 at Zāntāra (Wāyna Dāga), the battle in which Aḥmad b. Ibrahīm was killed.

This PhD Dissertation, supervised by Professor Víctor M. Fernández (Universidad Complutense de Madrid), aims to study the phenomenon of heritage destruction—mainly monuments and settlements—during the war on both the Christian and Muslim sides. In the Christian Ethiopian kingdom, there was a deliberate destruction of buildings of religious significance, primarily churches and monasteries under royal patronage. Ninety-one such structures have been documented, but there were likely many more, as at least 18 medieval monasteries remain unaccounted for. The reason behind it is clear, as *Imām* Aḥmad b. Ibrahīm sought to erase the traces of the Solomonic dynasty as a preliminary step toward establishing a Muslim state on the historical site of the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia. The destruction of these buildings is recorded in the *Futūḥ al-Ḥabaša*, the main Muslim chronicle of the conflict, which can be compared with data from the Christian *Māṣḥafā Səddāt*, as well as later Portuguese and Jesuit sources. The Christian kingdom persisted as a rural state without urban centres, though it was weakened by the emergence of Oromo migrations, which took advantage of the aftermath of the conflict to occupy large regions of the Ethiopian massif.

In the case of the urbanized sultanate of Bar Saʿad ad-Dīn, the war led to the collapse of its urban network and the abandonment of numerous centres. Surprisingly, this decline was not caused by Christian attacks. Out of the 40 sites analysed, only one showed signs of violent destruction (Biyo Gure). The disappearance of the cities was primarily due to the disruption of international trade in the Indian Ocean, largely as a result of Portuguese influence in the region. This significantly impacted the primary Ethiopian Muslim political entity. Consequently, the sultanate underwent a process of internal disintegration, culminating in the transfer of the capital from Harär to Awsa in 1577. It never regained its prosperity or military power and became a marginal state in the Eastern Ethiopian massif. This economic decline is also evident in the material culture of the Harär archaeological sites, with imported ceramics becoming rare and local ceramics of inferior quality becoming more common.

This research reveals that the nature of heritage destruction in the Christian kingdom was primarily ideological, focusing on specific buildings. In contrast, in the sultanate of Bar Saʿad ad-Dīn, the disappearance of cities resulted from the disruption of commercial networks, compelling inhabitants to adopt a nomadic lifestyle. This ultimately led to the demise of the sultanate itself, following the transfer of the capital from Harär to Awsa in 1577. Conversely, the Christian kingdom managed to survive, albeit with significantly reduced borders, especially in the south and southwest. Its rural socioeconomic system, less reliant on international trade than the sultanate, undoubtedly contributed to its survival.

Additionally, the conflict caused significant population displacements, particularly through the facilitation of Oromo migrations from the south, leading to substantial ethnolinguistic changes throughout the country, especially in the southern regions where Semitic languages experienced a decline. This shift also affected the names of locations, resulting in the obfuscation of many medieval sites.

Furthermore, the main Ethiopian monotheistic religions experienced a decline. Ethiopian Orthodoxy lost all the southern territories that had been evangelized between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as evidenced by the existence of 43 location names in the southwest associated with ancient Christian worship sites. Meanwhile, Islam was confined to the religious oasis of Awsa and the vicinity of Harär. In both cases, the influence of the Oromo religion was significant, although its adherents soon began converting to Christianity in areas of contact with the Christian kingdom and to Islam in the Harär region.

Regarding the architecture of the Christian kingdom, the war marked the end of the style of royal-patronage churches from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, leaving nothing more than remnants of their foundations and fragments of their decoration. Subsequently, circular churches emulating the traditional Amhara round house became widespread.

The work has also involved a study of the evolution of medieval Muslim Ethiopian urbanism. To this end, the settlements of the Sultanate of Ifat (1285–1415) and those of the Sultanate of Bar Sa‘ad ad-Dīn (1415–1577) have been analyzed, observing continuities in domestic and religious construction techniques but significant changes in urban planning. Thus, on the one hand, the Ifat settlements are compact urban centers with well-defined urbanism and protected by walls; on the other hand, those of Bar Sa‘ad ad-Dīn lacked such urban planning, with only three walled settlements, and the buildings were dispersed, reflecting a more nomadic and livestock-oriented society.

JONATHAN EGID, *In Search of Zār‘a Ya‘qob: A Study of the Philosophy and Intellectual History of the Ḥatāta Zār‘a Ya‘qob and the Debate Concerning its Authorship*, PhD Dissertation in Philosophy, King’s College London, defended on 14 June 2024.

This PhD Dissertation is a study in the provenance and the legacy of a work of philosophy composed in highland Ethiopia, and an exploration of its meaning for the history and historiography of philosophy. The work in question is the *Ḥatāta Zār‘a Ya‘qob*, a philosophical autobiography that narrates the life and thought of the eponymous Zār‘a Ya‘qob, from his birth in the environs of Aksum, his exile and refuge in a mountain cave, his later years, and in a colophon by his disciple Wäldä Ḥəywät, his death. The *Ḥatāta Zār‘a Ya‘qob* and *Ḥatāta Wäldä* have served to demonstrate, in the words of Claude Sumner, that ‘modern philosophy, in the sense of a personal rationalistic critical investigation, began in Ethiopia with Zār‘a Ya‘qob at the same time as in England and in France’. But they have also been objects of puzzlement and suspicion. Over the last one hundred years, many scholars have concluded that these texts are in fact nineteenth-century forgeries, composed by a Capuchin missionary two centuries after their supposed composition. This dissertation examines the text itself and its philosophical system, the ongoing controversy over its authorship, and considers what it might mean for the history and historiography of philosophy.

The central aims of this dissertation are fourfold. The first is to demonstrate the interest of the ideas presented in the *Ḥatāta* by providing an original interpretation of its philosophical system. The second is to show that the state of the authorship debate at the time of writing is fundamentally inconclusive, and that the arguments on both sides of the debate are roughly equally weighted.

Third, given this aporia, I aim to examine *why* the authorship question has seemed so important to so many scholars and *how* it has been employed to support a dizzying multiplicity of political projects, from Tsarist Russia to Mussolini’s fascist imperialism to Haile Selassie’s Ethiopian nationalism, the Marxist-Leninist military dictatorship of the *Därg* and the contemporary academic politics of