

# Cycles, History, the Horn of Africa

## From riches to rags, of Castles and Ships

### 1 Introduction: *Corsi e Ricorsi*

Giovan Battista Vico, an Italian thinker recognized in 1740 CE that “Every society knows periods of dearth and surplus, might and demise, they tend to repeat in long cycles”, *corsi e ricorsi*, as he put it. Biblical seven years of slim and of fat cows aside, this is a first recognition of historic economic cycles<sup>1</sup>.

We identify at least three ages of splendor in the history of Ethiopia and of the Horn of Africa. All three are tied to periods of international trade and internal development. The first is when Kemet, ancient Egypt, whose elites and residents recognized the Horn as the land of origin, and of the Gods, Ta Net’jer or P’Wunt, traded relatively frequently with it, since at least 4500 BCE.

Rodolfo Fattovich and Kate Bard have found and studied the dismountable P’wunt ships in caverns in a north Red Sea port, S’w’w’ or Sawasis. A tract of about 140 kilometres of dromedary track then united the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean, via no Pharaohs’ canal, as happened irregularly later, but via the Nile, desert tracks and the Red Sea. The ships needed to be reassembled to take sail South to the Horn. If the rich representations of the land of P’Wunt and the ships were not enough, as found in Pharaohess Hatshepsut’s mausoleum, with a remnant base of the myrrh trees the bas reliefs represented, the furs of one of two embalmed monkeys, studied via the kind of oxygen isotopes they had breathed, indicate clearly their origin in Eritrea or the Northern Ethiopia of today<sup>2</sup>.



A replica of the P’wunt dismantable ships, the Min du Desert soon followed the Fattovich/Bard discovery

A fine alabaster box found in the same caves as Fattovich's dismantled ships, specifically recites "The Marvels of the Land of P'Wunt". Pot shards and a stele in the site mention the same land.

As Sada Mire, Somalia's noted archaeologist, pointed out at a recent symposium on P'wunt trade and African navigation in Italy, Hatshepsut's is one confirmed voyage, but the whole Northern Somalia coast may have been the destination of a number of significant Pharaonic expeditions, the recorded tip of an iceberg of sea trade. After all, the Ugandan tin that was found in Germany in 2002 investigations, again from isotopic types, has transited necessarily on these shores, to be later traded by the Canaanites and the Phoenicians<sup>3</sup>.

Long lasting conflicts and troubled centuries along the Nile and in the Mediterranean appear to have cut or reduced the ties since the arrival of the 'Sea Peoples' around 1200 BCE, as no grand expeditions are recorded since those of Hatshepsut. They were certainly fully resumed by the first century of our era, when a travelogue describes the Eritrean and Somali ports of Adulis, Avalites and Malao (Massawa, Assab and Berbera today), with details on the traded goods and the local political systems. These include exports of turtle shell, ivory, gold, medicine, and the description of Zoscales, either the Axumite Emperor or his local allied king, in ca 65 CE. The diary is known as the Periplus of the Eritrean Sea<sup>4</sup>.

The age of Axum was certainly an apex of wealth and recovered dominance of sea trade. Axum acted as the sea intermediary between Rome, India and China in the age of Byzantium until ca. 650 CE. Axumite coins, gold and silver as well as bronze, were found all over the Indian Ocean routes, including good but lower grade gold fakes from Mangalore, India.

In fact the biggest gold Axumite standard find was in Yemen. Similarly, a 106 gold Kusana coins hoard was resting in a pot under a cave in Debre Damo, a sacred monastery where, possibly one of the many noted Beshi or Sidi, Ethiopian mercenaries and traders may have donated it in the third or fourth Century. That was just before the period when admired Axumite ships, described as a large fleet by Cosmas, a Greek speaking Egyptian trader transported three armies repeatedly over the Red Sea to Arabia, to wage war to Yemen and Arabian sires, defending both Christian residents from the Horn and the ports Axum was controlling along both sides of the Red Sea, Yemen and the Somali Coast<sup>5</sup>.

As in the time of P'Wunt the Horn, and Axum knew a second down, when a full century long Rome/Parthian war ended in a total Parthian victory, with the victors taking control of all Axumite ports, and possibly, making routes inside Ethiopia, as some deductions on the find of Chinese coins in a gold trade and mining post in Ethiopia and local genomics may indicate, in the Harla site near Dire Dawa.

Axum's seafaring techniques were not lost, nor was Axum destroyed in a day. The founder of Kilwa, the capital of the powerful and long lasting Swahili coastal sultanate, Amir Al Shirazi was the son of an Abyssinian woman spoke Amharic fluently and had Ethiopian favorites. Swahili fleets, somehow capable to spread around 1150 CE coins as far as Australia, are the likely inheritors of Axumite seafaring might<sup>6</sup>.

In those years, Ethiopian emperors seemed more concerned with internal issues and spiritual deeds. They built an entire administrative and religious town in the Waag, Lasta Mountains, in Lalibela.

Defined as a prayer in stone, a marvel of twelve Churches and administrative buildings hewn and chiseled out of the rock bed, it was nevertheless the fief of international traders, that used and controlled the now Somali port of Zeyla.



Coins and shards across the Ocean, chart prepared by author

The brief Lalibela, or Zagwe dynasty was followed in Ethiopia by the Solomonic restoration, from 1280. The Emperors that looked for their origins in Israel, Solomon and the Mediterranean, and Red Sea trade soon turned their interests and fleets to the Indian Ocean in grand style.



Lalibela, Bet M. Alem, 1937 design by architect Barriviera;



Ian McIntosh, IUPUI, shows where in Australia coeval Kilwa coins were found

## 2 Socotra, the Incredible

### 2.1 Hoq, the troubled ocean farers' sanctuary

An acquaintance, Peter de Geest, speleologist, entered the Hoq cave in Eastern Socotra in 2000. We have since been in contact, as I have discovered or helped discover some of Ethiopia's most significant caves. His was no ordinary cavity. After over a kilometer he found a narrow passage and a

large stalagmite, bearing an inscription in Ge'ez, Ethiopia's Latin, an ancestral language still used in Church writings and functions I see as reading "YeHoq", of Hoq. Beyond, a set of about 300 writings was revealed, essentially in ancient Indian languages, Brahminic above all, with designs, offers to the Gods and a Luh wood, the de Geest tablet, the longest known script in the language of ancient Palmyra<sup>7</sup>.

Offerings, names and the tablet's text indicate the sanctuary was visited by stranded, desperate mariners. Monsoons changes at the limits of seasons mean storms with unbearable winds and extremely rapid currents. Being caught on Socotra in June as an example may mean a slow death, certainly great sufferings. Thus numerous incense offerings and names are found on the concretions and cave walls.

The tablet has been read by philologists and dated to the VI century CE. As a consequence scholars attributed three Ethiopic scripts in Hoq to the same period, corresponding to the apex of the Axumite power in the region. I note that Ge'ez letters, a Latin equivalent, in broad sense: an ancestral language surviving in Church liturgy, are not distinguishable from Amharic, our present lingua franca in Ethiopia. Also, I dispute the scholars' first observation that the Sanctuary would have been practically unvisited since the fifth hundreds, as a rather illogical statement. Even the hardest similar unsealed caves we found in Ethiopia were all visited recently. I can thus now only attribute a much wider, 12 or 14 strong *corpus* of Ge'ez or Amharic script I recognize in Hoq cave to Ethiopians in difficulties; more likely of one of the two periods of trade might I mention here, Axum or Solomonian Ethiopia, than of other periods<sup>8</sup>.



Arteha, an inscription in Hoq cave, Socotra, Yemen. Aretha, an Ethiopian saint's name.



More Ge'ez or Amharic inscriptions from Socotra's Hoq cave

## Scripts in Hoq cave read as Geez or Amharic, m. vig.

1. Arteha, name of a Christian Saint, Arethas. He is honoured by practically all Christian appellations. He was executed during a persecution in Nejar, now Yemen, by Dhu Nuwas, with Bruktawit and other Christians, mainly Ethiopian. A name diffused in the area. A Village in the Bazoft rural district administrative unit, Iran, is named Arteh. Aretha is today a female name.
2. Betzewe Shek, two names: not Shek Betzewe, title and name, as they are in the opposite order. Perhaps Betzewe can be a verb form, instead, in Geez or other??
3. Aw Bayith (te?)tzedede, Respectable Bayith took refuge, or became a refugee, a name, Bayith and title, Aw, used for Muslim Saints, cfr. Aw Sofi, Aw Hakim, Aw Berhadle, shrines near Harar.
4. Tzafe ZadebeWa, Zadebewa (Zebedee?, name) wrote. Script continues?
5. Tzafe Ayegenesa Tebetza.. ? Continues?
6. BeSeni 23 (chatet??) potential reading of the final tract of a script readable in Brahmi, so far not interpreted for this tract. It may resemble Geez or rather Amharic script. A date in early July, if so, consistent with a confirmed date in Palmyric on the De Geest tablet, the period of forced stay of strayed mariners. Original reading and interpretation by Ingo Strauch
7. YeHog, of Hog (may continue)
8. Tzetteta, Be silent
9. Sidibe yebe(a)ru sehalog, My Curse the sea's .. ?..
10. Somer, Name??
11. Tzafe Betzewe, written by Betzewe
12. Tegehafo hubeyo, ?
13. Abebe, name
14. Wa Memot? Care, to die? This last though not precisely read may appear to be Brahmi script

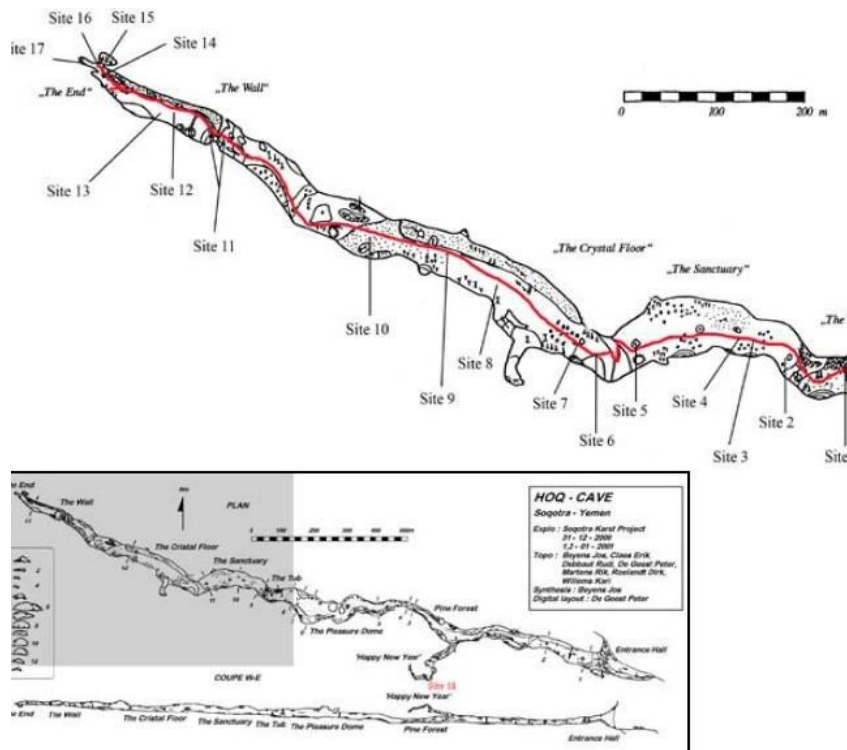
A list of interpreted Ethiopic scripts. Only three so far had been classified as Ge'ez from the VI century CE



Cave Hoq, the sanctuary part is the last recess, 1,2 kms after the access vault, seen here.



A script at the entry of the inner cave sanctuary reads “of Hoq”. The only one of ca. 300 bearing the cave name



Hoq cave plan, scripts and designs groupings, after Ingo Strauch

A ship design in an area where, as in most of the sanctuary, Indian scripts prevail has been the focus of attention in previous publications on Hoq. Although at least two other ships are represented, this one is the most detailed, and biggest naval design in the cave.



**The Ship, considered Indian, attributed to the VI Century, or anterior. Photo courtesy Peter de Geest**

Ships of the period, sailing across the Ocean, were direct descendants of the longest shipbuilding technology in the history of seafaring: that of African sewn ships. The first sewn ships and boats we have record of date back about 5000 years, in Abydos. They were associated with navigation along the Nile and descend, for the first, longitudinally tied plank types, directly from the reed boats still diffused today on Ethiopian highland lakes. This resilient technology is used today, in one of a few typical variants to produce vessels in the backwater coastal area of Southwestern India, North of Trivandrum<sup>9</sup>.

The four thousand six hundred years old Kufu's Solar Ship is over forty two metres long. It has been reassembled in a dedicated museum using the numbering those who dismantled it originally prepared for the Pharaohs' servants to use as rebuilding instructions in the aftermath. The Phoenicians used a technological evolution of the same sewn ships, comprising tenons, as already used in Kemet itself to trade with P'Wunt (ch.1). The same shipbuilding skills were used to realize the most stunning network of global trade, as an example, for the provision of then very valuable tin alone, from Uganda to Cornwall towards the rest of the known world, and to perform trade in West Africa, to explore its coasts up to Cameroon, or circumnavigate the continent in three years, around 550 BCE to please Pharaoh Necho II's desire to find a way to take his Mesopotamian foes from their back. Previous Kemet versions of the elastic, solid, ocean worthy sewn ships were found not only in Sawasis, but also in Ayn Soukhna, aside from a number of royal pyramid burial sites. Ships in the latter were less solidly built, as intended for one single ceremony on the Nile, and for an aftermath where waves must have been expected to be

tamed by the Gods, a category to which the Pharaohs strived greatly to subscribe themselves.



Hayk lake Tankwa, Ethiopia. A still diffused papyrus boat, the ancestor of Nilotic sewn ships is in use today



Socotri kids today fit to size in welded drum canoes; their grandfathers had a singular kind of catamaran, ca 1950

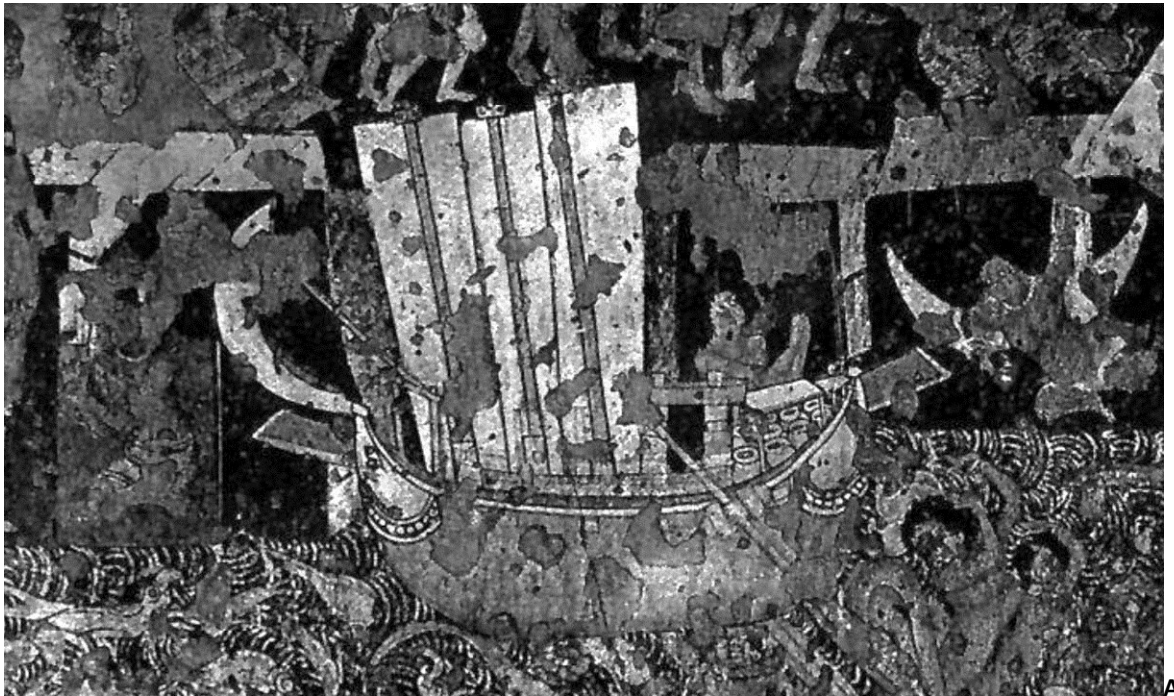


Different kinds of sewing characterized Kemet's, original nilotic ship making: longitudinal, transverse, crossed. All guaranteed superior elasticity to the vessel, against strong seas and minor accidents, all needed yearly maintenance, including renewing of water tight fiber joints and re-stitching.

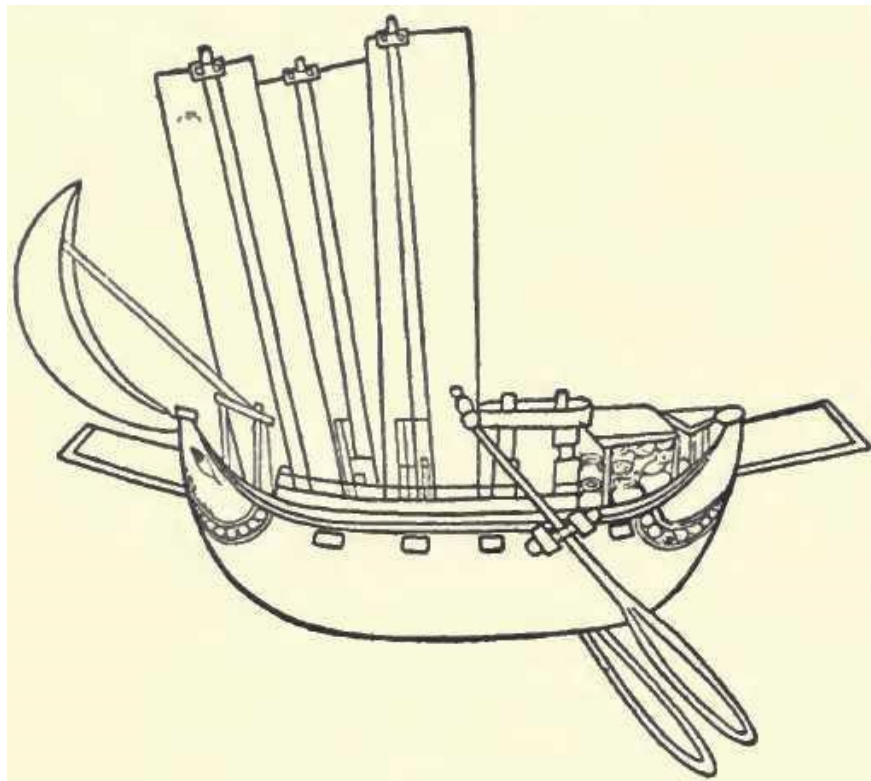


As complicated as this may seem the technique, though disappearing, is still in use in Indian Kerala today after five thousand years to the least, both for sand and clay cargo boats and for bigger tourist ships.

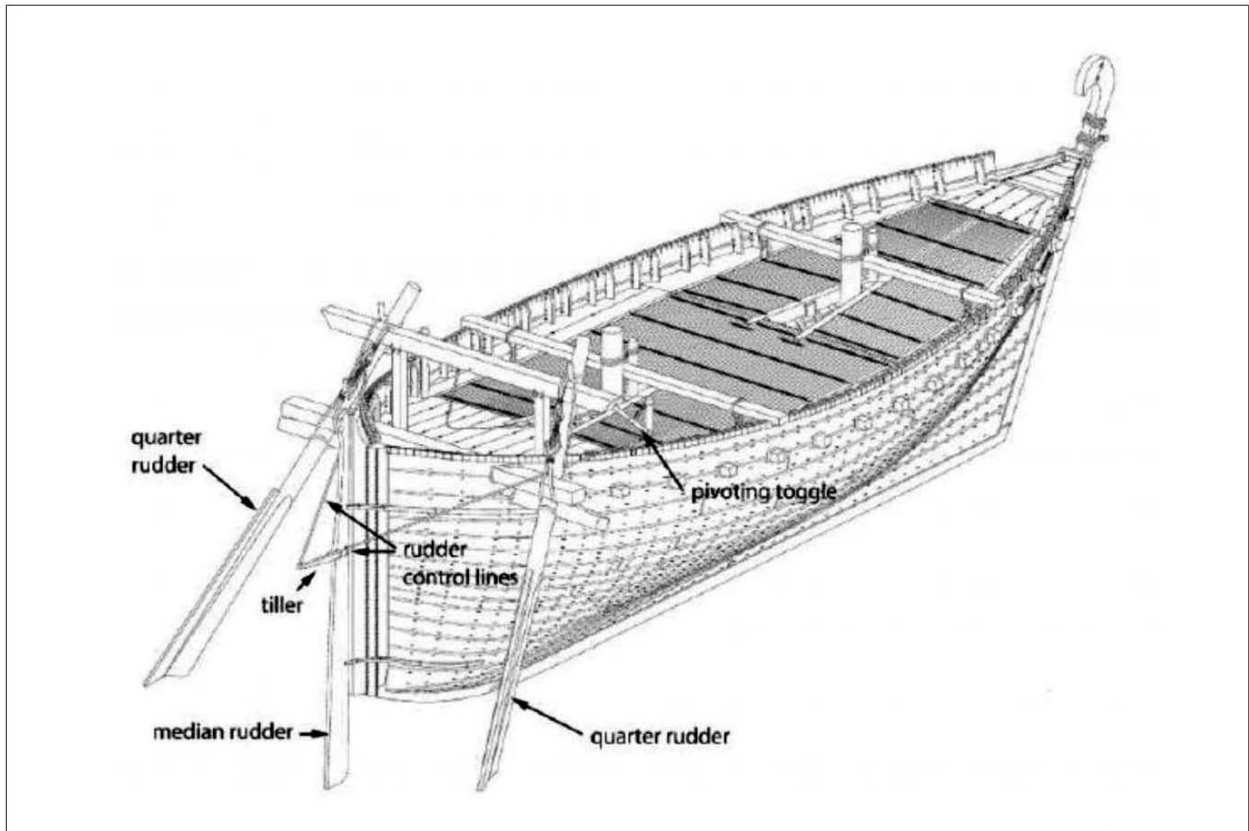
The Hoq ship is of the mentioned kind. Ajanta cave ships, India, ca 800 CE have similar configurations, but totally different sail riggings and independent quarter rudders, maneuvered separately.



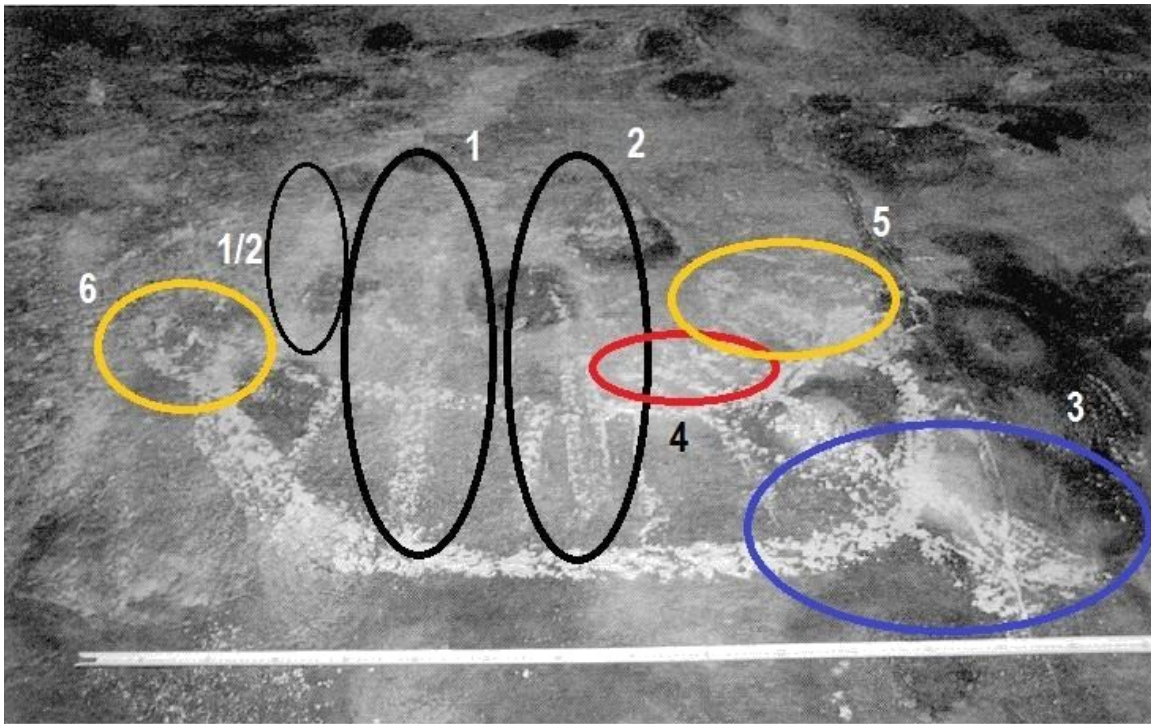
ship design from Ajanta cave, an early Buddhist sacred complex of amazing beauty and historical value



Sails were rigged through a central wooden pin system, quarter rudders operated separately



The rudder rigging of the Jewel of Muscat, a sewn cargo of 825 CE, reproduced from the Belitung wreck Tom Vosmer built it entirely of *Azelia africana*, endemic to the continent, the wood of the original's planks



1, 2, 1/2- masts; 3- rudders; 4- steering rod; 5- conductor; 6- prow

**Author's interpretation of nautical details of the Hoq cave main ship design**

The analyzed ship is a sewn plank two mast vessel with a prow half mast and castle. It was, as such of a length of at least 18 metres and would have carried over thirty tons of goods, if compared to similar wrecks of African origin as the Black Assarca, likely an Axumite cargo and the Belitung wreck, almost entirely built of an African wood. The design and riggings identify it as a local cargo, possibly Indian, typical of a widely shared technology, that makes it exactly as likely originated from Yemen, the Arabian Peninsula further North or the many major ports of the Horn of Africa. Its age is thus unknown; it cannot be pinpointed exactly to the sixth or to another century.

I like to point out to attentive observers that while Indians have and had then different complexions and hair sorts, the sun hut of the conductor holding the rudder bar is clearly raised by curly hair, more African or of some areas of the Arabian peninsula, in expected origin. He is likely not Indian, to me.



Endemic Socotri flora



1



2



1 Sewn Ships found in Kemet Egypt, ages

2 Model of a Greek sewn ship found in Massalia, Marseille

3 A sewn ship in use in South west Kerala, India, today

3 photos from “the sewn ships of Kerala”

A logic last note on the Hoq ship design brings us back thus to the first, African sewn ships' success and diffusion. The early Greeks had adopted the technology, as Omer well describes in the Iliad:



They thwart my wish to smash down those sturdy walls of Troy. Nine of Great Zeus' years have rolled on passed. Ships' planks have rotted, the ropes are freed. Back home our wives and children are waiting for us, the work for which we came remains undone. Omer, Iliad, book II, 130

Sewn boats and ships diffusion across the Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean and beyond, to the Baltic and China must be attributed to their progressive sophistication and, in my personal opinion to their relative elasticity, and proportionate sizes, making safe returns to port the rule. As the Greeks, the Carthaginians and the Romans later shifted to fixed planks, frame first design and much bigger ship sizes, they marked the onset of the worst era of seafaring disasters. Between 200 BCE and 350 CE we encounter a yearly wreck numbers ten to twenty fold multiplication<sup>10</sup>.

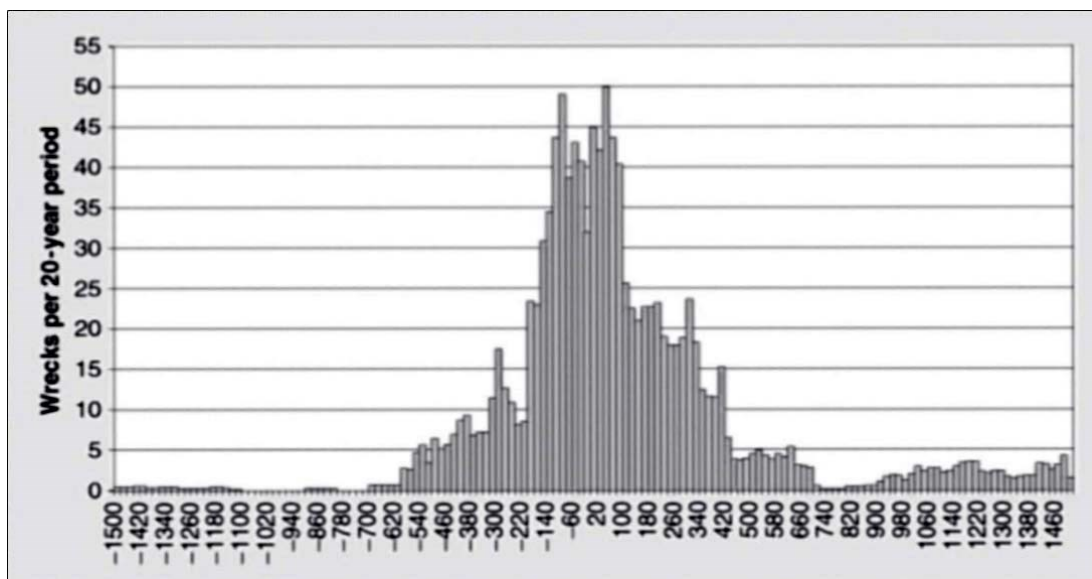
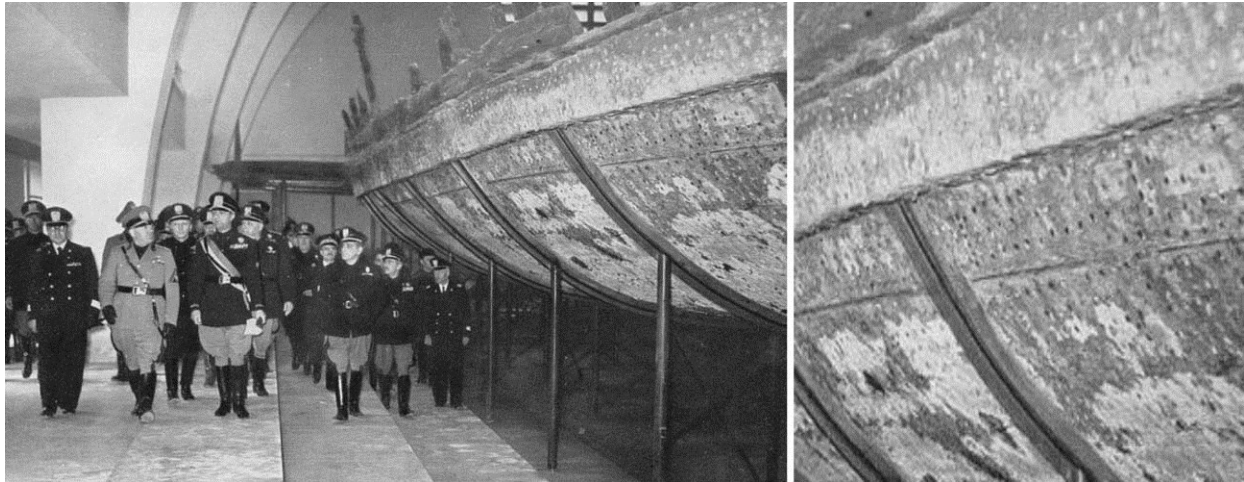


Fig. 9.6. Mediterranean shipwrecks by 20-year period, using probability per annum (data from Parker 1992a)

Shipwreck statistics, based on dating of sunken ships by marine archaeologists, a long peak lies across year 0



Inauguration, Nemi lake museum, burnt in a US raid, 1944; detail, hull of Caligula's frail ships, unsewn frame first



Kemet Mariners, State Museum of Berlin, original color; two of their stitch types in shipbuilding: superior tech

Not just the increasing sizes of ships of the most wreck prone period in history but, crucially, the incapacity of their frame-first rigid structures to withstand the very waves sewn ships absorbed naturally posed a serious problem. Renouncing the African tradition in shipyards was a recipe for sure disaster. Ships could no longer stand strong seas and broke up tragically, with no hope of staying afloat. Insufficient steering systems and the lack of a central rudder made the bigger ones ungovernable. Growing trade volumes even prompted a tax exemption for bigger cargoes, over 70 tons in the Roman Empire. Compounding and increasing risks, contrary to common average tonnage below one hundred ton, cargoes of 400 and 500 tons appear in marine archaeologists' statistics.

Virtually all archaic Greek ships found so far, those of the founders of western culture, a land of independent towns at sea, often island based States are sewn planks vessels. It is no surprise, for the descendants of Kemet, Egyptian culture. I can recall at this point that not only Kemet saw P'Wunt as the land of Gods and origins, but that the Greek at their peak dedicated seven constellations to their myth of Ethiopia, by far the largest group in their sky of deities. *Cassiopeia* and *Cepheus* sacrificed their daughter *Andromeda* to *Cetus* the sea monster to amend for Ethiopian beauty, so distinct it had offended sea Gods. *Perseus* and his horse *Pegasus*, both winged saved her enchained at the shore, *Pisces* completing the group, inoffensive spectators at sea<sup>11</sup>.

No wonder then, if the Gods were not on the Olympus at all times, where no Greek found them. They were considered to be often on.. vacation in their secondary siege, Ethiopian high peaks, where Kemet Egyptians had imagined them since immemorial. Where, after all, the latter must have originated

themselves. Trade and travel were really born along the grand rivers that permitted contacts, the Nile first. Civilization was born of the same skin color of our very first Homo ancestors, in the same areas.



Andromede .. — κεφαλὴν ὅλιγον γλῶσσο Μεδούσης  
 Κεφίζωνι, πείμεθρον ὄλον πετρώσατο κήτος.  
 Δεσμους δὲ Ἀνδρομέδης δυνεύσατο. —

Nonnus lib. 47.

6

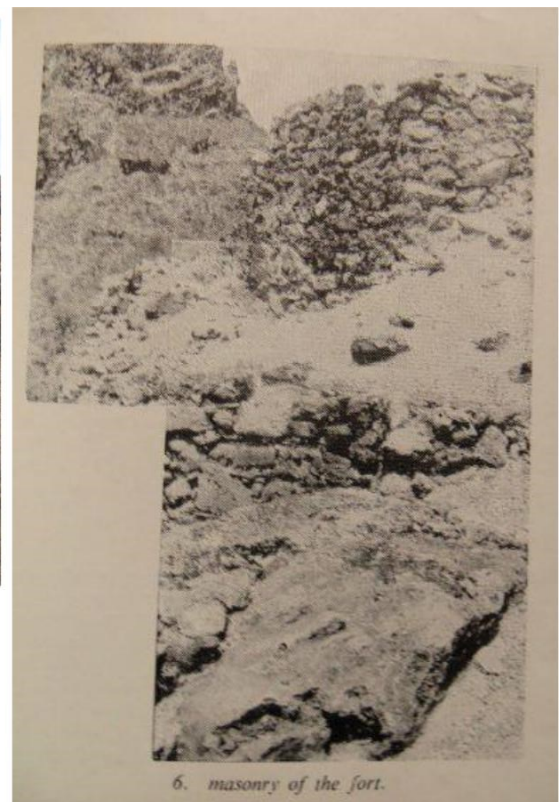
Andromeda, Abraham van Dienbeek, British Museum. Few others dared paint her original Black

## 2.2 A castle above Hoq, and other areas of study in Socotra

A castle, very similar to some of the two dozens we have recently recovered in Ethiopia, is attributed to a local leader, and reputed built in 1507. It lies in a mountain pass high above cave Hoq.



Hawari fort ruins.



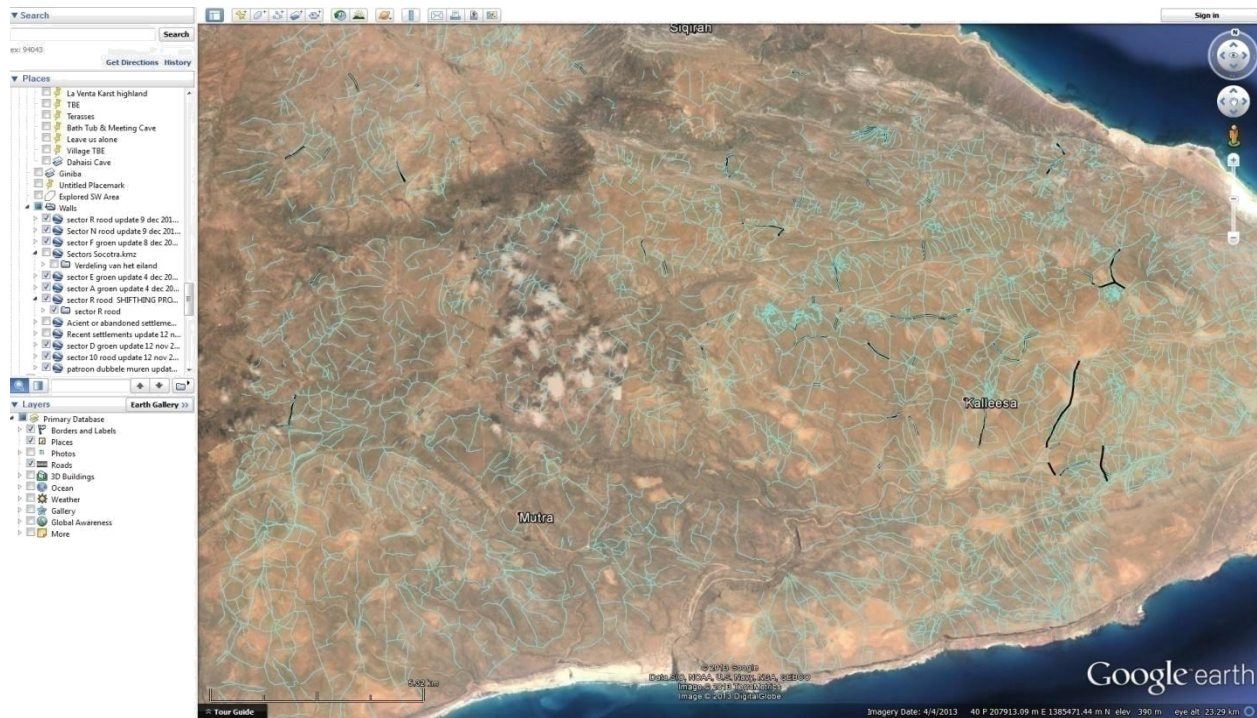
The coarse structure and the round towers resemble it considerably to the Ancorcha fortification, a small trapezoidal plan fort indicated on the Fra Mauro map on the Maganagna hill in Addis Ababa, pre-dating 1435, thus likely one century older. Clearly regional mountain forts were similar, possibly the realization of the same builders. The Hawari fort and other smaller fortified houses and mountain pass ancient dwellings deserve excavation and further attention. Other scripts have not been interpreted; practically no archaeology has ever been practiced on the island, with the notable exception of a Russian protracted mission in the seventies.

Hoq itself overlooks a small bay, one of the few practicable ship harbors and lies below the fortified Hawari pass, on a trade route crossing the island.

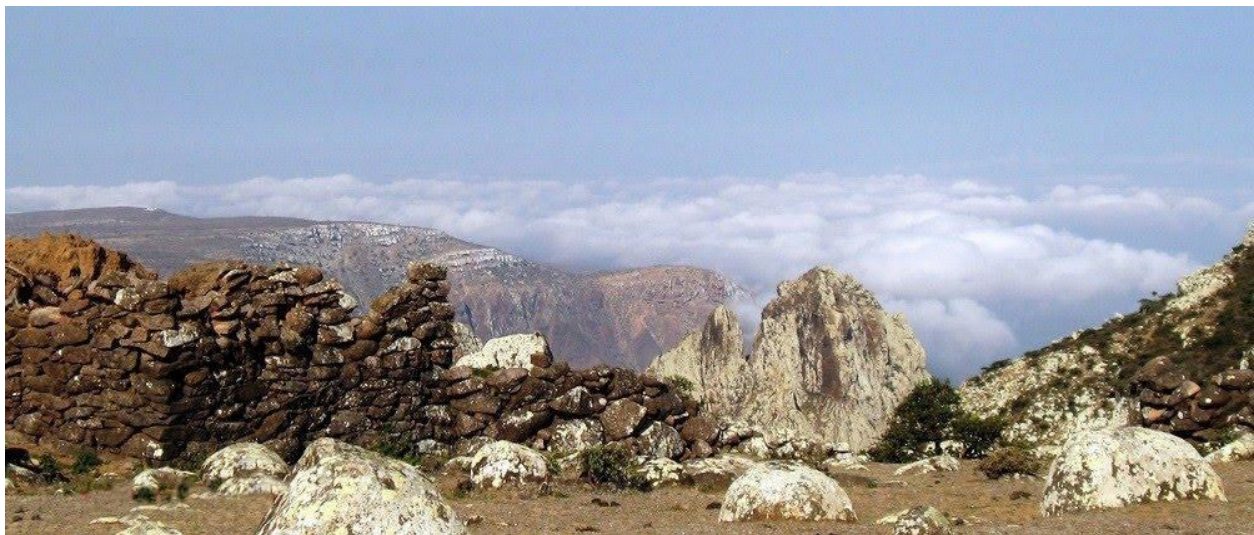
The high worth of Socotra for the trade wind immemorial routes of the spices, off *aromata promontorium*, the tip of the horn is mentioned in the Periplus, which notes and lists the transiting goods off the horn, precious to Indians and dwellers of the Far East: gold, ivory, tortoise shells, slaves, as exchanged for silks, aromas, iron tools and weapons. The local language was akin to that of the Ethiopian highlands, and the Periplus witnesses as of 65CE already the presence of resident Indians.

Really, no island, coast, or port of passage is more significant than Socotra to fully grasp the early globalization, and valuable shared developments the trading community centered in the Horn of Africa and thrust, as it naturally is, towards the Ocean.



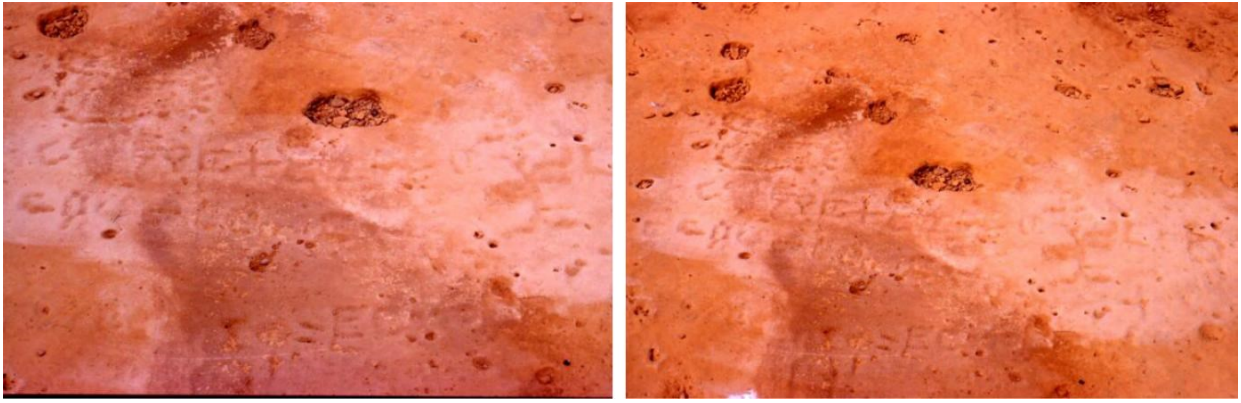


**Google earth based archaeologist Julien Jensen van Rensburg's study of rural areas in the broad area of Hoq.**



**Fortifications on the Hijr mounts**

amazing understanding spurred when Hoq was rediscovered, but geomorphologists, geographers, marine archaeologists, linguists and anthropologists should join a vast team, as soon as the present Emirati occupation of the island can be solved. The purpose is adding to the islands' wealth -unique natural site- its vast intercultural heritage significance.



More Amharic scripts from the exterior of Eriosh cave, Socotra, not interpreted so far



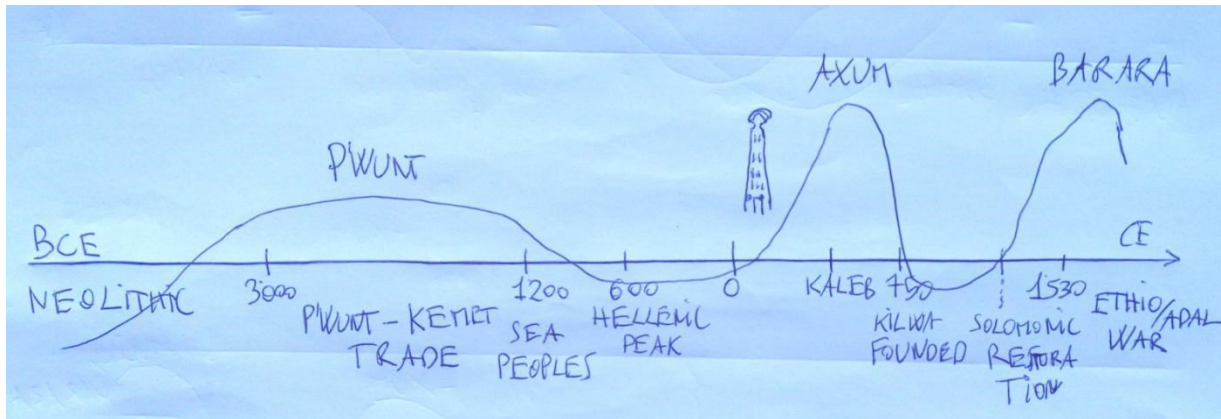
An unreported construction or monument in Socotra, courtesy Peter de Geest



More Brahminic script on tombstones in Delisha, Socotra, witness to the reason for the Ocean's name: Indian

### 3 A third cycle, Barara and its splendor

After the Axumite period, undoubtedly the Age of Barara, or the peak of the Solomonid restoration, ca. 1380-1530 CE was yet another period of Abyssinian might, again, based on trade and expansions.



Three Cycles in the History of the Horn, a timeline, including some mentioned dates

Emperor after Emperor, the Abyssinians engaged in wars of conquest, and invariably clashed with the very allied traders they used to access the ports in present day Somalia, and exploit the vital Indian Ocean Routes: the Muslim Sultanates, of Ifat and Adal in particular.

This is well represented on the Borgia map, a German Swiss masterpiece of ca. 1435 CE, acquired by the Pope electors and Pope bearing family, the Roman Borgias. Clearly on influence by Abissinian visitors, likely the members of the two missions of 1403 and 1405, Sultan Abinichibel, with little if any doubt Sultan Ahmed bin Bedlay of Adel, is represented as a black monster faced tyrant commanding a people of naked man-dogs, the very denigratory terms Ethiopian Christians defined him by.

It must be noted here that the Sultan had obtained decisive victories against two of his Emperor rivals in the early fourteen hundreds, to be defeated later by Zer'a Yaqob, the king Europeans confused with a Bishop King, the mythical *Prester I* debate below. Rivalry and conflict were often mitigated by the evident reciprocal need to trade, as the muslims Sultanates generally controlled the ports.

One century later a Sultan of Adel, Ahmed bin Ibrahim al Ghazi used, for the first time in regional history, matchlocks to easily overpower the trenches and their defendant, the kilometres long defenses we are now uncovering. His troops rapidly and totally subjugated and destroyed Christian Abyssinia. After nearly five hundred anywhere in highland Ethiopia locals and clergy insist whatever Church or ruins was burnt by Ahmed the Conqueror (al Ghazi), they renamed Ahmed Gagn, the left handed, in long retained discern. Mythical interpretation of history aside, they are likely right in about half of cases. All significant settlements and towns were totally leveled, pillaged and burnt.



The Borgia Map, a shield like bronze artefact. Scene representing Ahmed Bin Badlay of Adel

The Hill of Gold, Debre Work, in newly recovered Tegulet, an Imperial residence of significance in and just after the age of Barara (destroyed in 1530) has a totally fire burnt top citadel. No inch of earth is spared, all soils are incinerated. Only two white ceramic shard from Egypt showed off in a different colour at our discovery, as archaeologist Sam C. Walker noted perhaps the days of fire were alimeted to collect easily the gold ornaments from a Church or palace, much like a purported fire at the Jerusalem Temple during the Assirian conquest was used to melt and loot the precious metal.



Two ceramic shard at Tegulet's Debre Work hilltop, a parchment smoothing tool (center), on heavily burnt soils and stones



Two of the ten mountain forts defending Abyssinian age of splendor's Capital, Barara, in today's Yekka hill, Addis: Talian Meda and Qwass meda. Barara was, most likely in what is today's Kolfe, NW Addis Abeba.



**Debre Work, Tegulet; a set of semiprecious stones and shards collected at site A, Tegulet, March 2017, elitist cultural material**

Ten forts, five villages, thirteen churches, various citadels and at least one whole town were found via space archaeology techniques and visits, named in general via a map the very visitors to the mentioned Council of Florence (cfr. chapter one) designed for Fra Mauro in Venice in 1439. All show clear signs of deliberate destruction. This within Addis Ababa alone<sup>12</sup>.



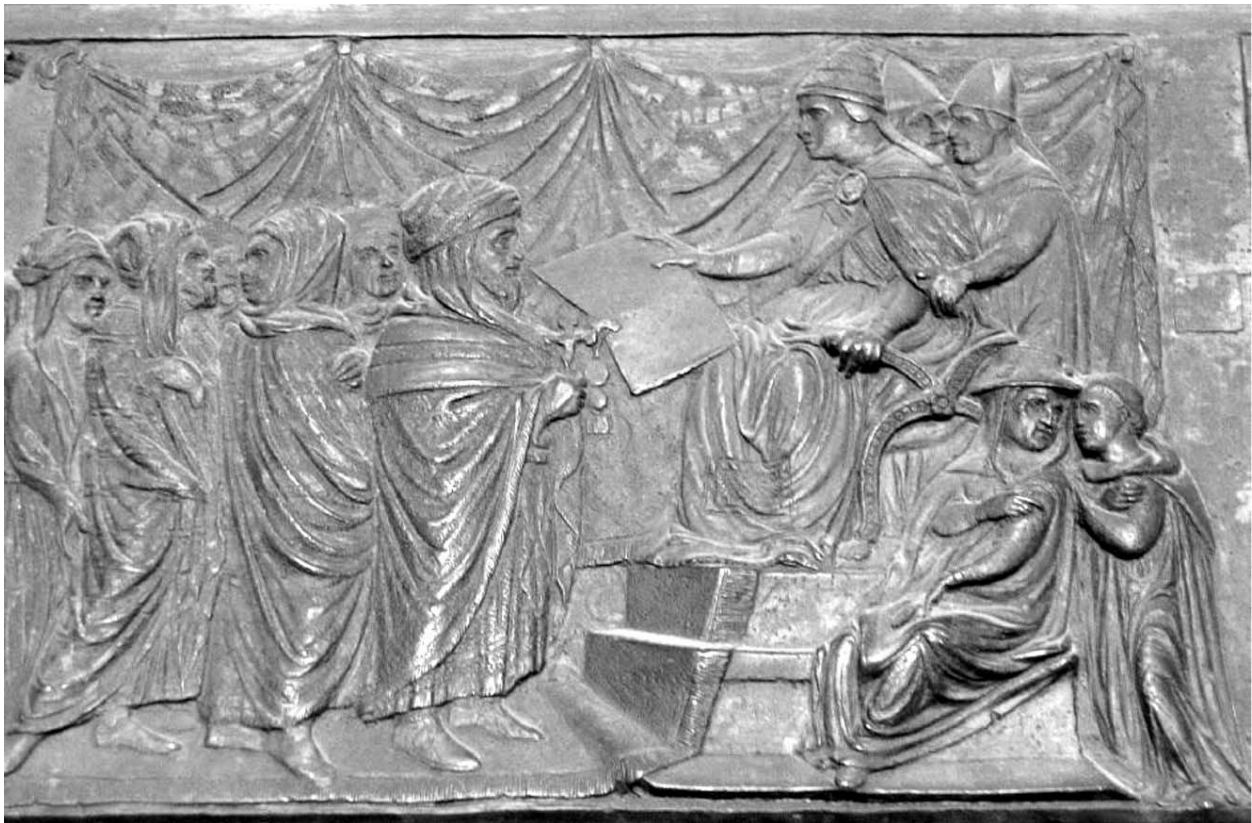
**A tower in the Entoto Royal Citadel, tentatively attributed to Emperor Lebna Dengel, 1515, now fallen, in a 1897 photo, stood five metres tall, its base and about a third of the rubble stoned remain. The crowned pillar is lost.**



**Another tower nearby, examined by a resident Italian Historian, Dr. Bossi**

A series of Emperors, starting from Wedem Arad in 1304, on a less documented mission to Europe, and twenty two well documented missions from 1403 to the Ethio-Adal wars started in 1529, contributed to the massive enlargement of a curious fake, one that became a long persisting myth in the West<sup>13</sup>.

A Prester John authored a preposterous letter, likely fabricated by German Guelphs to sustain the Pope's worldly claims, in the papal court of Viterbo ca 1145. Versions of the missive, a pledge to Christianity by a totally inexistent Bishop King, to ask for help in the fight against a Jihad, cropped up elsewhere. Soon a few century long quest for the *Preste* was onset, until the Florence Council in 1440 declared that Zer'a Yaqob, then Emperor of Ethiopia, was Prester John. A papal bull was issued and sent to Barara, an event taken as a reunion with the Tewahedo Ethiopian Church and held as so important it was later immortalized in St. Peter's bronze massive doors. There was no explorer to the coast of West Africa, like D'Azambuja with Columbus to Elmina in today's Ghana (around 1482) who could escape being the official bearer of a letter offering military alliance to the Preste<sup>14</sup>.



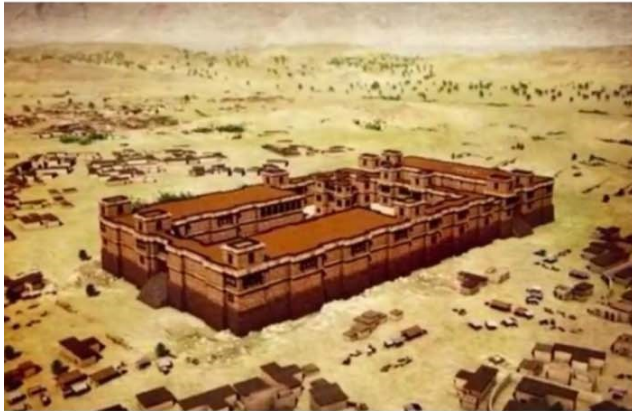
Filarete, St. Peter's, Rome, Pope Eugene IV consigns the Bull of Union to the Ethiopian envoys to Florence  
Photo Courtesy Dr. Andreu Martinex d'Alos Moner

#### **4 Inland to Harar, or East to Hararge**

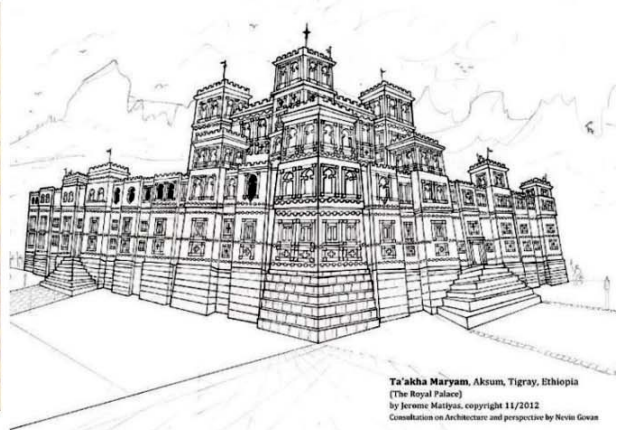
Inland from the Somali ports of Berbera and Zeyla -the latter a typical medieval port, while the first was already in use at the time of the Periplus, ca 65 CE- we find the capital of Adal, Harar in the Ethio-Adal war period, the middle fifteen hundreds. Hararge and the Harar state are easily recognized by space archaeologists as a real mine of new discoveries, especially protected settlements and mountain forts. Considering that some competent modern scholars evaluate Yemeni, Sabeen and especially Axumite

fortified palaces such as the Enda Tzion and the Ta'aka Mariam as the archetype of the global medieval castle, so elitist and evolved as they were compared to Motte and Bailey British forts, more adapted to comparatively destitute semi nomadic European peoples, it is no surprise really to find the Harari and Solomonic castles had similar plans and comparable defenses altogether.

Remote sensing from satellites and ground recognitions are discovering not just the fief of the Christian might, but the forts, citadels, villages and towns of both warring states in the generation long conflict that consigned Ethiopia to the onset of tragic destitution. That was soon to be aggravated by the sad dark dawn of European destruction of the Indian Ocean trade Koine', or shared culture and community.



Representations of Axumite Castles, ca 550 CE  
 Representations of Axumite Castles, ca 550 CE

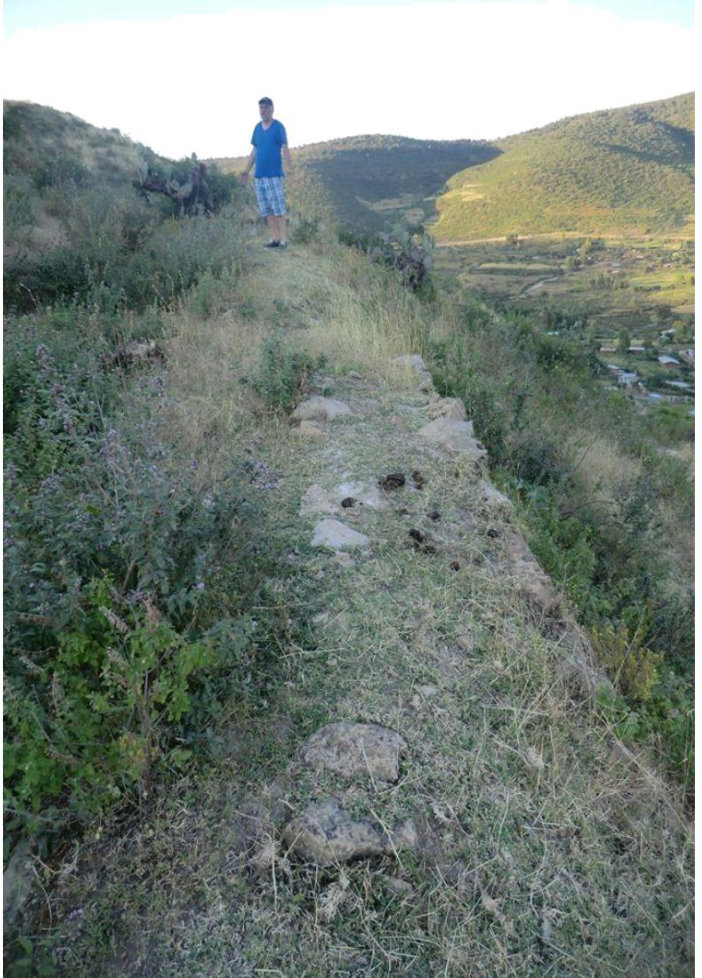


Ta'akha Maryam, Aksum, Tigray, Ethiopia  
 (The Royal Palace)  
 by Jerome Mattyas, copyright 11/2012  
 Consultation on Architecture and perspective by Nevio Govan



Harar walls built around 1540, photo Leslie Gottert, Ethiopian Institute of Architecture Building and Construction





**Forts in Hararge and near Jigjiga, Somali Regional State of today's Ethiopia.**

The latter, based on fair trade and shared practices, guaranteed development, the first is synonym with injustice and crime. Practices so hidden at the base of western culture our discoveries are met with inevitable disbelief, and, worse, denial and continued oblivion.

### **5 A pledge and a call to action**

While research, including archaeological excavation has started recently in the Harari Federal State and in Hararge, no action has been taken in the vicinity and inside Addis Ababa/Barara. This means sites now known to widening numbers are not studied, lie unprotected and no excavation has confirmed nor disclaimed my concept of a mighty Medieval Addis. As a consequence, developers, roads, power lines, local residents and tourists both pillage and destroy systematically a unique piece of history.

One at least two hundred years of Eurocentric narrative has systematically denied. The three dozens of major sites of the fief of Solomonic power at the height of the age of Barara we have uncovered over ten years.

There is no such excuse or delaying reason as insecurity: Addis Abeba is as safe as core western Countries, in fact, petty crime density and prevalence is likely less than half that of European Capital cities.

Local bye-laws suggest, like some technical inexperience, the intervention of foreign and Ethiopian integrated teams.

We are losing a site every six month, on average, lately. Procrastination is not an option; it is time to produce research that carries constructive consequences. Valuation of Medieval sites in the Capital has fixed their worth at two hundred and seventy million USD, only if properly organized and promoted<sup>15</sup>.

Medieval Addis Ababa awaits and deserves academics ready to build a career on some of the most exquisite, unexpected, unique and massive sites Medieval Africa has ever offered: the forts, towns and citadels of 'the Preste'<sup>16</sup>. Paired with research on the oceanic trade routes off the Horn, enough to engage generations of scholars in the now long due task of capsizing centuries of Eurocentric history.



Three areas studied here: Socotra Hoq cave, Barara and Harar, medieval capitals. Note site densities in 2 and 3



Uses of the Fra Mauro planisphere, the single most useful artifact in understanding medieval Ethiopia: medieval Addis-Barara, on the map and on the ground, after enquiries and visits. Sites are often only named via the map.

Marco Vignano, Addis Ababa, September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018

## Notes

1. Vico, G.B., *La Scienza Nuova*, Naples, 1744. A posthumous work, published just after his death. The Neapolitan philosopher's theories make him one of the first social historians, or perhaps historical anthropologists. He explains the cycles as tied to development of a diffused rationality, base for an economic growth, and successive decadence tied to irrational behavior of elites. He was an illuminist writer.

2. Jarus. O. , "Baboon mummy analysis reveals Eritrea and Ethiopia as location of land of Punt". *The Independent*. Monday 26 April 2010.. The same Rodolfo Fattovich that found the P'wunt ships in Sawasis had indicated first, around 1980, that P'Wunt had to be located in Eritrea and the North horn.

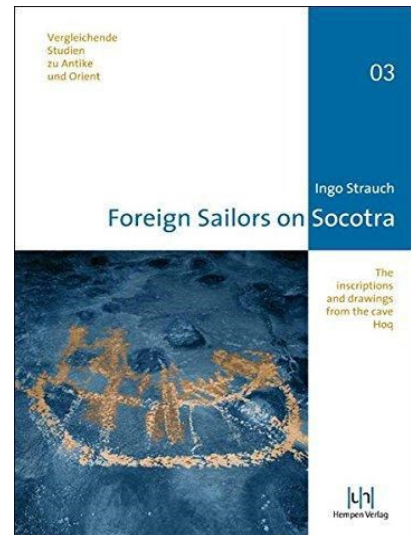
3. Dayton, W., Central Africa as a source of Phoenician tin. In *Proceedings, 33rd Symposium on Archaeometry. Geoarchaeological and Bioarchaeological Studies 3*. Ed. H. Kars and E. Burke. Institute for Geo and Bioarchaeology, 2002. Cfr. also: Vigano, M., Africans circumnavigate Africa, Phoenicians discover Mt. Cameroon, the Ugandan tin Phoenicians sold in Europe. Two thousand years old African lighthouses in the Mediterranean and North Atlantic, academia.edu, San Francisco, 2016. My publication offers details of the possible routes from the Ugandan mines to the Mediterranean.

4. Casson L., ed., 1989, *The Periplus Maris Erythraei*, Text with introduction, translation, and commentary, Princeton University Press, 1989.

The Milan Catholic University team sponsored by explorers and film makers Castiglioni is resuming a ground breaking campaign in Adulis this November, 2018. Buildings, considerable quantities of cultural material from as far as Europe and India have been recovered so far.

5. Mordini, A., *Gli aurei Kushana del monastero di Debra-Damo*, *Atti del Convegno di Studi Etiopici* (Rome, 1960), 249–254; Vigano, M. *The lost wood, African seamasters across the Indian Ocean*, academia.edu, San Francisco, 2013. The hoard was, in my opinion, simply looted by the Fascist occupants. They have been since dispersed. If any could be retraced, they should be part of Ethiopian, not Italian collections.

6. Ali al-Hassan Shirazi was the son, recounts have it, of a powerful Persian King and one of his Abyssinian wives. He had family disputes and set sail to first settle and colonize a part of the Somali shore, to soon abandon it and found Kilwa further South, in the eight century CE, soon after the decline of Axum ports, taken by the Persians. Let him be a real founder or not, the narrative shows the link to Ethiopia and its seafaring skills, cfr. Powell, R.L., *Oral Historiography and the Shirazi of the East African Coast*, *History in Africa*, 11 (1984), pp. 237-267, Cambridge University Press; Vigano, M. *The lost wood...*, p. 19



7. Strauch, I., ed., *Foreign Sailors on Socotra : the Inscriptions and Drawings from the Cave*, Bremen, Ute Hempen Verlag, 2012. The exhaustive text on the exploration of Hoq cave.
8. This present is the first publication of new interpretations of scripts in Hoq cave and -see pages 7 to 11- of author's opinions on a ship design in the cave.
9. Patrice Pomey et al. give good accounts of Egyptian and Greek sewn ships technology, often in French, tied to their 2013 reconstruction of Gliptys, an experimental archaeology replica of a Greek VI century BCE fishing ship found in Massalia, Marseille, in the ancient port, under the town's main Jules Verne square. Search for the youtube video *The Sewn Boats of Kerala*, Pomey presents ancient and present days sewn ships and boats in a vivid documentary. Greek experimental marine archaeologists Tzalas and US's Tom Vosmer, of our Past Masters research group are the most recognized in the field of sewn ship reconstruction; check Ralph K. Pedersen's site [wedigboats.com](http://wedigboats.com) for the Black Assarca, Eritrea shipwreck and edge cutting research on ports harbors and wrecks in the Red Sea.
10. The table and the quote are from Parker, A.J., *Ancient Shipwrecks of the Mediterranean and the Roman Provinces*, Tempum Reparatum, Oxford, 1992. While increased cargo vessel numbers and tonnage are the main reason for the wrecks' peak, little if any research has been performed to verify if the same is also tied to the contemporary ships' building techniques shift to frame first, albeit progressive, that occurred in the same period. The peak is self explanatory: ships around the onstart of the Current era were particularly unreliable in the Mediterranean. Chinese had invented the central rudder in the same period, while African, Indian, Arab traders went perfectly well along for centuries with progressive ameliorations of the Kemet, or P'Wunt ships' technology, to later and slowly adopt frame first builds when they became at least minimally reliable. Imperial Rome had a much repeated quote, "*navigare necesse est*", the *malum necessarium*, indispensable evil that kept the empires' economy and war machine afloat. While ships tragically sunk with no respite. Certainly, building material and hard material cargoes are easily spotted by scubas, other wrecks remain unnoticed, but this leaves the significance of the concentration of wrecks in the Roman classic era intact. The massive number of sunken ships offers a bonanza for archaeologist, the most powerful tool to understand our past at the peak of the classic period. Would we have ever understood Greek gears, and their advanced calculators, without the... assistance of yet another unseaworthy Roman cargo hit by a storm near Antikythera Island? Had the shipbuilders stuck longer to thousand years experimented African tech, they would have likely suffered less life and goods losses. Tight compartment ships rendered frame first larger ships really safe only during the Song era, in China alone, from ca. 1050 CE. Decline in the Mediterranean had in the meanwhile reduced volumes traded and cargo sizes dramatically.
11. Ethiopian Church scholars have a different version of the story. To them, the Greeks recognized that Ethiopians first studied the skies and transmitted their constellations to Kemet, with their own pre Julian complex and complete calendar, used here today. Cassiopeia, Cepheus and Andromeda are seen here as archetypes of Ethiopian astronomers, rather than constellations. Megabi (a high clergy teacher) Addis Rodas, pers. communication. While seeing Cepheus as a

nominator of constellations appears a distortion to me, a singular appropriation of a foreign myth as national history, I can confirm ancient Abyssinian sailors used the stars to orient their navigations, named them accordingly and had their own star groupings. Cfr: Vigano, M., *The lost wood..*, p. 6.

Adding together the Greek myth, the Ethiopian calendar with the factual complex principles behind the calculation of bissextiles (a thirteen month of five days, six days every four and seven every six hundred years) based on two series of time units accounted on the basic daily differences between the lunar and solar years, and the astronomical navigation the result can be taken as an indication of an Ethiopian independent science of time and astronomy, proven but not exactly dated. Addis Rodas places it, arbitrarily to me, at 2000 BCE. In the end, it is possible that Ethiopian, that is in a broad sense South Nilotic early astronomy passed knowledge through Kemet to Greece and us, together with a perfect and archaic calendar, still in use today!

This is better accepted and understood in a perspective that does not isolate Egypt as a special entity, but logically connects it South as a part of the Nile's astounding archaic, first civilization.

12. Vigano, M., *Ten forts in Addis and six in Hararge, of advanced military might, on the emplacement of Barara, capital*, academia.edu, San Francisco, 2018
13. Salvadore, M. *The African Prester John and the Birth of Ethiopian-European relations, 1402-1555*, Routledge, N.Y., 2016; the last and most comprehensive of a series of recent texts on the Preste issue. My personal impression, shared by some scholars I frequent, is that the myth has been now well studied; it is unfortunately the reality of Ethiopian medieval sites that stands forgotten and set to be rapidly destroyed. The myth remains, it makes sense today if it can be used to foster action research: help fund excavations, rather than academics and disputes.
14. A number of texts quote Diogo d'Azambuja (the founder of the El Mina colony, in today's Ghana) with Columbus as an accompanying young officer in at least one of his many voyage, Columbus' diaries repeatedly refer to his experience there. El Mina was the Country of some of his mariners in his American epics, like the Niño brothers, Pedro Alonso and Juan, pilots respectively of the Santa Maria and the Niña, two of his ships on his first transatlantic voyage. They participated also to the second and third. I particularly like the book: Sacchi, M. *Terra in Vista!, le grandi esplorazioni oceaniche del XV secolo*, Effeemme, Milan, 2011. It flows as a brilliant and exhaustive narrative held by a true historian, rendered as an enjoyable reading. I wish it could be translated into English to reach a wider public. He mentions Columbus' supposed voyages to Elmina, the castle of slaves, in detail. Diogo d'Azambuja was the Elmina fortified slave prison builders. Ghanaians paradoxically at times refer to him as.. the founder of modern Ghana. Time to look for African medieval might from within, is the author's comment.
15. Vigano, M., *Ten forts in Addis...*, the valuation is on p. 16, see also note 15, erroneously indicated as 16 in the published text.
16. Vigano, M., *A Pledge to save medieval Addis. An open letter to scholars*, academia.edu, San Francisco, 2018.