



ERC Consolidator Grant project *HornEast*
**Horn & Crescent. Connections, Mobility
and Exchange between the Horn of Africa
and the Middle East in the Middle Ages**
PI: Julien Loiseau, Aix-Marseille Université, IREMAM

The ERC project HORNEAST aims at evidencing local and global connections between the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Nubia) and its Islamic environment (Egypt, Palestine and Arabian Peninsula) in the Middle Ages (7th to 15th Century), for a better understanding of the Islamisation process in the whole area.

The Horn of Africa has long been studied as a linguistic and historic isolate, cut off from its environment since the 7th century Arabic conquests and the formation of the Islamic empire. The official subordination of the Ethiopian and Nubian churches to the Coptic church of Alexandria and the regular presence of Ethiopian monks in the Holy Land would have been the only remnants of the Horn's ancient relationships with the Red Sea area and the Middle East. Despite its early introduction, as soon as the 7th century, Islam seems to have played only a local part in the Horn's history. Recent decompartmentalization of Ethiopian studies, development of archaeology in Ethiopia and the better inclusion of Eastern christianities within Islamic studies allow

a deep adjustment of this statement. Indeed the same climate impacted the whole area from the 13th century onwards: the acceleration of the Islamisation process, that led to the decline of Christian communities in Egypt and the Middle East, to the progressive disappearance of Nubian Christian kingdoms, and to the growing competition of the Christian kingdom and its Islamic neighbours in Ethiopia.

The ERC project HORNEAST pursues two hypothesis:

1) that connexions never have ceased between the Horn and its environment that came under Islamic domination and have even increased from the 13th century onwards;

2) that mobility of women and men, free or enslaved, commercial exchange and the flow of books and stories back and forth, did participate in the Islamisation of the whole area in the same way as in the resiliency of Ethiopian christianity.

The ERC project HORNEAST aims at evidencing these connexions inside the Horn, through the study of local written sources (in Ge'ez, Old Nubian and Arabic) and through the archaeological survey of Negash, lieu de mémoire of the first Muslim emigration to Ethiopia; as well as outside the Horn, in Egypt, Palestine and the Arabian Peninsula, through the study of Arabic sources and of all traces left by men and women that came from the Horn to the Middle East.

By evidencing these connexions, the ERC project HORNEAST will achieve its objectives in fully connecting the history of the Horn of Africa to the Global history of the area and in better understanding the historical conditions of islamisation in the Medieval world.

julien.loiseau@univ-amu.fr

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