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## Rethinking the Reign of ‘Abdullāhi Muhammad b. ‘Alī Abdaššakūr: Harār at the Dawn of the ‘Glocal’ Era during the Latter Part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

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*Rethinking the Reign of ‘Abdullāhi Muhammad b. ‘Alī Abdaššakūr: Harär at the Dawn of the ‘Glocal’ Era during the Latter Part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*

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Avishai Ben-Dror\*

This article<sup>1</sup> examines the short-lived reign of ‘Abdullāhi Muhammad b. ‘Alī Abdaššakūr, the last emir of Harär, through the prism of globalization. Harär, one of the most ancient cities in East Africa, is located east of Addis Ababa, on the south-eastern tip of the plateau that extends from the Rift Valley to the plains of the Ogaden Desert.<sup>2</sup> The historical events that happened in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century turned the town into a cultural and religious intersection which brought together global powers and their ‘agents’ – Muslims and Christians from Africa, as well as Europeans.

‘Abdullāhi was appointed to the position of emir by Great Britain in May of 1885, after the withdrawal of the Egyptian occupation force that had taken control of Harär a decade earlier. He quickly became enmeshed in a series of political imbroglios, both inside and outside the emirate that hastened the conclusion of his rule. In January 1887, an army led by Menelik, the sovereign of the Ethiopian kingdom of Shewa, defeated the Emir's army. Harär was annexed by Ethiopia, and has since maintained its status as one of the country's political and economic centres. The ‘Abdullāhi Emirate period occupies a place of relatively minor significance in historical research on Harär. The period from 1885-1887 is generally thought of as a brief interim between the “large” events – the Egyptian and Ethiopian occupations of Harär – and the Emir's name often goes unmentioned.<sup>3</sup>

When the literature does mention him, ‘Abdullāhi is often referred to in negative terms. He has been described in some current research as “weak” and “fanatic”, and as an “obsessive reactionary”.<sup>4</sup> A more balanced approach portrays ‘Abdullāhi as “someone who tried to revert to Harär’s old system of government, which relied on a closed-door policy by limiting the presence and influence of foreigners in the city” (AHMED ZAKARIA 2003:38-39). The traits ascribed to ‘Abdullāhi, and his religious Muslim “fanaticism”

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<sup>1</sup> This article is an early version of: BEN-DROR 2015.

<sup>2</sup> See ASANTE 2005:1012-1013.

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, a review of major periods in the history of the city in an album published in the last decade in REVAULT and SANTELLI 2004:17.

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, CAULK 1967-1968:6, FOUCHER 1988:370- 371; MUHAMMAD HASSAN 1973: 33-35.

were mostly based on a corpus of literature produced by European travellers – merchants and missionaries – who resided in Harär in the late nineteenth century. These documents were part of the Orientalist discourse in Western and Ethiopian Christian research, which also came to bear on Harär and the Muslim communities that resided in and around the city. Some of the studies that adopted this approach often couched encounters between the city's Muslims and Christians in strictly polarized religious and cultural terms, disregarding the actual events that took place in Harär at the time. They also focused on “local” history and tended to artificially sever Harär from the regional structures that tied it to the coastal cities of Zeila and Berbera on the Somali coast, as well as to the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea.

In fact, ‘Abdullāhi’s story is a reflection of the first time in the history of Harär that a dialogue took place between the local and the global. The globalization processes discussed here are connected to African and European colonialism and its ‘agents’ (such as Muslim Egyptian officers and preachers, European merchants and missionaries). The globalization trends, brought by the colonial agents, deeply influenced the political, social and economic alignments in Harär and along the Somali coast from 1875.

‘Abdullāhi, as this paper suggests, conceived Harär and its relationships with its African and Somali coast's surroundings solely on a ‘local’ level. To ‘Abdullāhi’s great regret, the political and economic conditions that were valid for his predecessors until 1875 were no longer relevant a decade later, and he was forced to deal with globalization ‘agents’ in Harär and along the Somali coast. His misreading of the changes and the import of forces that came from ‘the sea’ led to his political fall and to the emirate sovereignty's final destruction in 1887.

From October 1875, the Egyptians linked Harär to the global system of commerce and transport that rapidly developed in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean over the last three decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Egyptians introduced a new era in the history of Harär, instituting new standards of government, society and religion. One aspect of the new global era was the influx of European merchants and missionaries who settled in Harär. Furthermore, the Egyptians aspired to convert the Oromo people to Islam and to spread what they called ‘the right Islam’ among the town’s Muslim denizens. The Egyptians identified the re-Islamization with modernization and with their vision of a ‘civilizing mission’, merging a hybrid message of ‘cultured’ Muslim colonialism, part of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman colonial ideas.<sup>5</sup> The Egyptian occupation, which was the first phase in the process of Harär’s loss of sovereignty, had come to an end by 1885. The second phase was the Ethiopian occupation of the town during January 1887, followed by the assimilation of Harär’s political and economic elites into the Ethiopian empire.

Fredrick Cooper discusses the role played by globalization in the historical study of African societies. He maintained that such research must focus on something that is “more than local and less than global” (COOPER 2001:208-211). In this article, I wish to draw on Cooper’s assumption and weave Harär’s local history into the history of global

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<sup>5</sup> For further details see DERINGIL 2003:311-342.

developments, in a region to which the city was linked since its founding in the 13<sup>th</sup> century – the Somali coast and the cities of Zeila and Berbera. A focus on the interaction between the Somali coast – the portal for globalization trends that seeped in from “the sea” – and the Muslim community of Harār can give an additional dimension to our understanding of ‘Abdullāhi’s reign and his struggle with “the sea” and its agents of change.

### **Globalization trends in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, 1865-1885**

The advancement of maritime transportation, and the subsequent development of trade and transport routes in the Red Sea, gave rise to a rapid increase in trade both along the coasts of the Horn of Africa and in the north-western regions of the Indian Ocean. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 expedited the development of trade routes between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea and between the European empires and their colonies along the coasts of Sudan, the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. As one researcher who studied the Sudanese port city of Sawākin put it, the Red Sea, once a “side street of maritime commerce”, quickly became the “highway to the East” (BLOSS 1937:247).

The Red Sea and the north-western regions of the Indian Ocean became centres for the movement of capital, workers and merchants, as well as for service providers who settled in the port cities of the Red Sea. Some of these cities were assimilated into the new transport and trade system and became hubs for immigrants and various types of trade, including human trafficking, throughout the Red Sea and the western Indian Ocean.<sup>6</sup>

These developments are consistent with the definition of globalization as an amalgamation of economic, technological, political, social, cultural and behavioural processes along with increased participation in global commerce and an accelerated “flow of capital” (DODGE and HIGGOTT 2002:14-15). Globalization also impacted the region discussed in this article, appearing as a diverse phenomenon that “involve[d] both capitalist markets and sets of social relations and flows of commodities, capital, technology, ideas, forms of culture, and people across national boundaries” (KELLNER 2002:287).

Globalization phenomena were linked to increasingly acute colonial rivalries in the Gulf of Aden and the southern Red Sea, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century. Britain had been in control of Aden since 1839, France aspired to gain power in areas of Djibouti, and in 1869 Italy consolidated its hold on the port city of Assab. Another factor was Khedive Ismā‘il, the ruler of Egypt between 1863 and 1879, who harboured his own imperial ambitions in Africa. Ismā‘il's armies deepened their control via Sudan towards the Red Sea, occupying the port cities of Sawākin in Sudan and Massawa (located in present Eritrea) in 1865. In 1875, Ismā‘il also took control of the port cities of Zeila, Berbera, Tadjoura, and Bulhar, as far as Cape Guardafui. Egyptian

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<sup>6</sup> See for instance, the case of the city of Massawa in MIRAN 2009:33-65.

sovereignty over the ports of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden was ratified in an agreement signed between the British government and the Khedivate in 1877, and became a feature of the colonial map of the region.<sup>7</sup> Two months after the takeover of Zeila, an Egyptian force numbering 1,200 soldiers departed from the city to occupy the Emirate of Harär.

### **The first modern 'global agents' in Harär: the Egyptian occupation (1875-1885)**

Since its founding as an urban centre in the thirteenth century, Harär has enjoyed a unique political and religious status in the Horn of Africa. The city is considered a centre of Islamic learning, combining a Shafi'i educational system with Shari'a courts and rituals associated with the graves of saints. From the fifteenth century onward, Harär ruled its environs, and especially its neighbours, the Oromo. The establishment of a dynasty of emirs in the seventeenth century, and Harär's location in the centre of the triangle formed by the Somali coast, the Nile Valley and the mountain kingdom of Christian Ethiopia, caused trade in coffee, *khat* leaves, skins, arms, and slaves to gravitate towards the city. Thus Harär became one of the most important cities in North-Eastern Africa.<sup>8</sup>

The occupation of the Harär Emirate by the Egyptians in October 1875 was a defining historical moment that ushered in the era of globalization in the city. It was the "flattening" agent that linked Harär to regional and global economic circles in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup> The Egyptian occupiers exhibited military might and technological superiority on a scale that had hitherto been unknown in Harär and among the nearby Oromo and Somali communities. They murdered Emir Muhammad b. 'Alī b. 'Abdaššakūr ('Abdullāhi 's father), took the local "Mahlak" currency out of circulation, initiated the rapid construction of public buildings and mosques, launched a cartographical project and took censuses in and around the city in order to take optimal economic advantage of the region and the communities that populated it. The Egyptians also replaced the mutual relationship between the city's emirs and the Oromo elites, which had existed since the mid-seventeenth century, with political oppression, economic enslavement and a process of consolidation into easily controllable groups of towns.

Another important dimension in the role of the Egyptians as agents of globalization was the religious one. The Egyptians coerced many Oromo into converting to Islam as part of an effort to create a 'new,' 'cultured' Oromo psyche that conformed to their 'modern' vision. The Egyptian *mission civilisatrice* aspirations included, however, the creation of new pattern of 'civilized' Muslims in Harär and its surrounding peoples. It demonstrates once again the flexibility of the terms of globalization and colonialism as trans-cultural and trans-religious phenomena. Thus globalization, which is almost

<sup>7</sup> See FO 78/3189: Draft (March 1877).

<sup>8</sup> For more on various aspects of the political, historical, cultural and religious development of Harär, see BRAUKÄMPER 2004:106-128, DESPLAT 2005:483-505, GIBB 1999:88-108.

<sup>9</sup> For more on history as a "flattening" agent that brings about the second – cultural and political – "flattening" agent in the globalization process, see FRIEDMAN 2005.

instinctively associated with the ‘West’ and ‘White Europe’, is expressed here as inter-African and inter-Islamic.

Egypt's regime of political and economic oppression in the city began to decline in 1878 with the dismissal of Raūf bāšā, the city's first governor, by Charles George Gordon, the then Governor General of Sudan. Once the British occupied Egypt in 1882, the removal of the Egyptians from Harār became merely a matter of time (MIRAN 2005:1019-1021).

The Egyptians encouraged European merchants to operate in the city, thus linking Harār's economy to circles of global commerce. Since its inception, Harār was never isolated and played an important role in the Red Sea and North-Eastern Indian Ocean trade and cultural networks, as well as in the inter-African trade networks.<sup>10</sup> The Egyptians ‘contributed’ the ‘modern’ dimension by seizing the sphere between the town and the Somali coast and securing its trade routes under their oppressive regime, which almost totally subjugated the Oromo and the Somali peoples. Furthermore, the Egyptians were the first in the history of the region to use telegraph lines and to improve the quality of the winding trade routes that linked Berbera and Zeila with the hinterland.

Muhammad Nādi bāšā, the third Egyptian governor of Harār (1880-1882), was of the opinion that the city's economic and political future would be determined by Europeans, particularly the French and Italian merchants who operated along the Somali coast, and the British merchants in Aden (BEN-DROR 2008:188-192). In order to make it easier for European merchants to settle in the city, he installed a telegraph line between Harār and the Somali coastal cities of Zeila and Berbera. In August 1880, French merchants Alfred Bardey and Henry Lucereau arrived in Harār from Zeila.<sup>11</sup> Bardey, who had opened a coffee trading company in Aden, was invited to settle in Harār under the auspices of the Egyptian occupying force. It was the first time in the history of Harār that foreigners had settled in the city to trade. On the heels of the merchants, missionaries from the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin arrived in the city from Zeila in April 1881 (ALEME ESHETE 1975:2).

The success of the Egyptian initiative was reported in an article in the Italian *L'Esploratore* newspaper in May 1883. “The Egyptian government is inviting European travellers and merchants to a place where the fine weather, the fertile soil and the intelligence of the local residents bode well for the future” (*L'Esploratore* 1883:432). Nādi bāšā reported to his superiors that “Currently, Harār has twenty Greek shopkeepers, French Jesuits, and salesmen representing a French company and an Italian company. We are happy to welcome travellers to Harār and assist them as we've assisted

<sup>10</sup> For further details see HUSSEIN AHMED 2010:111-117, BRAUKÄMPER 2002:12-38, AHMED HASSAN 2001:135-147.

<sup>11</sup> Alfred Bardey (1854-1934) was a merchant in the French city of Lyon. In early 1880 he opened a coffee import company in the cities of Aden and Zeila. Henry Lucereau was appointed French consul in Zeila in 1879. He arrived in Harār in September of 1880 before moving on to the Oromo areas, where he was murdered in October of 1880. For more on Bardey and Lucereau, see MIRAN 2003:476 and PERRET 1981:194-201.

their predecessors: merchants and priests who've settled in the city" (*Bulletin de la Société Khédiviale de Géographie du Caire* 1886:464).

However, a semblance of openness to the world and economic initiative could not save the Egyptian administration in Harär. In March 1884, the Egyptian government first offered to withdraw its forces from Harär. The British considered this a positive development and appointed a military envoy, arriving in Harär and Zeila from Aden in order to oversee the evacuation. The British representative, Major Hunter, concluded that the great admiration the city's Muslims harboured towards the dynasty of emirs that had been in power before the Egyptian occupation was further cause to appoint a local to rule after the Egyptians withdrew (FO 403/82 5 April 1884). He suggested that the independence of the emirate in Harär be preserved "under the previous Ameer's son. Each Gala (Oromo) and Somali tribe should keep within his own limits, acknowledging British supremacy, and protect routes to the coast, denying passage to slavers" (FO 403/82 4 September 1884).

The British saw Ibrahim and 'Abdullāhi, two of the sons of Emir Muhammad b. 'Alī b. 'Abdaššakūr, as potential candidates for the post of emir (FO 403/82 5 September 1884).

### **'Abdullāhi and the Pasha of Zeila: localism versus glocalism**

'Abdullāhi's subservience to the British was one more stage in the process wherein Harär and its emirs lost their independence. 'Abdullāhi never wielded any actual political power. After the murder of his father at the hands of the Egyptians in October 1875, 'Abdullāhi relocated to Zeila, where he was sheltered by the governor of the city, Abu Bakr Ibrahim Shahim. The governor became 'Abdullāhi's sponsor in Zeila, paying him a monthly stipend and maintaining his servants (ATTALA SHAUKI 1959:307). Abu Bakr even mediated between the government of Khedive and 'Abdullāhi, who travelled to Cairo and was promised that upon his return to Zeila, the Egyptians would show consideration for his status and take care of his family's assets in Harär (ATTALA SHAUKI 1974:214).

The comparison between Abu Bakr and 'Abdullāhi sheds new light on the global processes that began in the Red Sea, as well as on the various ways in which they impacted Zeila on the coastline and Harär further inland. Abu Bakr Ibrahim Shahim, a member of the Afar people and a slave trader in the Zeila region, was the epitome of survival in the region from the early 1860s through his death in 1885. Abu Bakr's personality, political acumen and knack for manoeuvring between global forces in the Red Sea and the Somali tribes – all these made him a serious player upon whom the superpowers of Europe, Egypt and Ethiopia relied in their activities along the Somali coast. Despite the fact that his involvement in human trafficking was common knowledge, Abu Bakr was given French citizenship in the early 1860s in exchange for granting special privileges to French merchants in the Zeila region. When the Egyptians arrived in the area, Abu Bakr quickly became an integral part of their colonial enterprise, earning the title of "pasha" in exchange for maintaining quiet along the coastal plain.

He consented on condition that the Egyptians respected Zeila's sovereignty and did not get involved in his personal appointments and the in government, and adhere to Shari'a law (ATTALA SHAUKI 1974:249).

The prospect of returning to Shari'a rule was a source of profound anxiety for the slave trade, a business he pursued until his death. When he noticed that Egypt's control was flagging, he began to reinforce his political connections with the British, the Italians, the French and Menelik of Ethiopia, becoming an object of political courtship (FONTRIER 2003:52).<sup>12</sup>

Abu Bakr's status was earned not only by virtue of his political skill, but also due to the nature of the city he ruled. Unlike the inland city of Harär, the port of Zeila became a transportation hub for the global political and economic forces drawn to the southern Red Sea region. The tension felt in Zeila between 'regional' and 'global' may have contributed to the perception of Abu Bakr as a 'cosmopolitan,' an embodiment both of influences from 'the sea' (the imperial powers and global economic and commercial transformations) and of local influences from 'the land' (Somali tribal politics and Ethiopia). Furthermore, Abu Bakr mediated between political-imperial circles and local forces. His status as arbiter between 'land' and 'sea' lent him power on both the 'local' and global stages.<sup>13</sup> One could say that, in early twenty-first-century terms, Abu Bakr was a personification of the process known as 'glocalization.' He succeeded in adopting various aspects of globalization in the second half of the nineteenth century in the southern Red Sea – especially the regional imperial discourse and its influences of flow of capital and the rapid maritime traffic revolution – without forsaking his local distinction as a tribal leader and slave trader.

'Abdullāhi, on the other hand, embodied the exact opposite of Abu Bakr. As a scion of the emirs of Harär, he had to shoulder the independent political heritage of his city, while dealing with an urban Muslim society that was still very much under the influence of the Egyptian occupation at the time of his appointment. He lacked any prior political experience and was essentially 'parachuted' into a position he was not qualified to fill. 'Abdullāhi grew up in Harär, which had not been exposed to foreign powers and the political, economic and commercial aspects of global processes until 1875. He was not versed in the esoterics of the new discourse between the imperialist forces, and did not comprehend the regional globalization processes. The sovereign dynasty of the Harär emirs built its political and economic strength over the centuries through interactions with 'the land' – the Oromo and the Somali on the Somali coastal plain and the Ogaden Desert, who controlled the trade routes between Harär and the coast. 'Abdullāhi was the first emir required, as a *protégé* of the British, to build ties with forces from both 'the land' and 'the sea'.

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<sup>12</sup> For an extensive political biography of Abu Bakr Ibrahim, see FONTRIER 2003.

<sup>13</sup> For more on merchants as "mediators" between occupiers and occupied see COHEN 1971:266-281.



### The 'resurgence of radical Islamism' in Harär: a re-examination

On the eve of his official coronation, 'Abdullāhi informed the British that Shari'a – Islamic law – would be the sole law in Harär, and the basis for the treatment of the city's residents, both Muslim and foreign. He affirmed his commitment to the wellbeing of foreigners and vowed to refrain from taxing them in manners that he deemed "superfluous", due to "their importance to commerce in the city" (FO 403/83 22 March 1885). The Egyptians, who officially handed over control of the city to 'Abdullāhi, received promises to the effect that he would guarantee safety on the road from Harär to Zeila, shun the slave trade, include the Ulama city's European merchants, who had become accustomed to freedom of religious expression and special trade privileges during the Egyptian occupation. They saw the Emir as a reactionary who "made it his goal to reintroduce Islam to the residents of Harär", dangerous because "he scorned any possibility of a European occupation of Harär" (PAULITSCHKE 1981:335). The Capuchin missionaries saw in 'Abdullāhi an "Islamic resurgence" that harmed their conversion enterprise and threatened their life in the city (ALEME ESHETE 1975:9). The import of such statements in the writings of foreign merchants was also adopted in descriptions of the 'Abdullāhi era in the works of some present-day researchers.<sup>14</sup>

This picture is de-contextualized in that it neglects the fact that deteriorating relations were the result of economic tensions and the merchants' failure to respect the Emir's sovereignty in the city. Still, testimonies of residents of Harär from that period can teach us something about the implementation of 'Abdullāhi's policy. The new Emir put himself in charge of the city's Shari'a courts and commanded local women to dress modestly and wear veils. New mosques were built at his behest both inside and outside the city. 'Abdullāhi also mandated the closure of the *cafés* that had catered to the foreign residents and banned the consumption of alcohol in public spaces and in the home. All of Harär's residents were enjoined to pray in the mosques during the day and adhere to the edicts of Islam. These were the practical manifestations of what 'Abdullāhi termed a "war against [the] wantonness" that, he believed, had characterized the Egyptian occupation.<sup>15</sup> It seems that the policy of the new emir was a reaction to the global trends, brought about by the Egyptians and their European *protégés* and not necessarily a direct result of a policy of religious allegiance.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the new policy marked the deterioration in the conditions of the Europeans, who had been accustomed to doing whatever they pleased in their religious and political activities. However, 'Abdullāhi did not directly target the foreigners in the name of some religious or cultural motive. Rather, although he conceived of them as symptoms of the "ailments" of the Egyptian period, he had no intention of confronting them in the name of a religious "holy war". 'Abdullāhi wished to redefine Harär as a regional religious and political Muslim centre, restoring its pre-1875 status and undoing the effects of the Egyptian occupation. Presumably, it was lack of political experience that caused him to ignore the various global forces the Egyptians

<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, FOUCHER 1988:370-371, MUHAMMAD HASSAN 1973:34.

<sup>15</sup> Undated Arabic manuscript, page 1, in MUHAMMAD HASSAN 1973:34.

had introduced into the city and assume he could restore Harär's independence through religious policies.

Basing themselves on 'Abdullāhi's struggle with the merchants, modern scholars have portrayed him as "a weak and indecisive man, almost fully controlled by his advisors, who advocated a strict Islam" (CAULK 1967-1968:6). However, the attempt to impose a new-old currency, associated with Harär's independent past, can rather be seen more as a part of 'Abdullāhi's attempt to restore the city following the Egyptian occupation, than as a systematic policy aimed at harassing the foreign merchants. It was only after the merchants flouted his new policy that he penalized them. The religious and cultural biases that cropped up in the writings of the merchants stemmed from their apprehension of the events in Harär through the prism of an inter-religious struggle. Although these views were adopted by some scholars of the period, the facts appear to disprove them. Furthermore, in order to fully understand this development, one must examine 'Abdullāhi's policy as the work of someone who was under pressure from both 'the land' and 'the sea,' insisting on full sovereignty and yet unable to grasp that the changes – which were brought about when merchants settled in Harär, linking the city to the global economy – precluded the possibility of such exclusive control.

### **The end of 'Abdullāhi's reign, January 1887**

Despite 'Abdullāhi's fear that the European superpowers would attack and remove him from power, his political demise was actually brought about by a Christian African imperial force that came from the "land".

King Menelik of Shewa resolved to take control of Harär as soon as the Egyptians withdrew from the city. After Egypt pulled out of Harär and the coastal cities, and Italy occupied Massawa in February 1885, Menelik tried to convince the Italians to sign a pact that would guarantee an Italian takeover of Berbera and Zeila along with the occupation of Harär by the Shewans. The Porro incident had highlighted the issue of Berbera and Zeila, and Menelik was afraid that the Italians would use the incident as a pretext to gain control of the coast. Therefore, as early as the summer of 1886, he acted to bolster his military presence in the Oromo regions outlying Harär, his final objective being the occupation of the city (CAULK 1971:6-8).

'Abdullāhi was aware of the concrete Shewan threat to his city. Testimonials of Haräri residents show that it was not until December of 1886 that 'Abdullāhi began to employ religious rhetoric, calling for a holy war in an effort to rally the city to face the Ethiopians in battle. When his advisors entreated him to consider yielding to Menelik, 'Abdullāhi replied, "Does the Koran permit us to surrender to the infidel?". Some of the Oromo from the areas surrounding Harär did not join the Emir's army in the name of a holy war but rather out of mercenary motives, having been promised large portions of the loot that would be taken from the Ethiopians – and due to their wish to capture Ethiopian soldiers and sell them into slavery.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See the testimonials of Haräri and Oromo, regarding 'Abdullāhi's efforts to recruit soldiers for a war against Menelik (CAULK 1971:13, MUHAMMAD HASSAN 1973:42-43).

On January 1st, 1887, ‘Abdullāhi massed his forces next to the town of Čällänqo, some eighty kilometres west of Harär (CHERNETSOV 2003:676-677). In a series of battles that began on January 3rd and lasted until the 7th, the Ethiopian armies routed the Emir's forces. The Ethiopians enjoyed an overwhelming numerical advantage. ‘Abdullāhi’s army numbered some 4,000 men, only half of whom were armed with guns and properly trained. Menelik, on the other hand, commanded a force of between 20,000 and 25,000, 8,000 of whom carried firearms. The Emir’s hasty flight from the battlefield to the Ogaden Desert following the death of many of his troops, and the failure to rally groups of Oromo fighters that could make it to Čällänqo in time, were among the factors that demoralized ‘Abdullāhi’s remaining soldiers. They finally surrendered on January 6, 1887.<sup>17</sup>

The battle of Čällänqo was a watershed event in the history of Harär, which had now become part of Menelik’s expanding Shewan kingdom.<sup>18</sup>

## Conclusion

‘Abdullāhi ruled in Harär for a total of nineteen and a half months. As soon as he entered office in May of 1885, he was forced to deal with difficult conditions. The population of Harär and its satellite communities were still reeling from the blows the Egyptian occupation had inflicted on their military, social and economic systems. The Egyptian occupation of Harär and the Somali coast heralded the coming of the “agents of globalization” – the European merchants and Capuchin missionaries – who were active in the area even after Egypt withdrew. ‘Abdullāhi, lacking any real-world political experience, was “parachuted” into the position of emir, and was unable to grasp the fact that the economic and political conditions that had prevailed in Harär on the eve of the Egyptian campaign had changed. ‘Abdullāhi ignored Harär’s enmeshment in broad global circles during the Egyptian occupation, and was not fluent in the new “language” required in order to converse with these forces.

‘Abdullāhi conceived of Harär and its relationships with its surroundings solely on a “local” level. But things that were true for his predecessors until 1875 were no longer relevant a decade later. His political failures, and the misreading of the changes and the import of forces that came from “the sea”, are especially salient in light of the survival and political success of Abu Bakr of Zeila. In contrast to ‘Abdullāhi and his “local” conceptions, Abu Bakr represented the process that came to be known in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries as ‘glocalization’ – a fusion of ‘global’ and ‘local’. Abu Bakr’s awareness of this trend allowed him not only to survive the currents of globalization, but to actually increase his political power while maintaining his human trafficking activities.

‘Abdullāhi’s bleak personal story is a brief but tempestuous episode in the rich annals of Harär. After ‘Abdullāhi’s departure, Harär’s adaptable political, economic and religious elite spearheaded the city’s integration into Christian Ethiopia. This elite succeeded in adopting

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<sup>17</sup> For more on the battle of Čällänqo and its progression, see CAULK 1971:14-17 and MUHAMMAD HASSAN 1973:43-44.

<sup>18</sup> For more on the cooperation between the Haräri elites and Mäkonnen at the outset of the Ethiopian occupation, see CAULK 1975:1-15.

the glocal discourse, and towards the turn of the century, Harär became a powerful centre in a country rife with ethnicities and religions. It kept this status throughout the political turmoil of the twentieth century, and maintains it to this day.

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