

Islamic legitimacy), and the broad changes signaled by both empires, including Almoravid contributions to the appearance of a new Sunnism and the Almohad display of Berber cultural and religious confidence. Bennisson also considers the reasons for the collapse of each of these empires and their respective significance and long-term legacies.

Featuring a detailed chronological outline, a list of place names with Latin and Arabic designations, a glossary of Arabic terms, a bibliography of primary and secondary sources, and a useful index, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires* is an introduction, synthesis, and major contribution to this fascinating and vitally important period in the history of the Islamic West. It will be accessible and engrossing to students and scholars alike.

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## URBAN GROWTH IN ETHIOPIA

*Urban Growth in Ethiopia, 1887-1974: From the Foundation of Finfinnee to the Demise of the First Imperial Era.*

By Getahun Benti.

Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017. Pp. xvii + 213. \$79.00, hardback (ISBN 9781498521932).

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**Key Words:** Ethiopia, urban, modernity, imperialism, ethnicity.

*Urban Growth in Ethiopia* investigates the history of towns and cities in Ethiopia. It critically examines the factors that impeded this country's transition to a fully modern economy and society. Getahun Benti based this book on several years of research in the country's rich archival sources, as well as on his intimate knowledge of the Ethiopian cultural landscape. Tracing the origin of towns to 'different historical periods', this book aims at providing a 'comprehensive history' of urban growth in modern Ethiopia (viii). Building on a body of literature by Ethiopianist scholars such as Akalou Wolde Michael, Richard Pankhurst, and a collection of essays and Master's theses completed at Addis Ababa University over the last three decades, Benti has produced a well-researched and highly readable book. The introduction defines and discusses urbanization in broad historical perspective. Chapters Two, Three, and Four cover the emergence and development of new towns in Ethiopia chronologically from the late nineteenth century to the 1970s. Chapter Five analyzes the settlement patterns and demographic profile of modern Ethiopian towns.

To better understand the origin of towns in Ethiopia, Benti takes a regional approach in his analysis. Looking at the trajectories of urbanization in northern and southern Ethiopia separately is appropriate because of the different political contexts of the two regions. While the demographic profile of towns in the north reflected local economic, religious, and ethnic factors, those in the south were influenced by broader political developments of the late nineteenth century. The conquest of the southern region by Emperor Menilek II (d. 1913) and the administrative reorganization of the empire in the 1880s, for example,

led to the establishment of garrisons that later evolved into small towns, serving both as administrative centers and as the focal points of regional trading networks. Initially, these towns were dominated by northern settlers. The differences between the northern and southern towns were minimized only after the brief Italian occupation, 1936–41, which injected new dynamism into the process of urban growth in both regions. The Italian administration provided services such as piped water, electricity, hotels, restaurants, roads, motor vehicles, and trucks that facilitated trade and migration to towns. The Italians also introduced modern urban planning. After 1941, the Ethiopian government continued to support the processes of urban expansion that the Italians had promoted in the 1930s.

In Chapter Six, Benti makes an interesting argument about the nature of urbanization in Ethiopia. Despite urban growth during the imperial period, Ethiopia did not experience rapid or profound modernization. The development of Ethiopia's towns was not even comparable to those of other African cities during the colonial era. Benti asserts that 'Ethiopia was unable to initiate a concerted process of urbanization and modernization' that could transform its society (181). He offers several explanations for why modernization took place slowly and unevenly, if at all. He argues that conservative Christian traditions discouraged creativity and hampered the spirit of technological and economic innovation. He further contends that the failure to modernize and transform the society was partly due to lack of agricultural surplus as Menilek's territorial expansion 'pushed back its subjects to the medieval period' (183). While the conquest of the south by Abyssinian forces in the 1880s opened new economic opportunities for imperial soldiers and for domestic and foreign merchants, the occupation that followed slowed economic growth and hindered surplus production throughout the region. As a result, it is somewhat problematic to consider the Abyssinian conquest as ushering in a new 'growth of towns' (10).

Since it was the subject of his first book, Benti does not focus on Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa (which he refers to by its historic name, Finfinnee).<sup>4</sup> But given the great contemporary significance of Finfinnee, the reader could have benefited from some more discussion on the capital city. Benti could have better explained the ambiguous position of Finfinnee as, on the one hand, the historic seat of imperial power that drew all resources to itself and suffocated other emerging towns and, on the other, its role as a center of trade and modernity. Currently, the role of this mega city is contested. The ethnic tensions that have emerged in this city have sparked controversies. They involve Oromo farmers' concerns with cultural preservation and rights to land, rights that have been threatened by Menilek's conquest of the late nineteenth century and the imperial exploitation that resulted. The complex social and political history of Finfinnee and farmers' memories of their displacement around the city recently triggered mass protests when the government announced a new 'Addis Ababa Master Plan'. The Oromo now want their historic rights to be recognized and the city's name to be changed to that which it bore in the pre-conquest period.

At the same time, while Benti explains why he did not investigate the history of all major urban centers in Ethiopia, he nonetheless could have paid more attention to a few unique cities, such as Harar, which deserve more than a marginal footnote. Located in the

4 Getahun Benti, *Addis Ababa: Migration and the Making of a Multiethnic Metropolis, 1941-1974* (Trenton, NJ: 2007).

southeastern region, Harar is the only walled city in Ethiopia, and one of the oldest. It has been influenced by the Harari people and their relations with their Oromo and Somali neighbors. It was also an important regional trading center known for its Islamic learning traditions. The ethnic make-up and religious orientation of this city does not easily fit in the general description of other southern towns, and it therefore could have added a new perspective to the book's analysis.

Overall, *Urban Growth in Ethiopia* is a valuable contribution to the history of urbanization in Ethiopia. Ethiopianists, urban studies specialists, and the general public will greatly benefit from reading it.

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## THE ADDIS ABABA MASSACRE

*The Addis Ababa Massacre: Italy's National Shame.*

By Ian Campbell.

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**Key Words:** Ethiopia, violence, imperialism, microhistory, memory.

On 19 February 1937 (12 Yekatit 1929 by the Ethiopian calendar), Ethiopian nationalists in Addis Ababa attempted to assassinate Rodolfo Graziani, the Italian Viceroy known for his brutality in the Italian empire. In heart-breaking and grisly detail, Ian Campbell tells the story of the three days of unbridled retaliation that followed. Based on a rich combination of memoirs, personal interviews, and photographic evidence, Campbell dispels any effort to dismiss the ruthless mass murder of Ethiopian civilians in February 1937 as random acts of a handful of overzealous black-shirted thugs; Campbell proves that the reprisals involved Italians in every sector of the settler society and at every level of the Italian colonial apparatus. This book serves as a damning catalogue of events and a demand for an apology from the Italian government for the over 19,000 Ethiopian civilians who, according to Campbell's careful calculations, died during the massacre.

Campbell begins with a background chapter that provides a broad history of Italian imperialism. The core of the book consists of seven chapters with an hour-by-hour account of the Addis Ababa massacre starting with the attempt on Graziani's life that instigated the horrifying reprisals. Through a series of personal accounts and detailed maps, Campbell shows how terror spread from the seat of the Italian government to an area known as the Circle of Death in the afternoon of 19 February 1937. Perhaps most damning to the Italian high command is Chapter Five on the declaration of '*Carta Bianca*', or *carte blanche*, by the Fascist Party secretary Guido Cortese. In a public announcement, he encouraged Italian citizens to seek reprisals and extended to them the tacit support of the Italian military. The book continues to detail the height of violence against Ethiopian civilians over the following two days. Mass arson, summary execution on the