



A Story in Stones: Portugal's Influence on Culture and Architecture in the Highlands of Ethiopia 1493-1634

By John Jeremy Hespeler-Boulton

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A Story in Stones explores the relationship between Portugal and Ethiopia during the 16th and 17th centuries from a unique perspective. Through historical research and many years of fieldwork J.J. Hespeler-Boulton reveals Portugal's early Renaissance contact within the Ethiopian Highlands using a description of contemporary architectural vestige. What started as a mission of exploration and discovery for the Christian kingdom of the great Emperor Prester John and Portugal's search for an ally against Islamic forces developed into diplomatic, military, religious, cultural and most long lasting of all, architectural ties between Portugal and Ethiopia. This great search started with the overland route of Portuguese explorer Pêro da Covilhã that led him to the Ethiopian Highlands in 1493, thirty-seven years before Portugal's diplomatic embassy mission of 1520.

The story within the stones can still be seen in the ancient Portuguese and Gondarine ruins which are still of great influence in today's architectural design in this region. J.J. Hespeler-Boulton explores over thirty different sites within the Highlands, many of which are remote and rarely visited. Fully illustrated with colour photos and drawings.

Review:

"We are deeply indebted to Jeremy Hespeler-Boulton... for his initiative in studying Portuguese, Portuguese-Indian or Ethio-Portuguese buildings in Ethiopia, and thus opening an entirely new field of Ethio-Portuguese studies."
- Richard Pankhurst, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University

About the Author:

J.J. Hespeler-Boulton is an Art & Architectural Historian and Associate of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University. Having worked in Portugal as a lecturer at the University of Lisbon, an associate for CIDEHUS, the research and development organization at the University of Évora and as a Master Builder and Stonemason restoring old and traditional houses for over twelve years, he is uniquely qualified in this field of research.

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