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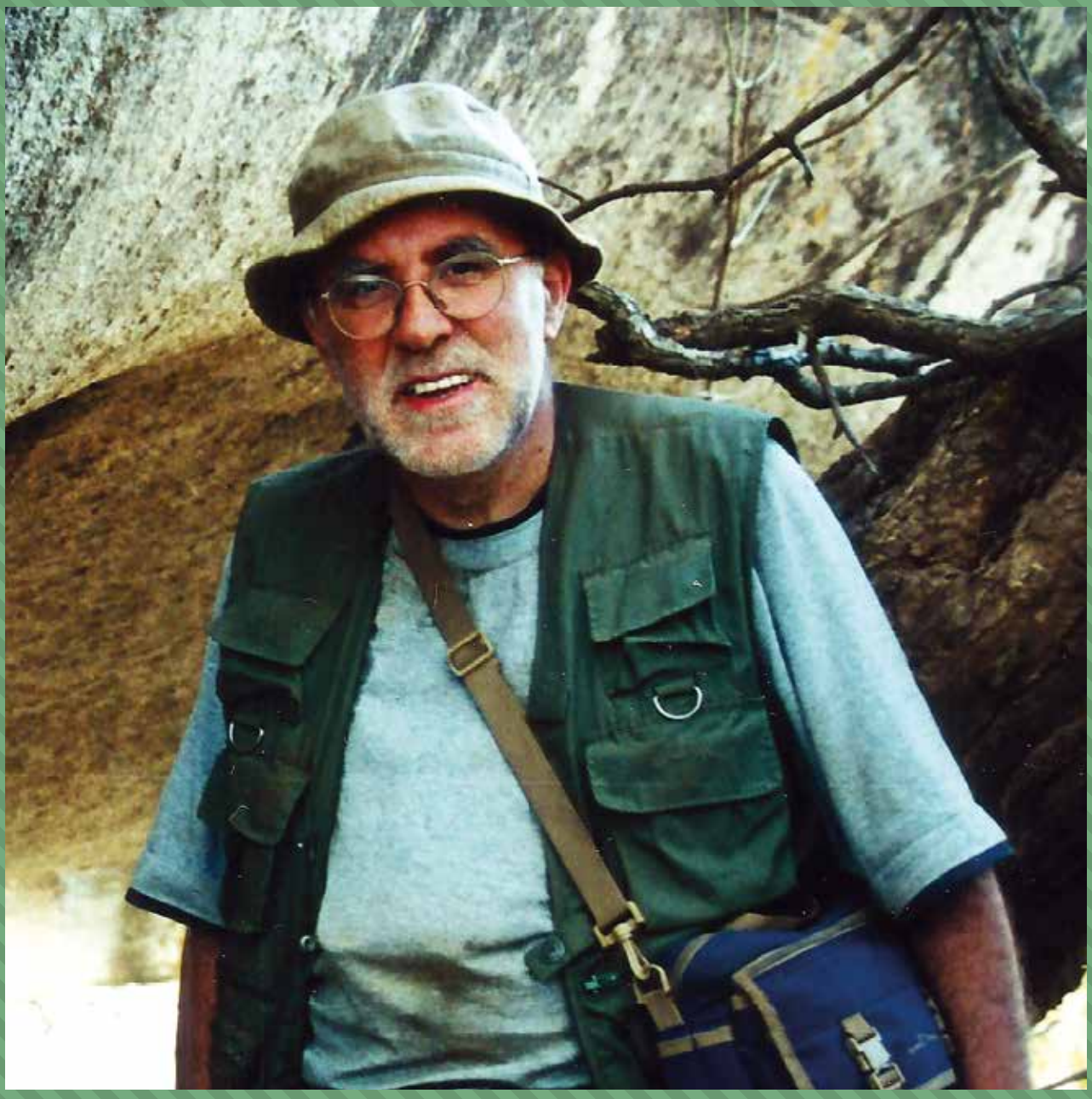

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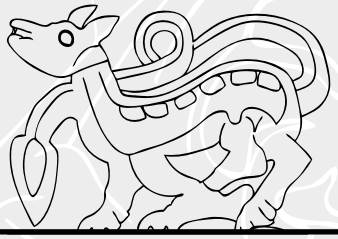

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En recuerdo de
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Sumario

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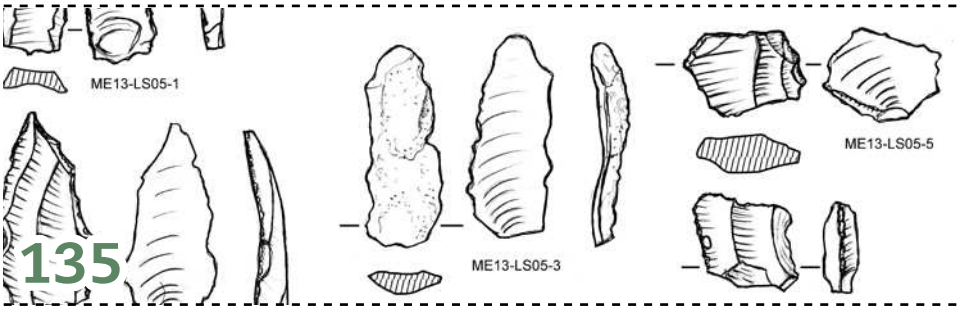
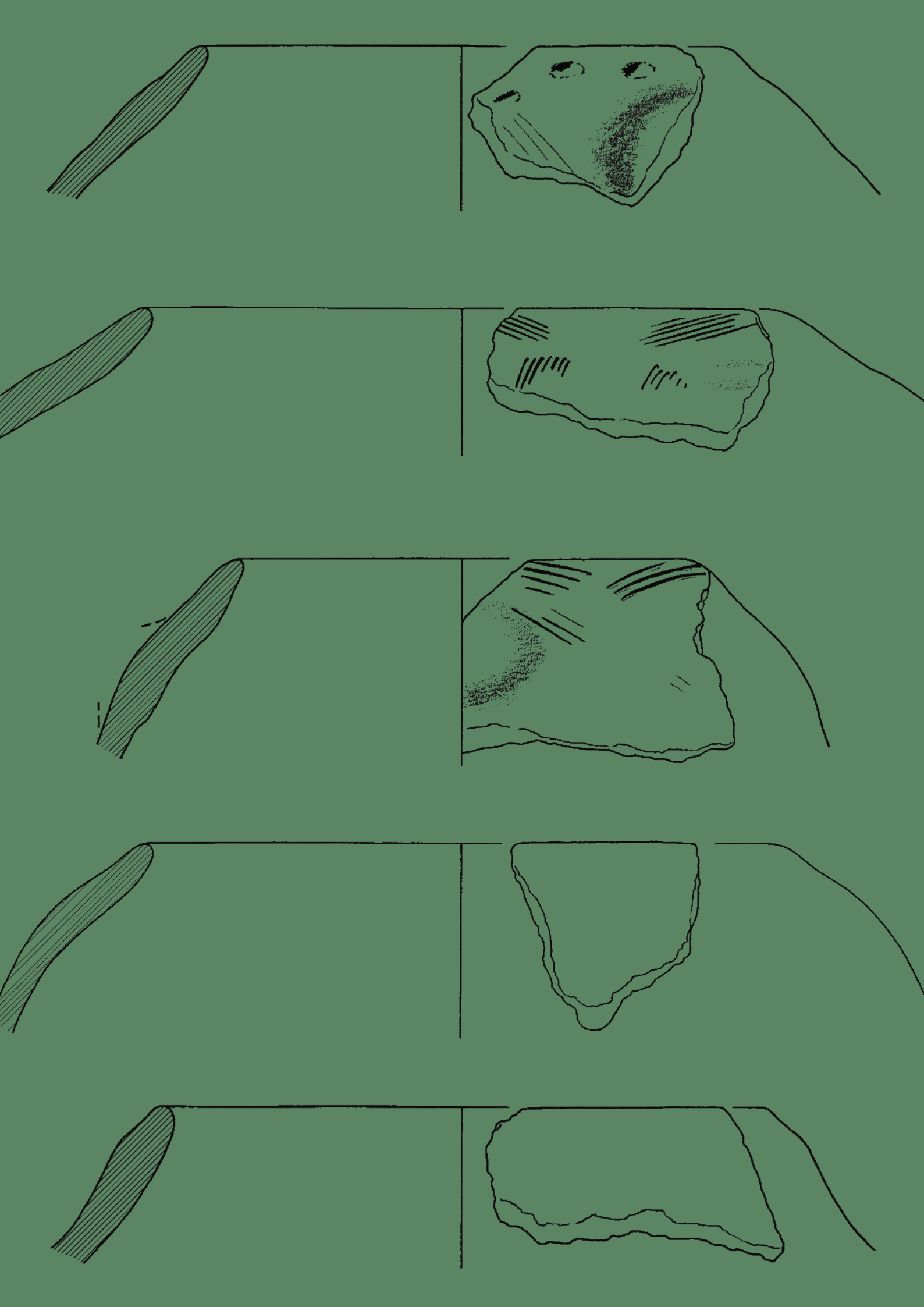
Summary



Summary



06

Built on diversity: Statehood in Medieval Somaliland (12th-16th centuries AD)

Construido sobre la diversidad: las estructuras estatales medievales de Somalilandia (siglos XII a XVI)

Jorge de Torres Rodriguez

Resumen

Este artículo pretende ofrecer una visión general de la arqueología medieval musulmana en el Cuerno de África, poniendo énfasis en el papel de los estados medievales que durante más de tres siglos fueron capaces de integrar poblaciones con creencias, estilos de vida, lenguas y etnias muy diferentes. El estudio combina fuentes históricas y arqueológicas para analizar el caso específico del oeste de Somalilandia, una región en la que grupos sedentarios y nómadas con culturas materiales muy diferentes convivieron durante siglos. A través del análisis de las relaciones entre estos dos grupos se plantea una propuesta sobre el modo en que los estados musulmanes fueron capaces de proporcionar unas marco estable y cohesionado para la región durante toda la Edad Media.

Palabras clave: Cuerno de África, Edad Media, Estados, Islam, Arqueología medieval, nómadas

Abstract

This article presents an overview of the current situation of the medieval Islamic archaeology of the Horn of Africa, paying especial attention to the role of the medieval states that for more than three centuries were able to integrate peoples with very different beliefs, lifestyles, languages and ethnicities. The study combines historical and archaeological sources to analyze a specific case in western Somaliland, a region where nomads and urban dwellers –two groups with very different material cultures- lived together for centuries. The analysis of the relationships between these two groups is the base for a proposal to define a framework to understand how the Muslim sultanates were able to generate a cohesive superstructure that provided a remarkable stability for the region during the Middle Ages.

Key words: Horn of Africa, Middle Ages, States, Islam, Medieval Archaeology, nomads

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Figure 1: Location of the Horn of Africa (green) and Somaliland (black)

1. Introduction

The study of state-building, statehood and state collapse has a long tradition in the Horn of Africa, a region that holds some of the oldest examples of states in the African continent and whose archaeological remains have long since attracted the interest of archaeologists and historians alike. The privileged position of this region as a crossroads between Africa, Middle East, the Nile River and the Indian Ocean has favoured the exchange of ideas, beliefs, goods and commodities, and has pushed the development of complex political structures of which the Axumite kingdom (Phillipson 2012) is the better studied. Less attention has been paid to later state experiences, especially from the archaeological point of view. Although the medieval history of the Horn of Africa is well known due to the remarkable number of written accounts from Ethiopian, Muslim and European origin, the materiality of the numerous polities which played a role between the 10th and the 16th centuries is still very poorly known.

This lack of information is especially significant considering that the Middle Ages were one the key historical periods in the region. Between the 13th and the 16th, the Horn of Africa witnessed the emergence and consolidation of a number of Muslim kingdoms to the south of the Ethiopian highlands, an increasing conflict between these polities and the Ethiopian Christian kingdom, the arrival of the Portuguese, the invasion of the Oromo groups from the south and the collapse of the Sultanate of Adal. All these events were fundamental to reconfigure the whole ethnical, religious, political and social map of the Horn of Africa, and had an impact which is still present on many of the political issues that affect the region.

This lack of interest is especially noted in the southern and eastern regions of the Horn of Africa, a wide territory now occupied by Somalia, Djibuti and the south-eastern region of Ethiopia, where

the medieval Muslim kingdoms were situated. The region has been significantly understudied due to a combination of reasons –political instability and fragmentation, lack of academic interest or research traditions and complex logistics, among others. Only recently (Fauvelle-Aymar et al. 2011, Insoll 2003, 2017; González-Ruibal and Torres 2018, Torres *et al*. 2018) a number of projects have started to unravel the materiality of the Muslim states in the Horn of Africa, although proper archaeological synthesis are sorely needed before an adequate interpretative framework can be established for this period.

This article presents an overview of the current situation of the medieval Islamic archaeology of the Horn of Africa, summarizing the available information in the areas where research has been conducted but leaving aside southern Somalia, which historically has been more related to East Africa and the Swahili world. The paper will then focus on a theme considered key for the historical reconstruction of the period: the presence of very diverse ethnic groups, religions and lifestyles within the Muslim sultanates and their relation with the state superstructures. It will choose the example of nomads and urban dwellers in Somaliland, two groups with very distinctive and radically opposed material cultures, to understand how the Islamic sultanates were able to generate a cohesive superstructure that provided a remarkable stability for the region for more than three centuries.

2. The historical context

Traditionally, the history of the medieval period in the southern half of the Horn of Africa has been reconstructed through the use of the significant corpus of written sources, which includes texts of Arab geographers and historians, Chinese records, Ethiopian chroniclers and European accounts, especially from the 16th century onwards (Figure 2). Although complementary and rich, they vary widely in terms of accuracy, detail, topics of interest and length, and they often present conflicting views on the same historical processes, especially in the case of the Christian-Muslim conflict during the 15th and 16th centuries.

Obviously, Muslim texts provide more information about the history and characteristics of the Islamic medieval kingdoms, describing with some detail the region and its different principalities. Although references to Muslim presence in Ethiopia date from the very beginnings of Islam (Cuoq 1981: 25-27), it's from the 14th century onwards when we have a significant amount of information about the region thanks to the work of al-Umari (1301-1349). Al-Umari's description is complemented by accounts of travellers as renowned as Ibn Battuta (1304-1369) or Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), or the chroniclers of the Mamluk sultans of Egypt as Al-Mufaddal (Ahmed 1992: 22-23). However, the most important document for the reconstruction of the early history of the region is an anony-

	Arab geographers	Arab historians	Mamluk chroniclers	Ethiopian chronicles	Portuguese and other Europeans	Chinese
9th century	Yaqubi					Duan Chengshi
10th century	Ibn Hawqal Masudi					
11th century						
12th century	Al-Idrisi					
13th century	Ibn Said				Marco Polo	Zhao Rushi
14th century	Abû l-Fidâ' Ibn Baṭṭûṭa	Ibn Khaldûn al-'Omari Qalqashandi	Al Mufaçça	Amda Seyon I		
15th century	Ahmad ibn Majid	al-Maqrizi		Zara Yaqob Baeda Maryam Eskender		Fei Xing Ma Huan Fang Zhen
16th century		Arab Faqih		Na'od Dawit II Gelawdewos Minas Sarsa Dengel The History of the Galla	Ludovico di Varthema Luis del Mármol Carvajal Tomas Pires Joao do Barros Francisco de Álvarez Duarte Barbosa Miguel de Castanhoso Afonso de Albuquerque	

Figure 2: main authors for the study of the medieval Horn of Africa

mous document edited by Enrico Cerulli (1941) describing the final stages of the sultanate of Shoa (896-1285 CE) and the ascendency of the sultanate of Ifat. This key moment will inaugurate a long period of antagonism between the Muslim states to the south and the Ethiopian Christian kingdom to the north. For the following centuries, al-Maqrizi (1364-1442 CE) provides the most detailed information about the region until the mid-15th century, where there is a gap in the Muslim sources until the 16th century. At that moment, the rise of the Sultanate of Adal under Ahmed Gragn (d. 1543 CE) is described by the Arab Faqih in his book "The conquest of Abyssinia" (Faqih 2003).

The gaps in the Muslim chronicles in the 15th and 16th centuries can be filled to some extent with the Ethiopian royal chronicles, which provide a comprehensive account of the struggle against the Muslim sultanates, obviously from an Abyssinian perspective (Conti Rossini 1907, Perruchon 1889, 1893, 1894, 1896). They are also useful to understand the last moments of the Sultanate of Adal and the beginning of the Oromo invasion which affected Muslims and Christians alike. From the 16th century onwards, a third big corpus of information is provided by the Portuguese writers who described the expansion of the Portuguese kingdom in the Indian Ocean and its increasing engagement in the Ethiopian politics. The texts of Francisco de Álvarez, Joao do Barros, Duarte Barbosa, Miguel de Castanhoso or Afonso de Alburquerque (Ahmed 1992: 25-28), provide an extremely helpful information not only to understand –from a non neutral, but at least external point of view- the political context of the region. The accounts of other European travellers such as those of Tomas Pires (1944), Ludovico Varthema (1863) or Luis Mármol de Carvajal (1599) provide additional information about the region during the the 16th century.

From this complex mosaic of written sources, academics such as E. Cerulli (1931, 1941), J.S. Trimingham (1965), J. Cuoq (1982) and U. Braukämper (2002) have been able to reconstruct with some detail the history of the medieval Muslim states of the southern Horn of Africa. The process of arrival, expansion and development of Islam in the region is still poorly known although the combination of archaeological, epigraphic and written sources is starting to clarify some of its characteristics (Fauvelle-Aymar 2011b). By the 9th-10th centuries a number of small Muslim principalities (Figure 3) had been constituted to the south and east of the Ethiopian highlands, the most important being Shoa which according to the so-called Walashma Chronicle had a predominant political position between the 10th and 13th centuries. By the end of this century, this state was in clear decadence and was conquered by the neighbouring state of Ifat, which in 1285 become the dominant kingdom and started a process of unification of the Muslim principalities under the Walasma dynasty (Trimingham 1965: 68). This process increased the conflict with the Ethiopian Christian kingdom, which to this moment had more or less controlled the much weaker and divided Muslim states; and by the beginning of the 14th hostilities escalated into a state of permanent war. The conflict was clearly favourable to the Christian kingdom, which during Amda Seyon reign (1314-1344 CE) defeated the coalition of Muslim principalities, incorporated several of them to his kingdom and made of Ifat a vassal state (Trimingham 1965: 73). However, in 1376 the ruler of Ifat declared independent and a long period of hostilities started, ending in 1415 with the total defeat of the Muslim armies, the killing of the last sultan of Ifat (Trimingham 1965:74) and the effective end of that state.

The disappearance of the sultanate of Ifat didn't end of the conflict between Muslims and Christians in southern Ethiopia. A new sultanate –Adal- emerged as

Figure 3: distribution of the main polities and ethnicities during the Middle Ages in the Horn of Africa (After Braukämper 2002)

the successor of Ifat in the region around Zeila, and by the last decades of the 15th century the new state was able to challenge the Christian armies and defeat them repeatedly (Trimingham 1965: 82). This military situation was coincident with the ascendancy of a new, more militant group of religious leaders in Adal, the amirs, who actively opposed the appeasing politics of the Walasma sultans and pressed for the beginning of a jihad against the Christian Ethiopian kingdom.

The precarious balance between the more peaceful, trade oriented Walasma sultans and the amires lasted until the arrival of the Imam Ahmed ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi (1506-1543), better known as Ahmed Gragn, who relegated the sultan to a puppet role. Ahmed Gragn launched a systematic and extremely successful war of conquest which took the Muslim armies to the shore of the lake Tana, almost erasing the Ethiopian kingdom. The support of the Portuguese, who had become increasingly involved in the region since the beginning of the 16th century, and the death of Ahmed Gragn in combat in 1543 ended with this threat, leaving both states severely weakened. Fighting continued during the rest of the 16th century, but the combination of military defeats, the decay of the trade due to the Portuguese blockage of the Red Sea and the invasion of the Galla (Oromo) groups from the south ended with the sultanate of Adal by 1577. The seat of the sultanate was then to Aussa in the Danakil desert and slowly disappeared during the 17th century (Trimingham 1965: 97).

3. The archaeological record of the medieval Muslim kingdoms in the Horn of Africa

3.1. Somaliland

For more than three hundred years, a large part of the self-declared independent state of Somaliland was included in the core of the sultanates of Ifat and Adal. with the important port of Zeila becoming the capital of the kingdom for prolonged periods of time. The western area of Somaliland was also crossed by the main trade route that connected Zeila and Harar, and the presence of abundant archaeological sites in this region was mentioned by Richard Burton as early as 1848 (Burton 1854). In 1934 and during the definition of the international boundaries between Ethiopia and the British protectorate of Somaliland, a number of sites were identified by a British officer, A.T. Curle, who excavated some of them and donated the materials to the British Museum (Curle 1937). Since then and leaving aside sporadic visits to these sites (Warsame et al 1974, Huntingford 1978), the political situation of the region prevented any research until 2001, when a French team directed by François-Xavier Fauvelle-Aymar visited several medieval sites as a part of their research on the Muslim spaces of the Horn of Africa (2011a). This initiative was short-lived, and besides some compilations of sites (Mire 2015) it wasn't until 2015 when the first systematic research on the medieval archaeology of Somaliland was launched. In that year, a team from the Institute of Heritage Sciences of the Spanish National Research Council (Incipit-CSIC) started a project to analyze the trade networks in Somaliland and their impact in local communities. This project has identified the Middle Ages as a key period for the expansion and consolidation of the most important trade routes in the region, in a context of parallel development of the state structures of the Sultanate of Adal.

During the last five years, the Incipit-CSIC project has identified, recorded and mapped 27 sites (Figure 4) of different sizes, functions and located in geographic positions; and has partially excavated 7 of them. In addition, more than 500 tumuli have been documented during the surveys, many of them most probably from the medieval period. The research of the Incipit-CSIC team (González-Ruibal *et al*. 2017, Torres et al. 2017, González-Ruibal and Torres 2018, Torres et *al*. 2018) has concentrated in four different geographic contexts which during the medieval period were fundamental to the existence of trade routes and by extension, of the states which relied heavily on them. By the coast, the three only sites recurrently referred by the Arab and Portuguese sailors –Zeila, Berbera and Maydh- were surveyed, although only Zeila seems to have been a city in the strict sense of the word during the Middle Ages. In fact, the Incipit-CSIC research has identified what seems to have been the most common type

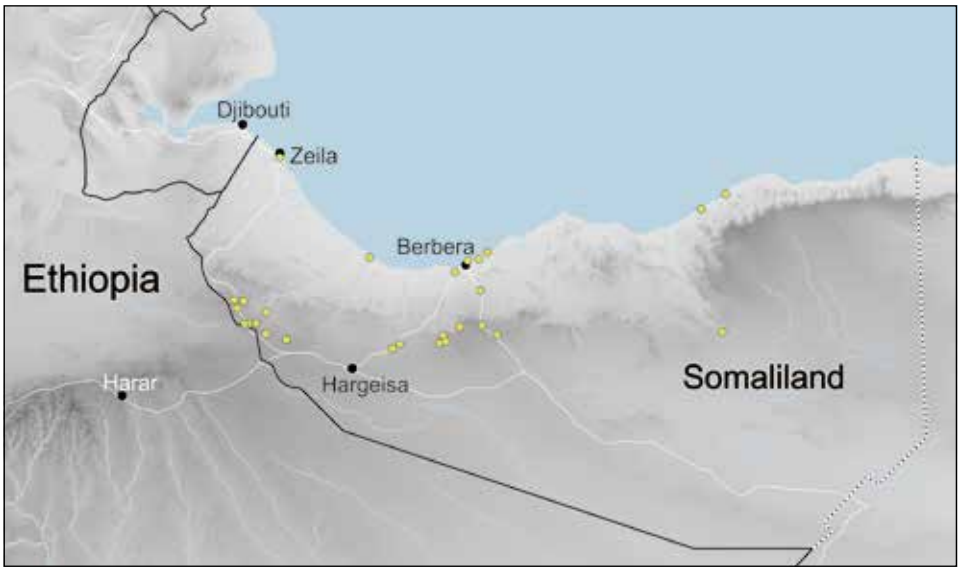

Figure 4: sites surveyed by the Incipit-CSIC archaeological project

Figure 5: Coastal sites in Somaliland 1 Satellite image (Google Earth) of Siyara marking the two square buildings, 2 Photograph of one of the buildings at Siyara, 3 Archaeological materials found on the ground at Siyara, 4 16th century mosque at Zeila

of settlement used for trade in Somaliland: trading posts with few or no permanent structures, surrounded by graves and refuse heaps and literally covered by imported materials (González-Ruibal and Torres 2018: 29-34). These places –such as Farhad, Bandar Abbas or Siyara– were used seasonally by the nomads during the trading season (October-April), but didn't evolve into villages, contrary to what happened in many other areas of the Red Sea (Figure 5).

A second area of research (Figure 6, 1-2) has been the region around the village of Sheikh, which houses the important settlement of Fardowsa, one of the few that can be truly considered a city (González-Ruibal *et al*. 2017: 157-159). The place is surrounded by a several villages, all of them strategically situated close to the escarpments of the Ogo mountains, the first place where caravans could resupply and rest after the hard journey across the desert coastal plains of Somaliland. This strategic role can be appreciated in the significant amount of imported materials found in these sites, and the identification of a settlement specifically dedicated to trade: the caravan station of Qalcadda. The third zone –the region around the modern city of Borama- gathers a significant number of sites (18 located so far) of which the Incipit-CSIC team has studied 8 (Torres *et al*. 2018). Although they are architecturally very similar to those around Sheikh (Figure 6, 3-4), there are also significant differences, the most obvious the scarcity of imported materials and a clear agricultural vocation. These sites range from towns as big as Ferdowsa (Amud, Abasa) to hamlets of less than 12 houses (Aroqolab). Leaving aside their differences in size, all of them share unequivocally the same cultural background, identical to that of the Sheikh region. Not all sites are villages or towns: at least one of them was a stronghold on the top of a hill (Derbi Cad), while another one seems to have been a religious centre (Dameraqad) housing several mosques and cemeteries.

Finally, interspersed throughout these regions there is a strong nomadic presence of which little is known so far. Its main evidences are the ever present cairns that dot the landscape of Somaliland, usually along the wadis that act as routes for the nomadic displacements (González-Ruibal *et al*. 2017: González and Torres 2018). Another common structures are the nomadic mosques delineated on the ground, in some cases very elaborated. In addition, the Incipit-CSIC team has located a religious funerary centre for nomadic groups (Iskhuder), where ceremonies and banquets of clear non-Islamic background took place among the cairns that filled the site (Figure 7) (González-Ruibal et al. 2017: 161-168, González-Ruibal y Torres 2018: 34-37).

The information gathered by the Incipit-CSIC team in these sites is very varied, depending on the type of work conducted. For most of them the combination of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV's), GPS, total stations, 3D models and conventional photographs has provided accurate plans of the sites and detailed information about their most relevant buildings and architectural features. A significant amount of archaeological materials –both local and imported- have been

Figure 6: Medieval sites in the Sheikh (1-2) and Borama (3-4) areas. 1 Quuburale, 2 Fardowsa, 3 Aroqolab 2, 4 Derbi Cad

recovered and processed, and are being systematized in order to present, for the first time, a robust chronological and cultural framework for the medieval material culture of the region. In the cases where excavations have been conducted, significant samples of faunal remains have been recovered and are currently under study. The preliminary results of these analyses are providing interesting information not only about the economical bases of the medieval inhabitants of Somaliland, but also about the pervivence of pre-Islamic beliefs in these communities or the existence of specific, local regulations about food.

3.2. Ethiopia

Although Islam arrived earlier to south-eastern Ethiopia than to Somaliland and it is the area where the first Muslim dynasties rose, archaeologically speaking our knowledge of the region is extremely fragmentary. Research has been mostly conducted in the region around the important city of Harar and to a lesser extent in the border with Somaliland, where A.T. Curle identified in the 1930's

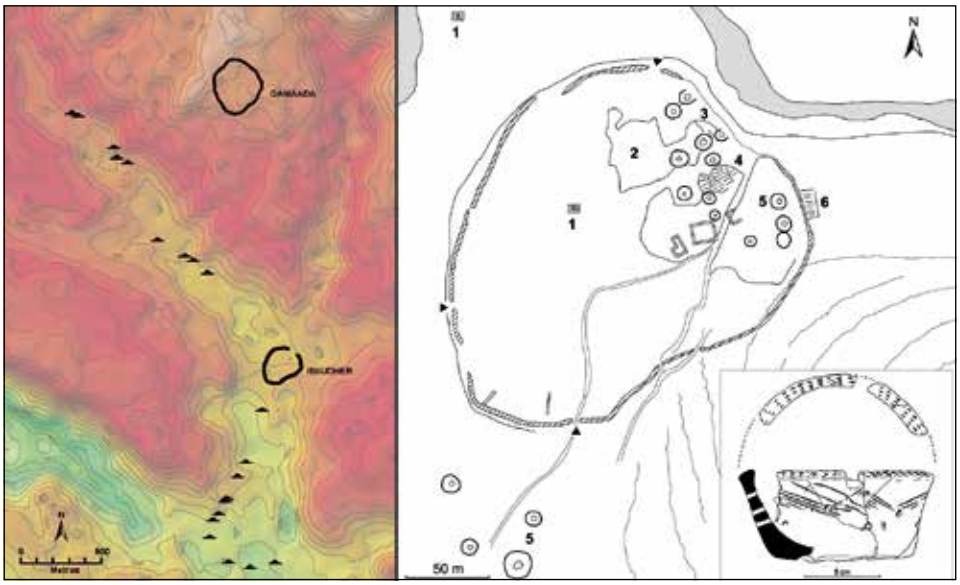

Figure 7: Location (left) and plan (right) of Iskuder. 1 cruciform tombs; 2 areas covered in rubble; 3 area with remains of feasting activities; 4 cist cluster; 5 structures; 6 cist cluster; 7 spaces delimited by partition walls.

a score of medieval sites currently in the Ethiopian side (Curle 1937). There is no updated information about these sites, although they are undoubtedly identical to those found in Somaliland which lie just some kilometres away. According to Curle descriptions (1937: 316), at least one of them -Au Bare- was an important town, and the only photograph of another one (Au Boba) shows the impressive domed tomb of the holy man that gives the name to the site (Curle 1937: plate IV). This site was also referred by Richard Burton as an important ruined town at war with the neighbouring Abasa (Burton 1894 [1854]: 92-93).

Apart from this area, which can be considered an continuation of the Somaliland cluster, two other areas of concentration of Muslim sites have been researched so far in Ethiopia (Fauvelle *et al*. 2011b: 16-18). These are the Çarçar massif, including the city of Harar and a significant number of ruins around it; and the eastern Shoa region at the escarpment of the Ethiopian highlands (Figure 8). The first region is significantly better studied due to the presence of the city of Harar, which outlived the collapse of the sultanate of Adal and has played an important role in the history of the Horn of Africa during the modern and contemporary periods. The region was explored archaeologically as early as the 1920s (Azaïs and Chambard 1931) and many archaeological sites and graveyards were documented to the west of Harar (Fauvelle y Hirsch 2011b: 33). The number of potential Muslim sites has grown after each new survey (Anfray 1970, Joussaume y Joussaume 1972), although no excavations have been undertaken

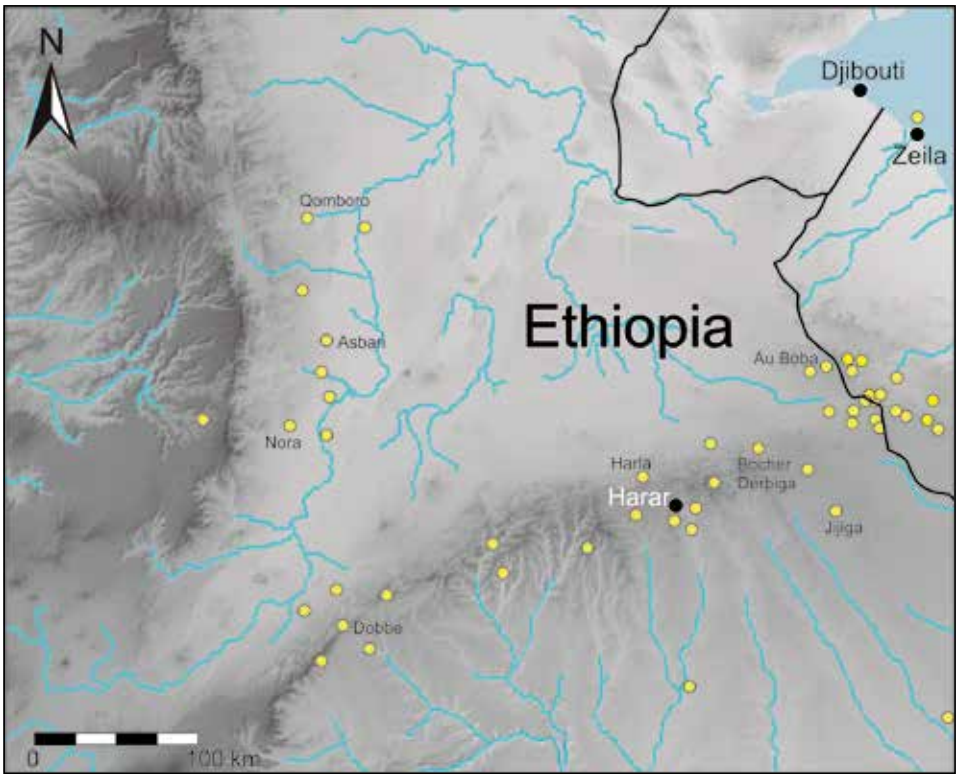

Figure 8: location of medieval archaeological sites in Ethiopia. Adapted from Curle (1937), and Fauvelle-Aymar and Hirsch (2011c)

in the region with the exception of some test pits conducted at the site of Molé (Joussaume y Joussaume 1972). According to the published data, most of the settlements are very similar to those of Somaliland, although not all the sites would have to be necessarily Muslim in origin (Fauvelle-Aymar et al. 2011b: 34). Several of them –Kubi, Hassan-Adi, Qulubi- are considered fortresses (Fauvelle-Aymar and Hirsch 2011b: 34-35), in contrast with the almost absolute lack of fortified sites in Somaliland. This difference is to some extent logical, given the closer distance of the border of the sites located around Harar. Surprisingly, not much archaeological research has been conducted in the city itself (Insoll 2017: 190), although a recent project launched in this region is providing new information about the origing of Harar, the nearby important town of Harla and other neighbouring sites (Insoll et al. 2016, 2017). Nowadays, about 30 Muslim sites ascribed to the medieval period have been identified in the Çarçar massif, although the chronology and characteristics of some sites in the area of Jijiga must be still fully confirmed.

Regarding the second area –the north-eastern part of Shoa/Säwa- a number of important sites have been documented, consisting in big concentrations of dwellings, large mosques and important graveyards (Fauvelle-Aymar and Hirsch 2011b: 34). Several of these sites have been studied in some detail, such as the site of Nora excavated by Fauvelle-Aymar and his team (2006) or Fäqi Däbbis, investigated by Poissonnier (2005). The results of this research show clear architectural similarities with the regions of Harar and Somaliland, although there are also significant differences. It has been proposed that this region could have been Islamized at an earlier period than Harar and that could actually constitute the core of the Shoa sultanate, the oldest Muslim state to be recorded in the interior of the Horn of Africa (Fauvelle-Aymar and Hirsch 2011b: 34-37). These sites would also mark the oldest route of introduction of Islam following a line which would link the Dahlak Islands with the interior, as has been suggested by Fauvelle-Aymar and Hirsch (20011a: 38-44)

Outside of these three main areas, evidences of Muslim archaeology are very scarce, without any doubt due to lack of proper research. Almost nothing is known about the medieval archaeology of the Ogaden, with the exception of the site of Ruqayi referred by Curle (1937: 318). Many other areas in the southeast of Ethiopia remain unexplored including significant parts of Wällo or the Danakil region. This second area played an important role in the medieval period, completely unknown with the exception of some references to ruins made by travellers in the early 1930s (Thesiger 1999: 123-127). Given the extraordinary results in those areas that have been surveyed, it is evident that these gaps are directly related to lack of research.

4. Tracking medieval states: the materiality of a multifaceted world

Since its very beginning, the study of the medieval Muslim states of the Horn of Africa has been framed by their confrontation with the Christian kingdom of Abyssinia. This approach has created a dichotomy that has simplified the extraordinarily complex world which was the Horn of Africa during the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern period. During the 15th and specially the 16th centuries, the written sources describe a world in which Turkish and Albanese mercenaries fight in the armies of Adal (Trimingham 1965: 89), Catalans sell weapons to the Muslims in Zeila (Trimingham 1965: 86), Arab missionaries land in the central Somali coast, Somalis show reluctance to be integrated into state structures (Faqih 2003) and many ethnic groups repeatedly appear living under the control of the Ifat and Adalite sultans in the border with the Ethiopian Highlands. Moreover, we have to consider the frequent changes in the control of the territories, the different rhythms of Islamization, the influen-

ces of pagan groups such as the Sidama or the Oromo, the different interpretations of Islam which probably were coexisting and the numerous languages present in the region. All these factors raise the question of how the sultanates of Ifat and Adal were able to develop strategies that not only kept the social a political cohesion, but made them long lasting regional powers.

The archaeology of the Muslim states in the Horn of Africa faces, from that perspective, two challenges. The first one is to track the physical expressions of this complexity which has long since been recognized by historians and linguistics (Braukamper 2002: 23, 28, 33-37) long since, but scarcely explored by archaeologists. The second one is to explore the unifying factors which allowed the development of efficient state structures, able to last centuries and overcome serious invasions and military defeats. Only from a balanced approach to these two aspects a more accurate vision of the medieval Muslim societies can be established.

4.1. Patterns of uniformity

Complex and diverse as they were, there is material evidence that point to a basic common identity shared by the bulk of the communities of the Muslim medieval states of the Horn of Africa. In the case of Somaliland, this uniformity is very evident and can be appreciated in all the sites studied so far, leaving aside the logical differences of size and type of settlement (Torres *et al*. 2018). All the sites share a similar lack of visible urban pattern, with the houses scattered along the landscape (Figure 9). However, this doesn't mean the sites lack any sense of spatial ordering: mosques, cemeteries and other buildings probably organized the space, and some of the empty spaces between houses were probably public areas –market places, squares, and so on. None of the villages or towns studied so far was walled, with the exception of a fortress –Derbi Cadand a caravan station –Qalcadda (González-Ruibal et al 2017: 149-150). This lack of defenses is surprising if we consider the permanent state of war between Christians and Muslims described in the written sources, and should be explained by the backward position of the Somaliland sites with respect to the border with the Christian kingdom. Fortresses and fortified settlements are more common the closer they are to the Ethiopian highlands (Fauvelle-Aymar and Hirsch 2010a: 33-34).

A great uniformity can also be seen in the appearance of the sites (Torres *et al*. 2018), which have an identical constructive system (Figure 10), the only differences being the size of houses, the type of stones used and the effort put in the construction of the buildings. Houses have rectangular or square shapes, with sizes varying but usually around 20 to 40 sq. meters and partition walls clearly visible defining two or three rooms per house. The walls are made of well laid

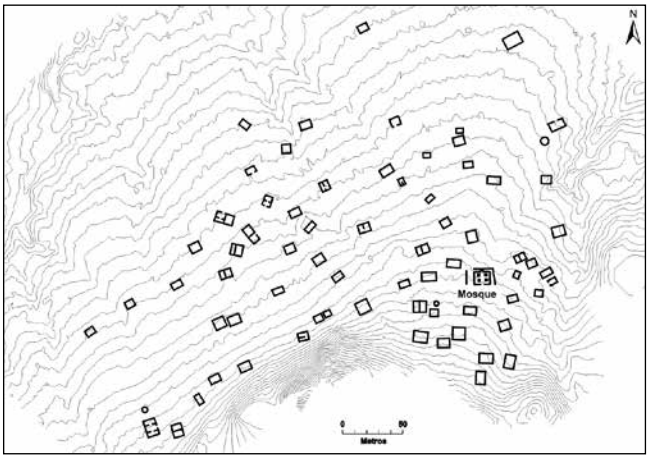

Figure 9: plan of Hasandile, close to Borama

Figure 10: Abasa. Detail of constructive technique at a house

flat stones of middle size, bound with mud. The state of preservation of the structures is variable, with some of them very well preserved and still reaching up to two meters high while others are much more weathered and just about 50 cm of the walls remaining. All the houses documented so far seem to have had only one floor. There are not significant differences in the size and quality of the houses, with the buildings of small settlements such as Aroqolab 2 being as carefully built as those of big towns as Abasa (Torres *et al*. 2018). The differences in the construction of the buildings seem to be related to the quality of stones available in the proximity of the settlement.

In all the settlements the most important buildings are the mosques, located in almost all the sites surveyed by the Incipi-CSIC team. They are built with the same construction technique as the rest of buildings and have square or rectan-

Figure 11: Rows of tombs at the site of Aroqolab 2

gular shapes, square mirhabs and in some cases perimeter walls surrounding the building. In the bigger mosques as those of Abasa and Hasadinle, circular, square or cruciform pillars have been used to support the roof which seems to have been flat. Significantly, neither minarets nor minbars have been documented in any of the mosques, and this could mark a difference with the examples at the Somaliland coast, such as the 16th century mosques of Zeila which have this feature. Leaving aside the mosques, the presence of communal buildings seems to have been very scarce. Only two examples have been documented so far, the first one a rectangular building of 15 x 4 meters built with big boulders and with a –relatively- monumental entrance documented in Abasa, and the second one a large circular structure located in the village of Kebab, between Hargeisa and Borama. It is difficult to interpret the functionality of these buildings. the size and appearance could point to a military use, but their emplacements are not especially strategic, being in the plain and in the case of Abasa separated from the rest of the village by a deep ravine.

Surprisingly, the cemeteries documented in Somaliland show a higher variety of styles and shapes than the uniformity of dwellings seems to announce. Although the basic ritual seems to correspond to cists marked by plain slabs of stones defining square or rectangular structures (Figure 11), burial practices seem to have been flexible including the use of stelae as markers in different positions or in some cases tombs made of piled stones surrounded by rings of stones. In some of the larger settlements, more than one cemetery has been identified, each of them with a different type of graves, but without excavations –proscribed in the case of Somaliland- is difficult to discern if these differences can be explained by changes through time or could be related to different ethnic groups or Muslim traditions.

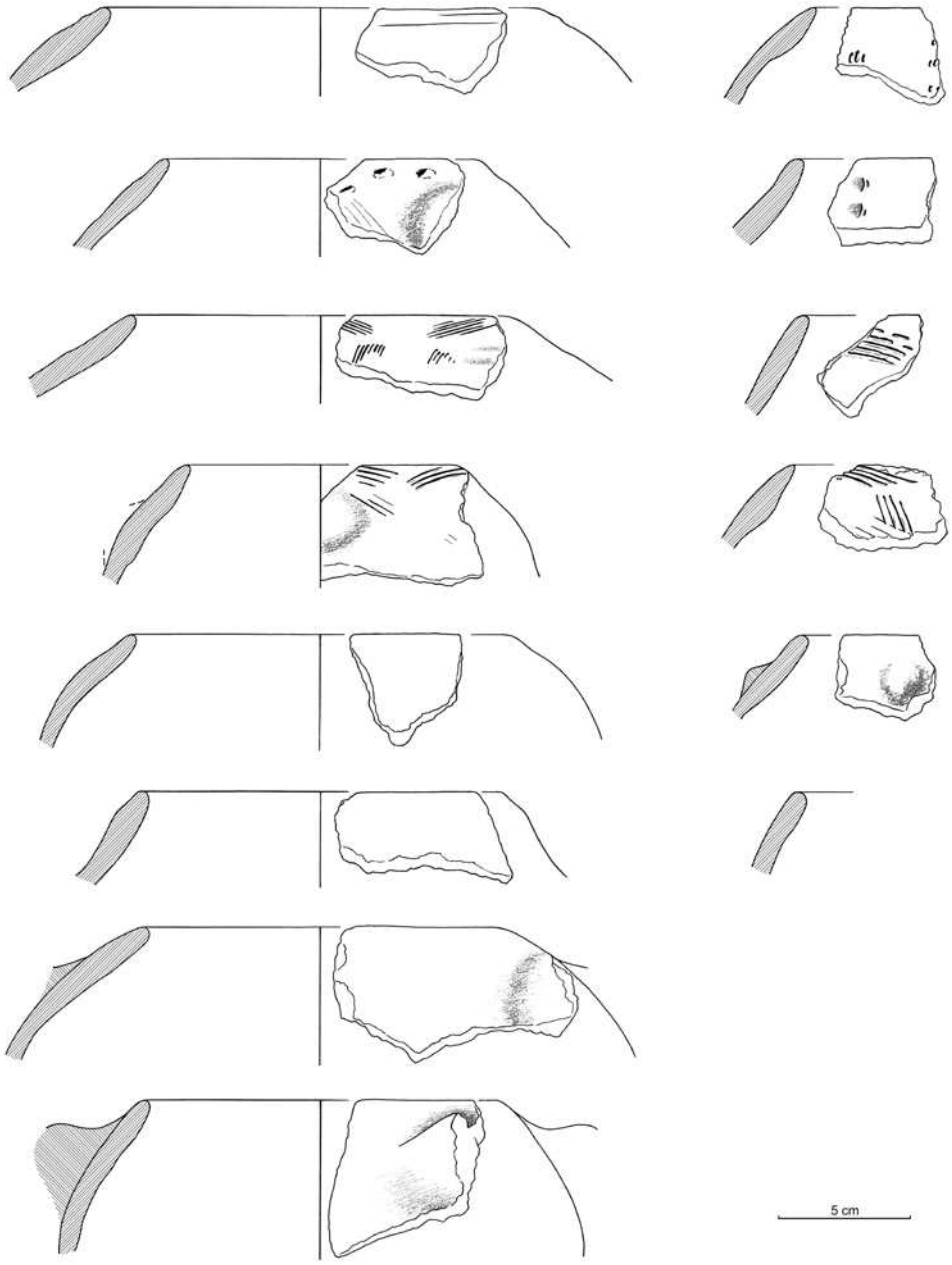

Figure 12: local pottery collected at the town of Amud. Drawings by Anxo Rodríguez

Finally, the uniformity is also noticeable in the material culture found at these places, especially the local pottery which shows a high standardization in terms of technique, shapes and decorations. Local pottery (Figure 12) constitutes an overwhelming majority in most of the settlements in the interior of Somaliland, consisting in hand-made coarse pottery of good quality, with a reduced number of types: open bowls with the rim slightly engrossed, globular vessels with a short straight neck and spherical-like pieces with an almost horizontal, flat rim. The sample is complemented with other specific and less common pieces such as small bowls-censers and medium sized containers with horizontal handles. Handles are abundant, either horizontal, curved handles with oval sections or smaller vertical handles with circular sections. Bases are scarce, but those found are ringed. Decoration is usually scarce and limited to the neck or the upper part of the rim. It usually consists on incised simple designs (series of parallel horizontal or oblique lines). Only in very few cases other types of decorations are present, as nail impressions or clay appliqués.

ignificantly and contrary to what happens in the contemporary kingdom of Abyssinia (Torres 2017), there are no local fine wares in Somaliland, and glasses, cups bowls and dishes are absent from the local repertoires. This absence can be explained by the easier access to imported wares in this region due to the closeness to trade routes. To the moment, imported materials have appeared in all the sites surveyed in the region (Figure 13), even in small villages of less than 10 houses, but differences in the amount and types of materials documented are remarkable. In the coastal trading posts such as Farhad or Siyara, the floor is littered with thousands of pottery and glass fragments from a huge variety of places including China, Japan, India, Persia, Arabia and the Near East (González-Ruibal y Torres 2018: 7-11). In the interior, imported materials decrease abruptly, and only the site of Fardowsa has yielded a significant amount of imports, including Chinese celadon and blue and white porcelain, and different types of glazed and unglazed pottery and glass from Egypt, Persia and Yemen (González-Ruibal et al. 2017: 159). In the rest of the sites, most of the imports consist of Chinese celadon and porcelain, glazed Speckled pottery, glass shards and cowries (Torres *et al* 2018). Soft stone vessels and spindle whorls, probably coming from the Arabian Peninsula are very common in all the sites (Curle 1937: 322, González-Ruibal *et al*. 2017: 143, González-Ruibal y Torres 2018: 7, Torres *et al* 2018).

With the available information it's difficult to see to what extent the material uniformity documented in the medieval sites of Somaliland can be extrapolated to the rest of the Muslim Horn of Africa. The published data shows evident similarities in the architectural features of the sites, including the size and shape of the houses, the lack of urban layouts, the prominent position of mosques within the villages or the type of cemeteries, but also some minor but interesting variations. The most interesting are those related to mosques (Figure 14).

Figure 13: Imported materials found in Somaliland. 1. Indian pottery (1a Indian Red Polished Ware, 1b kitchen ware), 2. Yemen pottery (2a Yemeni Yellow ware), 3. Green on green underglazed wares 4. Blue and white underglazed pottery, 5. Martaban stoneware 6. Blue and white Chinese porcelain, 7. Chinese celadon, 8. Other glazed and painted wares (8a, Speckled ware), 9. Glass bangles probably from Syria/Egypt/Turkey, 10 glass bottles, same provenance. Not at scale.

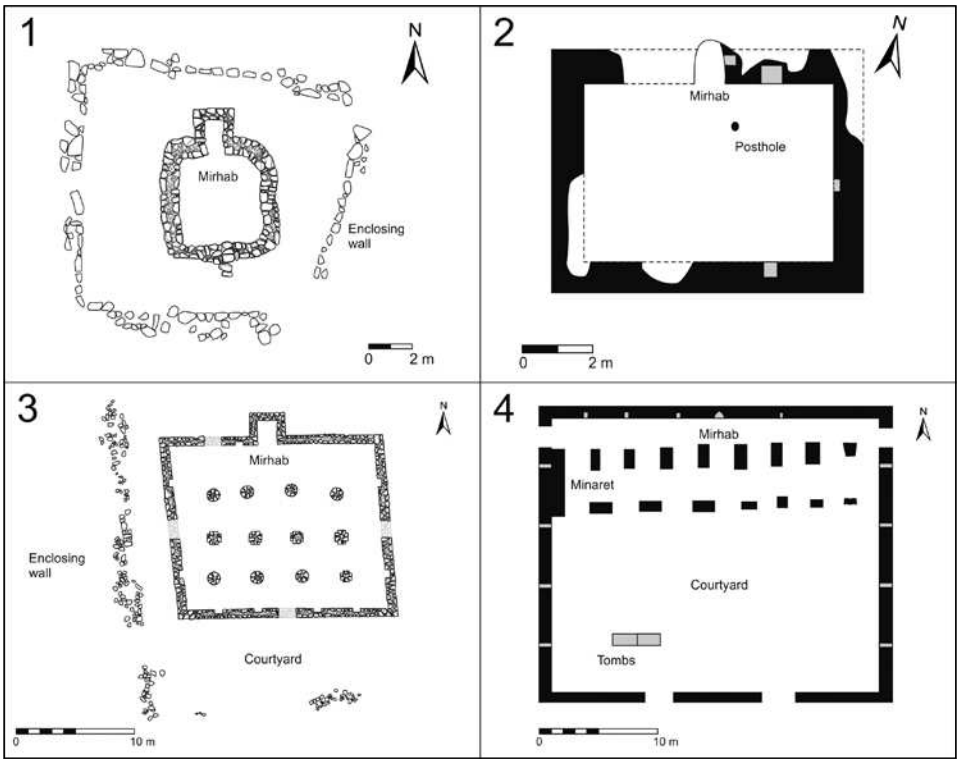

Figure 14: plans of medieval mosques in the Horn of Africa. 1. small mosque at Abasa,2 Mosque at Harla (adapted from Insoll et al 2016: 26), 3. Abasa. Main mosque, 4 Asbäri (adapted from Fauvelle-Aymar et al 2006: 140).

From the published plans and photographs (Fauvelle-Aymar et al 2006), several of the mosques in the northern Shoa region have minarets –absent in the Somaliland region- and mirhabs with pointed arches built with big stones and inserted within the qibla wall (Fauvelle-Aymar *et al*. 2006: 141, 168, 175). In the case of Somaliland, mirhabs seem to have been built with small stones defining a round arch and the structure protruding outside of the wall (Curle 1937: plate II). In the only plan of a Shoan mosque published so far (Fauvelle-Aymar *et al*. 2006: 141) the courtyard is attached to the roofed part of the mosque, while in the Somaliland mosques the roofed area is surrounded by a perimeter wall which defines the courtyard. Finally, none of the mosques identified so far in the Somaliland sites have yielded inscriptions or decorative patterns, as happens in several mosques in the Shoa region. Regarding the Harar region, the only mosque excavated so far (Insoll *et al*. 2016: 26) shares some features with those of the Shoa region, such as the mirhab inserted in the qibla.

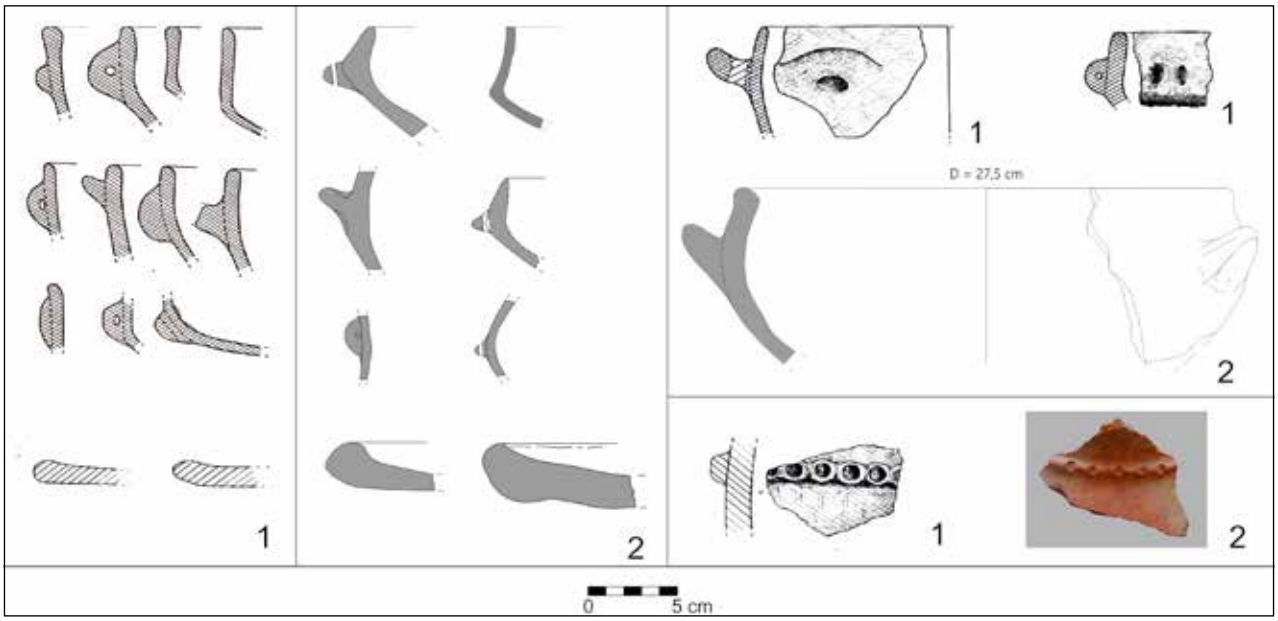

Figure 15: comparison of medieval pottery from the Harar region (1), adapted from (Joussaume and Joussaume 1972: plates IX to XI) with the northern Ethiopia wares (2) (Torres 2017)northern Ethiopia wares (Torres 2017)

If the external features of the settlements point to a shared materiality –with minor variations due to regional or maybe chronological differences–, the published data about the local pottery wares in the regions of Harar and Shoa show clear differences in the types of wares. Although drawings and photographs of materials are scarce (Insoll et al. 2016, Insoll 2017, Jousaume y Joussaume 1972), those published look closer to the pottery traditions found in the Ethiopian highlands than to those of the Somaliland region (Figure 15). These similarities can be appreciated in the presence of carinated vessels (Insoll et al. 2016: 29, Jousaume y Joussaume 1972: plate XI) –common in northern Ethiopia (Torres 2017: 237-238) but absent in Somaliland, in the burnished black appearance of some of the pieces (Insoll et al. 2016: 28) and in some decorative patterns documented in big containers (Jousaume & Joussaume 1972: plate X) also found in the Lake Tana region (Torres 2017: 232). Although a huge work has still to be made in the way of processing and publishing the medieval pottery of the region, the available data point to the existence of different regional traditions within the sultanates of Ifat and Adal, although currently is impossible to determine if they could correspond to different communities. In that sense and somewhat paradoxically, the variety of imported materials from China, Persia or the Near East could have had a somehow unifying role, providing a common set of materials which could be found and recognized throughout the region.

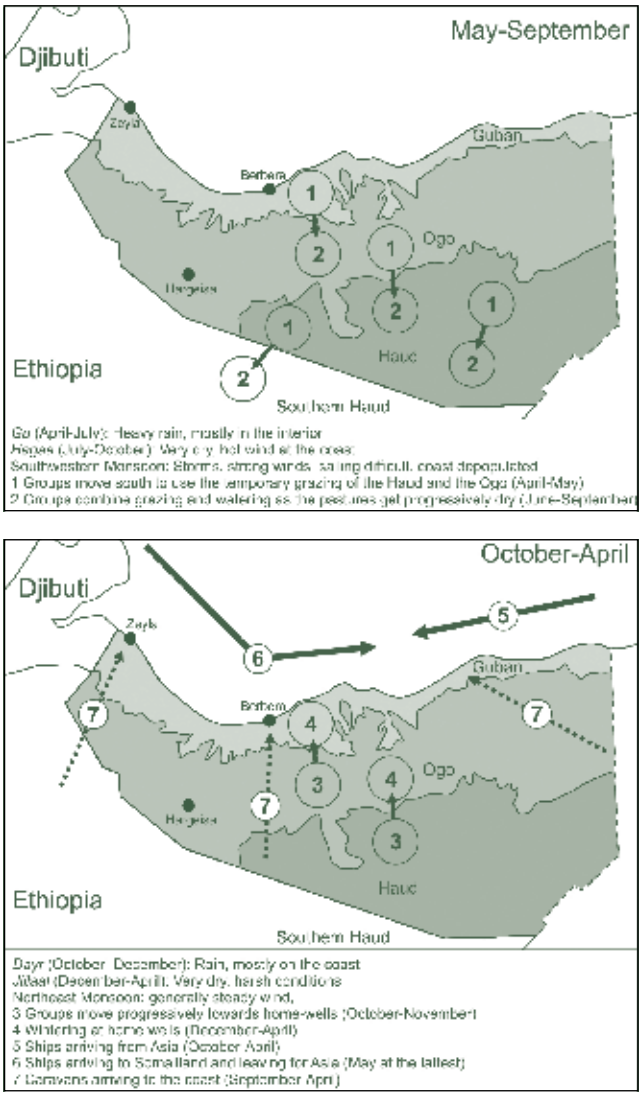

Figure 16: Map of the seasonal displacements of nomads and merchants in Somaliland.

4.2. Tracing diversity: the archaeology of the nomads in Somaliland

At this moment and with the state of research briefly presented here is impossible to document archaeologically the existence of different communities within the sultanates of Adal and Ifat. The only exception are the nomadic communities living in the region currently known as Somaliland. These groups not only have a specifically distinct archaeological record which makes them easily identifiable archaeology, but their presence during the medieval period in the region is attested not only archaeologically (González-Ruibal & Torres 2018) but through the written texts, which describe the presence of Somali groups living in the territory of the sultanate (Faqih 2003: 28).

The archaeology of the nomadic communities in Somaliland has only just started to be studied (González-Ruibal *et al*. 2017: 161-166), but nomadic lifestyle is regulated by a very specific geographical and environmental framework which hasn't changed significantly in the last millennia (Figure 16) (González-Ruibal & Torres 2018: 3-4). The annual cycle starts with the *Gu* rains of April, when the groups wintering in the Ogo and northern Haud move to the south to take advantage of the new grazing which will shortly grow. Following scouts, the groups move their herds to the southern Haud and establish temporary camps moving around the area as the grazing becomes more and more scarce. At the same time, the

groups in the Guban move to the Ogo, filling the empty spaces left the southern groups and benefiting from the comparatively cooler environment. After two or three months, the grazing areas start to dry and the hot season (*Hagga*) starts. Groups start to move progressively to the north, although camels are usually kept grazing at longer distances –returning to their home-wells pushes the northern groups towards the coast, at a moment in which the autumn rains (*dayr*) start to fall (Lewis 1999: 41). By the end of the *dayr* season, most of the groups occupy their home-wells and prepare for the winter dry season, the *jiilaal*. At that moment, only the permanent wells keep water, the Haud is deserted and depending on the total amount of rain during the year subsistence can be especially challenging (Lewis 1999: 41). With the arrival of the new rainy season in April the cycle commences again.

Within this geographical framework, the presence of a nomadic landscape is at the same time subtle but ubiquitous: the main material evidence of their territorial control being the thousands of tumuli and other types of tombs scattered throughout Somaliland (González-Ruibal et al 2017: 161-162). Although the chronology of these tombs still requires a proper analysis which would imply the excavation of a significant number of them, the information available suggests they became particularly widespread between the late first and early second millennia AD (González-Ruibal et al 2017: 162). Regarding their position in the landscape, they are mostly placed along the numerous wadis that connect the coast with the mountainous interior of Somaliland. They are also very numerous in some of the most important mountain passes where the act as prominent landmarks in the landscape (Figure 17). At an undetermined moment during the Middle Ages, when the nomads start to be progressively islamized, simple mosques outlined on the floor often accompany the cairns. The linear distribution of mosques and graves is not always coherent the optimal natural routes (González-Ruibal and Torres 2018: 6), and there were undoubtedly other

Figure 17: identification of cairns at the mountain pass of Jidhi, western Somaliland. Satellite images provided by Google Earth

factors –social, economical, cultural or political- which influenced the movements of the nomads beyond their adaptive strategies to the environment.

Two of these influences in Somaliland were trade and religion. The specific seasonal patterns of Somaliland favour the presence of nomadic populations by the coast at a moment when the monsoon winds allow the arrival of ships in and out of the Red Sea (González-Ruibal & Torres 2018: 4), and that coincidence has settled the bases for a long tradition of trading seasonal gatherings and fairs which has lasted until the 19th century (Cruttenden 1849: 54-55). In a coast where Zeila was the only permanent trading centre during the Middle Ages, these seasonal markets were not just a resource for the nomads: they were a key factor in the economy of the Ifat and Adal sultanates, which had in trade one of their strategic sources of wealth and influence (Pankhurst 1961: 346-350). The second key reference for the seasonal movements were the sanctuaries which acted as aggregation centres for the nomads. The excavation of one of these sites has proved the continuation of many pagan traditions well into the 14th century, when Islam was well consolidated in the region (González-Ruibal & Torres 2018: 14).

At this moment, the ways nomads and urban dwellers interacted in Somaliland are still not fully understood due to lack of research, especially long term excavations in the towns which were the hubs where these groups got in contact. The perishable nature of most of the nomadic material culture also difficult the identification of nomadic communities living in contact with settled groups. Only in a reduced number of cases this interaction has been tracked, as in the presence of a cairn –a nomadic type of burial- built in one of the two cemeteries of Abasa (Torres et al. forthcoming). The scarce references to the Somali prior to the *jihad* of Ahmed Gran in the medieval texts are usually derogative, qualifying them as unruly and quarrelsome (Faqih 2003: 10), something difficult to amend with the fact that only one settlement in the interior of Somaliland is fortified.

The absolute differentiated archaeological records, coherent with two almost antagonistic lifestyles, could lead to the idea of two communities living with their backs turned to the other. However, we know from the written sources that both communities were not only integrated in the sultanates of Ifat and Adal, but that leaving aside sporadic episodes the nomads seem to have participated regularly in the life of the sultanates and the struggle against the Abyssinians. The situation of the Somali within the sultanate of Adal seems to have been ambiguous: there are many open acts of defiance of Somali clans against Ahmed Gragn recorded in "The conquest of Abyssinia" (Faqih 2003: 12, 27-28), at least before the great Jihad was launched around 1529. However, most of them seem to take place outside the borders of the sultanate of Adal, in the so called "country of the Somalis", located farther to the east of the Somaliland coast. On the contrary, some other tribes seem to have been earlier allies of Ahmen Gragn, asking for his protection and mediation in intertribal conflicts (Faqih 2003: 22-23). Some of these tribes, such as the Girri, where living in te-

rritories clearly within the sultanate (Faqih 2003: 22, note 83). The analysis of this apparently peaceful relationship between two communities with so little in common is fundamental to explore which were the shared interests that led to, if not a unifying identity, at least to a common meeting ground which provided a remarkable stability to the sultanates of Ifat and then Adal.

4.3. Spheres of interest: the nomads and the state

Although the material relationships between nomads and urban dwellers in Somaliland still require an in-depth analysis, the archaeological evidence and the historical sources show consistently some contexts in which both communities interacted and collaborated. The first of these spheres of interaction is trade, one of the most important economical activities conducted in the Red Sea and attested in Somaliland since at least the 1st century AD (Desanges et al 1993). In the medieval period, references to trade in the coast are recurrent by both Muslim and European travellers, including Al Idrissi (1866: 31), Ibn Battuta (1953: 110), Tomas Pires (1944: 16) or Ludovico Varthema (1863: 86-87). Trade was obviously one of the main sources of income for both Muslims and Christians, although we have not much information about how this trade was supervised by the kings of Ifat or Adal, leaving aside the control of the important town of Zeila, the capital of the Sultanate of Adal for several decades. Interestingly, the most obvious evidence of state control over the trade routes comes from archaeology (Figure 18). In 2016, the Incipit-CSIC team visited the site of Qalcadda (from Qalāt, 'fortified place') and identified the remains of a rectangular enclosure (55×90 m) with thick walls around 1 metre high made of dressed stone and the corners are defended by round bastions. To the south of this fort, a square building with an inner courtyard was also documented, resembling very closely Middle East models of caravan stations (González-Ruibal et al 2017: 149-152). The radiocarbon dating (González-Ruibal et al. 2017: 150) set its occupation at the heyday of the Sultanate of Adal and constitutes a very explicit evidence of the prolonged and intense contacts between the Muslim communities living at both sides of the Red Sea. Moreover, it's one of the few cases in which the materiality of the state can be explicitly appreciated in the region.

Leaving aside these examples, the bulk of the trade in Somaliland was conducted all along the coast at trading posts such as Siyara, Farhad or Heis (González-Ruibal and Torres 2018). We don't know if caravans from the interior would arrive to trade to the coast or if the nomad communities would conduct the trade themselves, but what it's incontestable is that nomads were fundamental for the proper functioning and stability of the trade routes in Somaliland. Either allowing the pass through their territories, providing guide and protection or acting as traders themselves, commerce would have been impossible

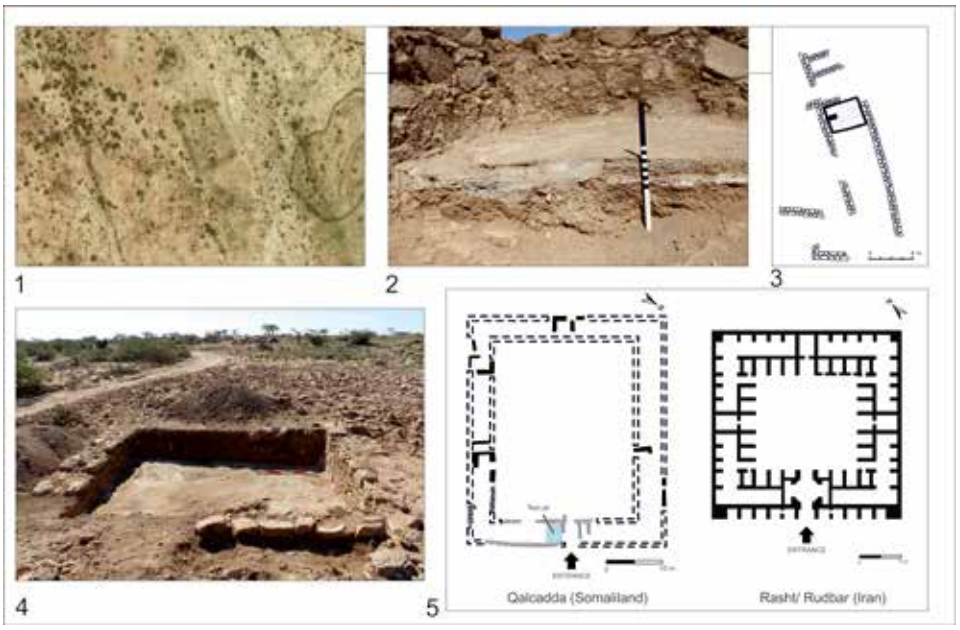

Figure 18: The caravan station of Qalcadda. 1 Satellite image of the site (Google Earth), 2 Detail of the several plaster floors of the excavated area, 3 Plan of the east nave and the test pit, 4 Test pit, 5 Comparison between Qalcadda and a Persian caravanserai (after Mansouri *et al.* 2015).

without their participation and collaboration. The absolute lack of references in the written texts to incidents related to trade point to the existence of a wide agreement on recognizing trade as a beneficial activity for all the stakeholders involved –foreigners, nomads, urban dwellers and state. The lack of walls in all the settlements found so far in the region speaks of a –more or less- peaceful coexistence between all the groups trading in Somaliland. Although problems could always arise –the fort of Qalcadda is an obvious example that caravans needed to be protected-, the importance of trade in the Horn of Africa only declined by external factors such as the blockage of the Red Sea by the Portuguese (Trimingham 1965: 86). What the archaeological record of trade points to in Somaliland is a clear coordination between the nomads that benefited from the exchanges and the pass of the caravans through their territories, the urban dwellers that acted as nodes to allow the caravans resupply and rest, and the state which could have overseen the whole system.

A second field of understanding between urban dwellers and nomads was obviously Islam, although there are still many gaps in our knowledge about on the religious framework during the Middle Ages in Somaliland. It's generally assumed that Islam arrived to the Horn of Africa through traders, although the rhythms, chronologies and routes of diffusion are still poorly known. The latest hypothesis (Fauvelle Aymar & Hirsch 2011b: 38-44) defend a process

with two consecutive axes of penetration in the interior of the Horn: an earlier north-south route from the Dahlak islands which followed the line marked by the Ethiopian highlands escarpment, and a second one which probably become active from the 13th century onwards and ran from Zeila to the interior of the Ethiopian kingdom (Fauvelle Aymar y Hirsch 2011b: 41). This hypothesis is convincingly supported by historical, epigraphic and archaeological data; and coherent with the data from Somaliland which point to a late moment of islamization for the nomad communities in this region, as late as the 13th century.

Although still scarce, the available archaeological data show some clues about the rhythms and ways this process could have taken place. The aforementioned site of Iskuder, which was active at least between the mid-12th century and the late 14th centuries, shows a mostly if not completely non-Muslim record (González-Ruibal & Torres 2018: 14). This interpretation is supported by the information from the historical accounts of travellers who while including the Somalis in the Muslim community described them as a society only lightly touched by this religion away from the main cities (Abderahman 1977: 118-120). Significantly, the strong oral traditions of the Somali describe the arrival of several missionary initiatives from the Arab peninsula, all of them directed to the central region of Somaliland –where the lack of permanent towns no doubt delayed the diffusion of Islam. That is the case of Sheikh Ishaq ibn Ahmed, who arrived in Zeila in 1153 and after teaching in Harar and Zeila settled in Maydh, a small coastal village in western Somaliland (Lewis 1998). The second important saint is Sharif Yusuf Aw Barkhadle, who at an undetermined moment in the 12th century arrived to the region and had to contest against pagan sorcerers to spread the Islamic faith (Abderahman 1977: 127). Although interspersed with legends and mythical episodes, these and many other sources point to a slow process of Islamization of the nomadic communities of the interior.

By the 16th century, the impact of these centuries of missionary activities can be felt in the archaeological record of the region; with at least three medieval sites wearing the name of Muslim saints preceded by "Aw" (holy men, in Somali). The most important is Aw Barkhadle close to Hargeisa, but at least another two sites (Aw Bare and Aw Boba) have the name of less known holy men. In addition, some archaeological sites described as villages in earlier publications seem to have been the seats for religious communities –*tariqat*-, a tradition still alive into the mostly Sufi Somalis (González-Ruibal & Torres 2018: 14-15). That is the case of Dameraqad, a site documented by A.T. Curle in 1934 (1937: 316) and described as a village, which was briefly visited by the Incipit-CSIC team in 2018. The survey (Torres *et al*. 2018) reassessed the interpretation of the site as a religious centre, made of 12-15 structures similar to those of other settlements, sometimes linked together by walls defining courtyards. At least three of the buildings are squared mosques, the bigger one with two pillars and three rooms attached occupied by well built tombs (Figure 19, 1). This uncommon number

Figure 19: Mosques in Dameraqad: urban (1) and nomad (2)

of mosques suggests that Dameraqad was a religious centre, hypothesis supported by the large cemetery attached to the site, which holds several big (more than 3 meters long) tombs marked with standing slabs and surrounded by large stone rings.

Moreover, unlike most of the settlements in Somaliland which don't seem to have survived the disappearance of the Adal sultanate in the 16th century, Dameraqad shows strong evidences of reuse by nomads after its abandonment. Nomadic presence is traced in the numerous cairns found in the surroundings of the site and an elaborated mosque situated in front of the main cluster of buildings (Figure 19, 2). This mosque reused stones from the neighboring buildings

to set two well made parallel walls, with the slabs carefully laid at their flat sides and a trapezoidal mirhab. The floor between the parallel walls of the mosque was filled with small quartz pink pebbles to provide a chromatic effect on the building. This unusual effort dedicated to the construction and decoration of the mosque remarks the idea of the sacredness of the site, but also shows how the situation had changed in relation to Iskuder: the nomads who were pagans two centuries ago now continue to visit this religious Muslim site even after its abandonment. In that sense, it seems obvious that religion increasingly acted as a common ground for understanding between nomads and urban dwellers, especially during the Sultanate of Adal period (1415-1577). In this period, religion seems to have adopted a central role not only in the daily life of the communities which lived in the sultanate, but in the politics of the region through the holy war or Jihad.

And war –especially in the 16th century- became the third sphere of interaction in which the nomads were integrated within the state structures of the medieval sultanates of the Horn. In this case, the archaeological record is extremely scarce, consisting just in the numerous fortifications that dot the border between the Christian and Muslim territories. However, archaeology hasn't found so far evidences of the large-scale destruction of which Christian and Muslim texts speak about. Although the conflict against the Christians was always present in the history of the medieval Muslim states polities, it seems to have taken the connotation of a holy war only in the early 15th century, especially after the disappearance of the Ifat sultanate and the killing of its last sultan Sa'd ad-Din, which had a deep impact in the Muslims of the region (Trimingham 1965: 74-75). Although there were likely nomads in the armies of Ifat, it's during the Sultanate of Adal period when they are fully and systematically incorporated in the Muslim armies, participating often with distinction in the main battles against the Christians (Faqih 2003: 20, 50). Again, it seems to be a distinction between the Somalis already integrated in the Adal territory and those living outside the Adal borders, which are initially reluctant to participate in Ahmed Gran's jihad. It likely that the increase of state control that Ahmed Gragn was imposing –including the payment of taxes (Faqih 2003: 27)– provoked a contrary reaction in the many of Somali tribes, which had to be forced to join the imam's armies.

A second, less studied military aspect in which the nomads became directly involved in the life of the sultanates was their participation in the internal struggles between the different political factions (Faqih 2003: 10, 12-13, 17) usually fighting against Ahmed Gragn and supporting the moderate party which looked for an appeasement with the Christians. If the nomads did this just as mercenaries, following previous a *status quo* or their own agenda is impossible to state, but the texts suggest that the Somali supported the sultan which represented the previous way of ruling, which had traditionally avoided a full scale conflict with the Ethiopian Kingdom.

5. Conclusions

Although the medieval archaeology of the Muslim kingdoms of the Horn of Africa is still in a dire need of systematization, the available archaeological record points to the existence of a diverse mosaic of identities and lifestyles coexisting under the sultanates of Ifat and Adal, in what seems a relatively peaceful and collaborative system which allowed the development of trade, the emergence of some state structures and a certain territorial cohesion. Given the significant differences between some of the medieval communities inhabiting Somaliland, especially nomads and urban dwellers-, we suggest that the elements that provided a cohesive framework for these states were not the development and use of uniform identity expressed in a homogeneous material culture, but the existence of some key areas of shared interest in which different groups could interact and adhere to. These "spheres of interest" would act as nodes where communities with very different backgrounds would get involved in collaborative projects and thus could establish links which at some point evolved into a kind of common identity. Based on the archaeological record and the historical sources, we propose three of these spheres –trade, religion and war– although the weight and influence of each of them would have changed through time and depending on each specific group. Some communities such as urban dwellers, nomads or minority groups would have their own well defined identities, but at a higher level the cohesion would be built around the aforementioned spheres rather than through a homogeneous materiality. This fluid and flexible system could explain the surprising stability of the Muslim medieval sultanates, considering the challenging environment, the diversity of its citizens and the permanent state of war in the region.

During the 16th century, the political and social changes that took place in the Sultanate of Adal eroded this delicate balance. The more radical approach of the new religious leaders of the state merged two of this spheres –war and religion- within the concept of Jihad, while the Portuguese presence in the Red Sea disturbed severely trade, the third leg of the system. At the same time, a tendency to a higher control of the territory and the sultanate resources can be perceived during the reign of Ahmed Gragn, using the Jihad as the main element of cohesion. This strategy was extremely successful while the Adal armies were victorious, but proved to be disastrous once defeats arrived. With the military collapse against the Ethiopians and the Oromo and the disturbance of the trade networks, the only cohesive element remaining was religion, and for this unifying force a state was not strictly necessary anymore. The archaeological evidence shows a general abandonment of sites around the 16th century, although it would be derogative to consider it a collapse. The new system that emerged was as stable and efficient as the previous one, but less diverse and based on the nomadic culture which has ultimately been identified as the traditional Somali lifestyle.

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