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HORN OF AFRICA. The region known as the Horn of Africa stretches over much of the area between the Red Sea and the Nile Valley, that is, over today's states of Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. Historically, it often also included the Sudan. Though lying quite close to those parts of Arabia where Islam was born, and though the two shores of the Red Sea were partially integrated in the century prior to the days of the Prophet, Islam, as an empire and as a political system, hardly included the Horn. Islam's political and military energies were diverted from Arabia in other directions, and the region's dominant state remained Ethiopia, which adopted Christianity in 333-334. Moreover, in the early centuries of Islam, the Christian Nubians prevented the penetration of Islamic armies that came from the direction of Egypt. Yet Islam, from its very inception, did spread in the Horn. Its local history dates back to the "first Hegira," the hasty emigration of the Ṣaḥābah in 615-616 from their pagan persecutors in Mecca to seek asylum with Ethiopia's Christian king. This formative episode left Muslims with a dual message regarding Ethiopia, of acceptance of the Christian kingdom as a good neighbor, as well as of delegitimization

of Christian Ethiopia after her king, who saved the Ṣaḥābah, had allegedly converted to Islam and was consequently betrayed by his people.

Islam continued to spread in the Horn, influenced by scholars, traders, and immigrants from both Arabia and Egypt. However, lacking the direct backing of an Islamic Middle Eastern imperial order, Islam was adopted in the Horn mainly by diverse local populations and groups that resisted the local hegemony of Ethiopia. They generally remained loyal to their different languages, cultures, and tribal or clannish structures, and developed their Islam in mostly popular modes. More orthodox Islam and the use of Arabic were better established in some urban centers along the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, and in the inland walled town of Harar, considered as of the twelfth century to be the capital of Islam in the Horn. Between the ninth and the mid-sixteenth centuries, various local Islamic sultanates of Sidama, Somali, Adari, as well as other linguistic groups, notably the Shoa, Ifat, and Adal, existed on the coast and in the southern Ethiopian plateau, but as they failed to unite, they were often dominated by Christian Ethiopia, especially in Ethiopia's prime, under the Solomonic dynasty, 1270-1529.

The major event in the premodern history of Islam in the Horn was a Harar-centered moment of religious politicization combined with Islamic momentum in the Middle East and Arabia. Inspired and aided by the rising Ottomans and by Arabian scholars, the local Harari *amīr*, Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm, nicknamed Gran (in Amharic *grāññ*, left-handed), united local Islamic power. Accompanied by Somalis, Sidamas, Afars, Hararis, and others—all also motivated by the desire to control the fertile highlands—Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm led his armies of Islamic holy warriors into Ethiopia in 1529. Emperor Lebna Dengel (who reigned from 1508) died in isolation in a mountain fortress in 1540, and, with the exception of the Lake