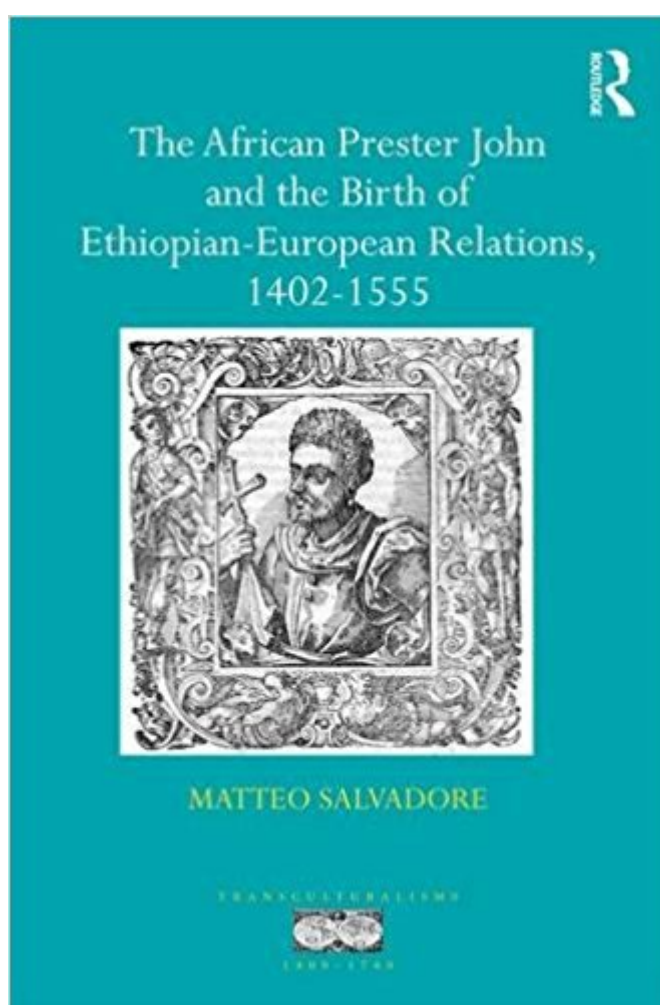


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The African Prester John And The Birth Of Ethiopian-European Relations, 1402-1555 (Transculturalisms, 1400-1700)



Synopsis

From the 14th century onward, political and religious motives led Ethiopian travelers to Mediterranean Europe. For two centuries, their ancient Christian heritage and the myth of a fabled eastern king named Prester John allowed the Ethiopians to engage the continent's secular and religious elites as peers. Meanwhile, back home the Ethiopian nobility came to welcome European visitors and at times even co-opted them by arranging mixed marriages and bestowing land rights. The protagonists of this encounter sought and discovered each other in royal palaces, monasteries, and markets throughout the Mediterranean basin, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean littoral, from Lisbon to Jerusalem and from Venice to Goa. Matteo Salvatore's narrative takes the reader on a voyage of reciprocal discovery that climaxed with the Portuguese intervention on the side of the Christian monarchy in the Ethiopian-Adali War. Thereafter, the arrival of the Jesuits at the Horn of Africa turned the mutually beneficial Ethiopian-European encounter into a bitter confrontation over the souls of Ethiopian Christians.

Book Information

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Matteo Salvatore has written that rarest of books, one that considers not just how Europe shaped Africa, but how Africa shaped Europe. In this fascinating account--full of vivid characters, lively writing, and surprising findings--Salvatore overturns many misconceptions about the early modern African-Europeans relations, not the least of which is that Prester John was a mere European fantasy having nothing to do with African discourse. This remarkable intellectual history,

taking advantage of rare Italian and Portuguese sources, will change how many see not just Ethiopia, but the global middle ages. Wendy Laura Belcher, Associate Professor Princeton University, USA (author of Abyssinia's Samuel Johnson: Ethiopian Thought in the Making of an English Author) The multiple viewpoints in this readable and scholarly study of the external relations of the once mythical and mysterious Christian kingdom of Ethiopia will surprise specialists and appeal to readers interested in global history. David Northrup, Emeritus Professor, Boston College, USA

Matteo Salvatore is Assistant Professor of History at American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.

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