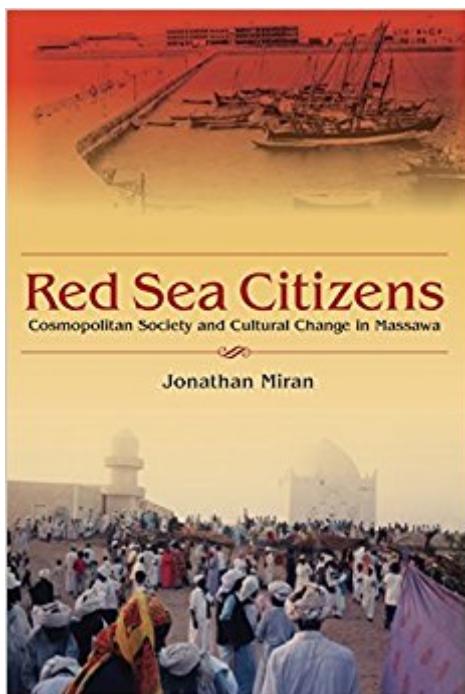


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# Red Sea Citizens: Cosmopolitan Society And Cultural Change In Massawa



## Synopsis

In the late 19th century, the port of Massawa, in Eritrea on the Red Sea, was a thriving, vibrant, multiethnic commercial hub. *Red Sea Citizens* tells the story of how Massawa rose to prominence as one of Northeast Africa's most important shipping centers. Jonathan Miran reconstructs the social, material, religious, and cultural history of this mercantile community in a period of sweeping change. He shows how Massawa and its citizens benefited from migrations across the Indian Ocean, the Arabian peninsula, Egypt, and the African interior. Miran also notes the changes that took place in Massawa as traders did business and eventually settled. By revealing the dynamic processes at play, this book provides insight into the development of the Horn of Africa that extends beyond borders and boundaries, nations and nationalism.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This is a rich, brilliantly researched, and intellectually ambitious book that will stimulate further research on the region.... In sum, the author must be praised for such a thorough and thought-provoking piece of research." —American Historical Review, December 2010 "Red Sea Citizens is an excellent, detailed study of this port town at the historical meeting point of the Red Sea, Arabia, the Nile Valley, and the Ethiopian plateau.... This original and thoroughly researched book breaks new ground and makes valuable contributions to a growing field."

—African Studies Review, September, 2011 Eritreans, Ethiopians, and Africans in general have often considered Massawa, Eritrea's principal port city, to be an integral part of African civilization. Not so, according to Miran (Western Washington Univ.), who attempts 'to rescue history

from the nation,' but not from the vagaries of Ottoman, Arab, Indian, and Italian merchants and adventurers, and the various imperialist powers struggling for dominance in the Red Sea area. This text is a useful microanalysis for historians in search of biographical accounts of alien residential families from regions as far as Kabul, Bombay, Yemen, Turkey, and Bosnia. Readers hear a great deal about immigrant merchant families such as the Hadramis and the al-Ghuls. For a history of the indigenous peoples of Massawa and their heroic struggle to decolonize the region, readers would have to turn to other sources. Miran's *Massawa* is rather 'inconveniently located' on the African continent, with very limited interconnections with the so-called 'African interior,' but the text involved research in Yemen, Asmara, Rome, Côte d'Ivoire, Paris, and Hamburg, and necessitated painstaking archival research in various languages. Graduate students involved in research into trading diasporas. Summing Up: Recommended. Upper-division undergraduates and above.

--ChoiceG. Emeagwali, Central Connecticut State University, June 2010"... this is an important, well-researched, and beautifully illustrated book that deserves to be widely read." Lidwien Kapteijns, Wellesley College, *Journal of African History*, Vol. 51, 2010"[This book] is a history of the (currently) Eritrean port city of Massawa, focusing on the 19th century but reaching back as far as the 1500s and moving up to the 1920s.... As a long-time lover of Massawa I have learnt a huge amount about the city from this book... that helps us understand Massawa from the perspective of Massawans." Leeds African Studies Bulletin, Winter 2010/11" After navigating through 300 pages of readable yet well documented thematic narrative supplemented with insightful anecdotes, useful maps, and a glossary, one realizes that Miran delivers on multiple levels."

International Journal of African Historical Studies, Vol. 43.1, 2010"Jonathan Miran has... produced a rich, well written and attracting book... which will surely become a must-read reference for many years to come." Aethiopica, Vol. 13 2010"This text is a useful microanalysis for historians in search of biographical accounts of alien residential families from regions as far as Kabul, Bombay, Yemen, Turkey, and Bosnia.... Recommended." Choice"[A] mature and competent expression of social history [that will be] extremely important in the context of Northeast African historiography because of its alternative approach." Jay Spaulding, Kean University"[The author] has taken an impressive first step toward a Braudelian treatment of the Red Sea as a place of cultural, geographic and socioeconomic cross-pollination." Saudi Aramco World, 2010"[This] is a fine book and should encourage similar studies of other Indian Ocean ports in the colonial period." Journal of World History, September 2011"Red Sea Citizens is a welcome addition to the literature on cultural pluralism... The book is well-written and meticulously put together..." African and Asian Studies, Vol. 9 2010"The 'global cities' of

the 19th century are increasingly coming to the attention of historians of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Jonathan Miran's study of Massawa on the Red Sea coast is a clear example of this orientation and a benchmark to which future studies will have to refer." çIntl. Journal of Middle East Studies, Vol. 42.4, 2010"[A]n original and very substantial contribution to the growing literature on the Indian Ocean world in the 19th century." çLee Cassanelli, University of Pennsylvania"[The author] deepens our understanding of...local topics [but] his major contribution lies in the links he draws with much larger historical processes....Mirançs work admirably illustrates how attention to transregional empires and larger spatial units can recast the problems that animate a field." çJames De Lorenzi, CUNY, John Jay College, Islamic Africa

Jonathan Miran is Assistant Professor of Islamic Civilization in the Department of Liberal Studies at Western Washington University.

My father is from Embaramy and mother is from Hergaigo. I was born in Eritrea, but lived all my life outside. Mr Jonathan Miran, did a fantastic work, after reading his book I started an in-depth conversation with my family members on the history of our ancestors. Mr Jonathan Miran unbiased views made the book a rear history treasure.

I got my copy via inter-library loan, and the author is a bit "I" this & "I" that, but I learned a great deal AFTER 1810. The author works in several languages.

A shallow and pedantic approach to one of my favorite subjects. I took a chance on a little known author and was disappointed. Lesson learned.

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