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Elements in the Global Middle Ages

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"ETHIOPIA" AND THE WORLD, 330–1500 CE

Yonatan Binyam

Institute for Advanced Study

Verena Krebs

Ruhr-University Bochum



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“Ethiopia” and the World, 330–1500 CE

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Yonatan Binyam
Institute for Advanced Study

Verena Krebs
Ruhr-University Bochum

Author for correspondence: Verena Krebs, verena.b.krebs@rub.de

Abstract: This Element offers an interdisciplinary introduction to the histories of the Ethiopian and Eritrean highlands from late antiquity to the late medieval period, updating traditional Western academic perspectives. Early scholarship, often by philologists and religious scholars, upheld “Ethiopia” as an isolated repository of ancient Jewish and Christian texts. This work reframes the region’s history, highlighting the political, economic, and cultural interconnections of different kingdoms, polities, and peoples. Utilizing recent advancements in Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies as well as Medieval Studies, it reevaluates key instances of contact between “Ethiopia” and the world of Afro-Eurasia, situating the histories of the Christian, Muslim, and local-religious or “pagan” groups living in the Red Sea littoral and the Ethiopian-Eritrean highlands in the context of the Global Middle Ages.

Keywords: Ethiopia, Eritrea, global medieval history, Red Sea region, transcultural history

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