

# African Research Review

---

*An International Multi-Disciplinary Journal* Vol. 3 (1), 2009  
ISSN 1994-9057 (Print) ISSN 2070-0083 (Online)

---

## **The Legend of Queen Sheba, the Solomonic Dynasty and Ethiopian History: An Analysis** (Pp. 468-482)

**Mamman Musa Adamu** - Department of History, Faculty of Education,  
Mekelle University P.O. Box 234, Tigray Region- Ethiopia.  
[mammanmusa2003@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mammanmusa2003@yahoo.co.uk) +251911572864

### **Abstract**

*The legend of Queen Sheba is undoubtedly one of the oldest legends, producing the oldest monarchy in Africa comparable, perhaps, only to the imperial dynasty in Japan or the Seifuwa dynasty in the Lake Chad basin. It is clearly one of the most accepted, believed, pervasive and resonant among all the legends of origin in Africa, today. The legend is still widely believed by the majority of Ethiopians and is reflected in their day to day daily lives. The existence of the Orthodox Tewahido church and other religious ceremonies, the presence of Beta Israel, the names of people like Makeda or Sheba and organizations such as the Sheba Miles are all testimonies to the legend living in the present Ethiopian communities. It purported to explain how the Ethiopian ruling dynasty 'the Solomonic dynasty' was descended from Solomon and through him from Abraham and the early patriarchs. The dynasty followed a succession of rulers from Yekunno- Amlak in circa 1270AD to the last emperor in the person of Haile- Selassie I who was deposed in 1974. This has lasted for a period close to a thousand years and making the dynasty to be one of the longest and oldest monarchies anywhere in the world. This paper is intended to look more closely at some of the claims made by this legend and its implication on the Ethiopian peoples, their heritage and identity. It is strongly argued that the legend is only legendary and a historical travesty. It cannot be proven historically. The*

*paper concluded by examining the political as well as the socio-economic significance of the legend in contemporary discourse.*

### **Different Versions of the Legend:**

The legend of Queen Sheba can be found in three main sources. These include the Christian Holy Bible, the Muslim Qur'an and the Ethiopian holy book- Kebra Nagast. The story has also featured in the Persian and Turkish paintings, Kabbalistic treatises and medieval Christian mystical works. The foundation of all these accounts, however, is to be found in the Bible from the book of 1 Kings 10:1-13, which is repeated almost word to word in the book of 2 Chronicles 9:1-12. The two texts described how the Queen of Sheba left her abode to visit King Solomon in Jerusalem on account of what she heard about his wisdom and great understanding. She came with so many questions to ask him and a lot of gifts of spices, gold and precious stones. The queen was able to satisfy and confirm her curiosities and concluded that she was told half of what she had seen with her own eyes. The remaining part of the text mentions her appreciation of the God that King Solomon worships and exchange of gifts by the monarchs. The queen then returned to her country. (*The Holy Bible- King James Version, Gideons International, 1977*) It is significant to note that the Bible did not mention the country she had come from or even her name or background generally.

The Islamic version has mostly retained what is contained in the biblical version except that the queen in this context went by the name Bilqis or Balkis. Similarly; the queen seemed to have gotten the story of King Solomon from a messenger bird, referred variously as a mountain-cock or hoopoe sent back to invite the queen to the court. She was also said to be overwhelmed by what she saw and ended up being converted to the worship of Allah. The Arabian legends have raised the queen's descent from demons, her hairy legs, her goats hoof as a foot and possible marriage with Solomon. (*Qur'an, trans. Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, 1977*) There is, however, no mention of where she had come from.

The Kebra Negast (The Glory of Kings) seemed to be compiled in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and draws largely from regional oral histories as well as Jewish and Islamic traditions. Queen Sheba is presented as the queen of Ethiopia and named as Makeda. She also visited King Solomon and was mesmerized at what she saw. The story, however, continues that Solomon was captivated by her beauty and decided to have a sexual relationship with her. He achieved

this by seducing her into taking a promise that she would not take anything from his house. This promise was, however, broken when the queen desired to take some water because she was served dishes full of pepper and vinegar that would make her thirst. It was through this means that King Solomon succeeded in satisfying the lust he had for the queen. The queen got pregnant as a result and gave birth to a male child some months after her return to her country in the modern day Tigray region in northern Ethiopia. The child was named Ebna Hakim or Menelik 1 and was sent to Jerusalem to see his father as an adolescent. The traditions maintained that his father was overjoyed and wanted the boy to stay so that he could become his successor but that the boy insisted on returning to his country. It was claimed that at this juncture the king confirmed his son as the future king of Ethiopia and asked some of his advisers to accompany him and assist him in his rule. The group insisted on taking along with them the Ark of the Covenant which housed the original tablets of the Ten Commandments given to Moses by God. When this was not possible, it was claimed that the group stole the Ark and brought it to Ethiopia where it was then placed at the Saint Mary's Church of Zion at Aksum in northern Ethiopia. (*Kebra Negast Tran. By Miguel Books, <http://www.angelfire.com/ny/ethiocrow>, <http://www.moonchild.ch/library/kebranegast.html>*).

The traditions concluded that on the death of Queen Sheba in the mid 10th century BCE, her only son succeeded her as Emperor Menelik 1. He founded a dynasty, the Solomonic dynasty, which would reign until Haile Selassie was overthrown in 1974. The 1955 revised constitution of Ethiopia claims the son of the Queen and Solomon to be the ancestor of present Ethiopians. On the origins of the Solomonic Dynasty, the imperial house of Ethiopia has this to say:

The origins of the imperial house of Ethiopia, also known as the Solomonic Dynasty, can be found in the Ethiopian book *Kebre Negest* (Glory of Kings). This book is often regarded as legend, but accepted as factual by many Ethiopians as well as the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church. ("[www.angelfire.com/ny/ethiocrown](http://www.angelfire.com/ny/ethiocrown))

This book was said to have been carried off to England by Napier in 1868 but the then Emperor, John IV, the successor of Theodore found that his subjects would not recognize his authority without it and so he wrote to Lord Granville to send it to him. The trustees of the British museum were said to

have granted this request and restored the book to the king. Unlike the account in the Kebra Negast, however, the Bible did not mention the details about the queen's visit to King Solomon, the alleged theft of the Holy Ark as well as Solomon getting her pregnant with a child who established the "Solomonic" lineage in Ethiopia.

### **The Contemporary Manifestations of the Legend:**

The legend of Queen Sheba and King Solomon is still revered as factual by many Ethiopians and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido church. Modern day Ethiopians believe her as the mother of their first emperor, Menelik I and the ultimate maternal ancestor and progenitor of their long- ruling Solomonic dynasty. The church claims that it originated from the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon back in the 10<sup>th</sup> century (BCE). The Ark is still kept at the Cathedral of Saint Mary's church of Zion to this day, in a special sanctuary chapel that only one guardian monk is permitted to enter. No other person has ever been allowed to see this Ark where it has been kept for centuries. The presence of the Ark cannot, therefore, be proven. But there is to date a ritualistic symbolism of carrying the Ark on the head in commemoration of how the Ark was initially brought to Aksum by Menelik I and his group. On holy days the priests circle the cathedrals, carrying a talisman of the Ark on top of their head (<http://www.appolonius.net/sheba.html>). Similarly, the existence of a Jewish sect of an unknown origin but traced to Menelik I, known as Beta Israel or Falashas in the region of Ethiopia north of Lake Tana, is another testimony of the pervasiveness of the legend. Most of these Ethiopian Jews were airlifted to Israel during the 'Operation Moses' in 1984 and 'Operation Solomon' in 1991, under the Israel's law of return of 1950. More than 90,000 or over 85 percent of them immigrated to Israel (<http://www.wikipedia/> Beta Israel). It is to be noted, however, that the claims of these people to their Jewish origin has been a controversial issue among different scholars, the Rabbis and scientists. Some notable Rabbis like Moshe Feinstein, Yosef Shalom Eliashiv and Shlomo Zaiman Auerbach have maintained that the Jewish ness of the Beta Israel was seriously suspect (*ibid*). In the same way the DNA evidence collected by Gerard Lucotte and Pierre Smots (December, 1999) was consistent with the view that the Ethiopian Jews descended from ancient inhabitants of Ethiopia who converted to Judaism (Onolemhemen, 2002). The study confirmed earlier ones done by Avshalom Zoussmann-Diskin et al,(1991). Both studies established that these people are of local (Ethiopian) origin. Modern scholars of Ethiopian history and Ethiopian Jews such as James Quirin, Steve Kaplan,

Kay Shelemay and Harold Marcus, consider the Beta Israel to be a native group of Ethiopian Christians who took on Biblical practices and came to see themselves as Jews (Paul, 2000). The Beta Israel is today facing a lot of racism and stigmatization in their adopted country and their so-called Jewishness is facing constant scrutiny (<http://www.almaya.org/content/beta/culture.htm>, Beta [Israel@Everything2.com](mailto:Israel@Everything2.com) ).

### **Who was the Queen of Sheba?**

Over the centuries, also, questions have been raised by different people or scholars over the validity and authenticity of the legend and personality of the Queen of Sheba. Such questions include: Who was the Queen of Sheba? What was her real name and background? Where was the location of her country-Sheba in the world map? Was she black or African or an Arab, Jew or some other race? Did she have a goat's hoof? Can it be proved that she had a son with King Solomon? Who were the people that she had ruled before her encounter with King Solomon? When did her son, Menelik rule over Ethiopia in the Aksumite period? Several other questions have also been asked in connection to why this legend has been kept and sustained and even enshrined in some constitution, the authorship of some of the sources like the Kebra Negast and how the birth of one person could have changed the whole identity of a people such as the Ethiopians.

The Queen of Sheba is mired in a serious identity crisis. She has continued to remain enigmatic, nebulous, elusive, and mysterious. The legend has continued to be puzzling and tantalizing, yet no sufficient evidence has been found regarding so many of the questions that have been raised. Her anonymity has been explained by modern historians of religion to indicate that she was a legendary invention and the story was written to glorify Solomon. (*Edward Ullendorf, (1973) pp 11-12*)

The question of where Sheba is located, today, has also raised some assumptions. Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian mentioned that it was in Egypt and Ethiopia. (*c.a. encarta.msn.com/sheba.html*) The Arab sources have mentioned Yemen as the likely location of Sheba called Saba. (*A.H.M. Jones and Elisabeth Munroe (1935)*).

Others, have maintained that it was a region of Southern Arabia east of Solomon's realm. (ibid) This claim seems to have been confirmed by modern

archaeological findings indicating that such regions or colonies had actually existed with South Arabian scripts showing the names of queens who reigned and artifacts relating to the lucrative trade that flourished, though, there is nothing to indicate the presence of Solomon's Queen of Sheba in particular. (<http://www.Solomon-wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.htm>).

Another explanation says that Sheba was centred in what is now Sudan and had as its capitals at Napata and later Meroe ([c.a.encarta.msn.com/sheba.html](http://c.a.encarta.msn.com/sheba.html)). Karl Mauch, the German geologist was also of the view that the remains of the Great Zimbabwe could have been the abode of Queen Sheba (Bahn, 1996) There is however no archaeological evidence to concretely establish the presence of the queen in all of these places. In the absence of any archaeological proof of where Sheba was located, it is now being speculated that it was in an area that spanned the Red Sea on the coasts of what are now Eritrea, Ethiopia and Yemen. (<http://www.Solomon-wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.htm>) But the location of Sheba is still shrouded in controversy as testified by Bill Glanzman, an archaeologist with the University of Calgary when he said 'We still know very little about the queen of Sheba. Hopefully, our excavation of the Mahram Bilqis (in present day Yemen) will answer some of our questions' ([www.ucalgary.ca/uofc/events/unicomm/Newsreleases/queenwho.htm](http://www.ucalgary.ca/uofc/events/unicomm/Newsreleases/queenwho.htm) )

The issue of whether Queen Sheba was black or Arab has attracted the attention of some scholars like Josh Bernstein, who in trying to dig for the truth, went to Yemen and Ethiopia and concluded that the queen was Arab but ruled as a queen of Ethiopia. (<http://www.hiphoprepublican.com/2006/03>)

This again is suggestive of the fact that Queen Sheba might not be a black or African woman after all, despite the extensive body of lore that developed on her in Ethiopia and as written in the Kebra Negast. The suggestion made by Michael Wood that the people of Ethiopia seems to have taken the Queen of Sheba to be their own, giving her name as Makeda and making her the founder of the Ethiopian royal house, makes some sense here. (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/cultures/sheba> ).

He was also specifically of the view that there is no primary evidence, archaeological or textual for the queen in Ethiopia and that the impressive

ruins at Aksum are a thousand years too late for a queen contemporary with Solomon at his traditional dating to the 10<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (*ibid*).

The Kebra Negast has a serious problem of authorship. A number of scholars have rightly observed that none of its manuscripts has any indication as to the identity of its compilers, the time when it was written and the circumstances under which it was compiled. (David and Thomas, 2004), (<http://www.moonchild.ch/library/kebranegast.htm> .)

Some early scholars have speculated that the book was compiled in the 14<sup>th</sup> century by Yishak and five other Tigrayan scribes. Others have noted that the Yishak's team only translated the Arabic version of a Coptic work into Geez and were not necessarily the authors (David and Thomas, *ibid*). This is certainly one of the major weaknesses of the document as a historical source material on the study of ancient Ethiopian history. It is now being speculated that the document could have been compiled soon after the restoration of the "Solomonic line of kings" from 1270 to 1285 AD. This was at the time when the Ethiopian throne was occupied by Emperor Yekuno Amlak who claimed whether truly or not to be a direct descendant of Menelik I. ( *Tadesse (1972) pp.64-68* ,<http://angelfire.com/ny/ethiocrown>.) Another fundamental anomaly with the document, Kebra Negast is that it has not mentioned the dynastic chronology of the Aksumite kings. Hence, it is still not known when Menelik I ruled and who succeeded him. The Sabaen traditions on the other hand have listed the names of the ruling kings in Southern Arabia in the present day Yemen at the time when Queen Sheba was supposed to have sat on the throne. There are records of the ancient country of Sheba, which date from 715 BCE; Sheba was sometimes called Saba and is thought to be in what is now the country of Yemen ([freemasonry.bcy.ca/texts/gmd/999/sheba](http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/texts/gmd/999/sheba)) Hence, all available evidence tended to be indicating the location of Sheba in the present day Yemen and less to Ethiopia.

### **Identity Crisis**

The implication of the legend of Queen Sheba on the people of Ethiopia could be seen in the way it has made some of them to think of themselves as descendants of the Jews, the chosen people, the guardians of the Ark of the Covenant and the heirs to the promises made to Abraham. The people see themselves as special, quite unlike the black Negroid people in other parts of Africa. (*ibid*) Some of them refer to other people from other parts of Africa as 'Blacks' or 'Africans' on their assumption that they are of a different stock or

race. It has created a very serious problem of identity so much so that some of the people have claimed to be apart from Israelites, Arabs or Greeks and some say they do not know their identity, but they are certainly not Africans. The more educated ones would accept the fact that they are Africans. (Mamman, 2007). Robert, (1998) has correctly observed that:

“the Ethiopians saw themselves as God’s chosen people maintaining Christian purity in their ‘second Israel’ imitating religious and cultural Institutions drawn from.....the Old Testament” In the end the Ethiopians came to identify themselves with the lost twelve tribes of Israel, their royal line stemming from the Union of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. P.94

The second implication is that the legend is negating on the rich cultural Ethiopian heritage as can be witnessed from some of the ancient historical sites at Aksum, Lalibela, Gonder, Yeha and several others. It is now not certain whether the architectural and artistic skills of the great granite stone curved obelisks or stelae and the stone tombs of King Ezana and King Gebre Meskel at Axum, still to be seen and still an inspiration for modern builders; the rock-hewn churches at Lalibela still standing today and now being referred to as the eighth wonder of the world and recognized by UNESCO as part of the World Cultural Heritage ( <http://www.ethiopianembassy.org>, Bahru, 1998 p. 55) and the castles of King Fasil at Gonder; were of African or Jewish or Sabaean origin. If the Judaic culture was established and followed in Ethiopia since the reign of King Menelik 1, as is being suggested in the legend of Queen Sheba, it can be inferred that these wonderful relics are also foreign and not African. It then confirms the presumption that has been made that Sabaean immigrants had played a direct and leading role in Ethiopian civilization. By extension also, the legend then serves as a local agent of the Hamitic hypothesis, that which claims that any progress and development among agricultural black communities in Africa was the result of the conquest or infiltration by outsiders (Curtin, 1995, Giblin 1995). This is tantamount to the denial of Africa of its initiative, originality, abilities and history.

The way Menelik 1 was given birth to, outside the proper wedlock system and the way the Ark of the Covenant got to Aksum have also tended to raise



issues of morality among these so-called founders of the Ethiopian ruling dynasty and their descendants.

Lastly, all these are happening at a time when Ethiopia is being seen to be the political home of Africa on account of Haile Selassie's role in the formation of the Organization of African Unity, now African Union in 1963, as well as the citing of the headquarters at Addis Abeba. While Africans all over the world are proud of this ancient country that is seen to be the epitome of African civilization and the symbol of freedom, the legend of the Queen of Sheba is portraying the fact that, the Ethiopian ruling house and by implication Ethiopians as a whole, are actually not Africans but ancestors of the Jews, the Israelites. It is also antithetical at a time when available archaeological evidence is increasingly pointing to Africa and Ethiopia as being the cradle of man. It should be noted that the earliest human ancestors were discovered in Ethiopia dating back to 5.8 million years ago. ([www.ethiopianembassy.org/history.shtml](http://www.ethiopianembassy.org/history.shtml)) The latest discovery of another human fossil that has been named 'Selam' has given an earlier date for human existence than the one given by the fossil named as Lucy which was discovered in 1974 and dated to 3.2 million years back. Selam has been dated back to 3.3 million years ago and has been said to be the most complete example of a hominid skeleton throughout the world. ([www.unexplainable.net/artman/publish/other](http://www.unexplainable.net/artman/publish/other), [www.archaeology.org/0701/abstracts/evolution.html](http://www.archaeology.org/0701/abstracts/evolution.html), [www.themoneytimes.com/articles](http://www.themoneytimes.com/articles))

### **The Significance of the Legend:**

While the legend of Solomon and Queen Sheba can be out rightly dismissed as being baseless and ahistorical in relation to the founding of the imperial ruling house of Ethiopia, the emergence and perpetuation of the legend was meant to serve some purposes or protect some interests. In the first place, it is being deduced that the Kebra Negast was actually produced to principally justify, legitimize and glorify the so-called Solomonic dynasty after the overthrow of the Zagwe dynasty of Agaw descent. Some parts of the content of the book emphasized that there should be no more queens in Ethiopia but only a man would reign who was of Solomon's descent. According to Robertino Solarion, the creation of the document was motivated by the desire of the Abyssinian royal house to assert their divine right to the throne by tracing their descent to Solomon and by making him anoint the first king of their line with the holy kinship and attributing to him the Salic law of

Ethiopia. He was of the view that, all these were for the purpose of investing in themselves the aura of divinity that would make any revolt against them a sacrilege. ([www.appoloniuss.net/sheba.html](http://www.appoloniuss.net/sheba.html)) As cousins of Christ no one was expected to rise against them or question their authority and the right to rule in perpetuity. This claim by the imperial family of Ethiopia to have its origin directly from the offspring of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba could be seen in the way the last emperor, Emperor Haile Selassie entrenched it in the Ethiopian constitution of 1955. Article 2 of this constitution says inter alia:

“The imperial dignity shall remain perpetually attached to the line of Haile Selassie I, descendant of King Sahle Selassie, whose line descends without interruption from the dynasty of Menelik I, son of the Queen of Ethiopia, the Queen of Sheba, and King Solomon of Jerusalem.” (<http://www.angelfire.com/ny/ethiocrown>)

Article 4 also proceeds in the same direction as thus:

“By virtue of his imperial Blood, as well as by the anointing which he has received, the person of the Emperor is sacred, His dignity is inviolable and His powers indisputable. He is consequently entitled to all the honors due to him in accordance with tradition and the present constitution. Any one so bold as to seek to injure the Emperor will be punished.” (*ibid*)

Up to the time of his overthrow in 1974, the official title of Haile Sellasie was, ‘His Imperial Majesty Ras Tafari Makonnen Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia, Elect of God, King of Kings, Lion of Judah.’ ([www.appoloniuss.net/sheba.html-legacy\\_of\\_the\\_queen\\_of\\_the\\_south.htm](http://www.appoloniuss.net/sheba.html-legacy_of_the_queen_of_the_south.htm)) Scholars like Bahru Zewde and John Illife have both argued that the longevity of the ‘Solomonic dynasty’ could be partly attributed to the sustenance and perpetuation of this legend by the ruling house.

Bahru, (1998) has noted that though the legend was legendary, it was very powerful and generally accepted at the time and even later and the whole legitimacy of state power came to be based on it. He further added that all Ethiopian monarchs, whatever their regional or ethnic origins, claimed descent from the family of Yekuno Amlak (Pp.57-58). This was because they wanted to obtain the same legitimacy of being in power. Illife, (1995) also

noted that Yekuno Amlak and his successors ruled partly by right of Solomonic blood but chiefly by force of arms.

The legend of Queen Sheba could also be taken to be indicating the socio-economic influence of not only the Jews but the entire Arabian coastal lands on the people and societies of Ethiopia. Christianity seemed to have been introduced into the region by Frumentius who was consecrated the first bishop of Ethiopia by Saint Athanasius of Alexandria in about 330AD. From the scanty evidence available it would appear that the new religion at first made little progress. Towards the close of the 5th century, however, a great company of monks are believed to have established themselves in the country. Since that time, monasticism has been a power among the people to date. It was also used effectively by the rulers to unite the people together ([www.historyofnation.net/africa/ethiopia.html](http://www.historyofnation.net/africa/ethiopia.html)). The establishment of what became the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was also critical in moulding the people's culture and identity and makes them feel that they are more of Israelites than Africans or blacks. This fact could be seen in the presence of some Hebrew religious words, such as words for Hell, Idol, Easter, Purification and alms in the Abyssinian Semitic languages which are all of Hebrew origin derived from a Jewish source. Both the indigenous languages of Southern Arabia and the Amharic and Tigrinya languages of Ethiopia are also of the same root. They are all South Semitic languages, which further confirm the cultural contact that existed for many centuries. Archaeological evidence has also shown the presence of Arabian and Jewish settlements and their cultural influence on both sides of the Red Sea about 2,500 years ago, along the Arabian coast and in Yemen on the eastern side and along the Southern Egyptian and Sudanese coastal regions (Shillington, 1995, pp68-71, Stuart, 1991, p57, Pankhurst, 2003 p. 57). The legend, further, shows the economic relations that developed from the time of King Solomon, along the Red Sea to the Yemen and as far as India. Trade would have been one of the major links between the two civilizations starting probably from the founding of the empire of Aksum in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. or even before that period. The empire was able to maintain trading relations both with the Greek-Roman world and with India and China during its most prosperous times ([spaansen@wanadoo.nl](mailto:spaansen@wanadoo.nl).) Greek traders knew Aksum as centre of an empire which had trade links with India, Arabia, Rome, Persia and Greece. Mani, the Persian religious figure, has listed Aksum with Rome, Persia and China as one of the four great powers of his time. (Stuart Munro, (opcit) pp. 22-23) This trade was mainly lucrative in Myrrh and frankincense and trade

routes linked the empire via caravan to the west as well as the south to the port of Adulis, that is to Baghdad and Gaza and to Alexandria, west of Jerusalem. (*Nigel Groom, Trade, Incense and Perfume- Chapter 6*) Many historians believe that Queen Sheba's visit to King Solomon, wherever she was from, was probably a trade mission with the queen trying to ensure her kingdom's lucrative trade in frankincense and myrrh continued unhindered by Solomon's armies. ([www.ucalgary.ca/uofc/events/unicomm/newsreleases/queenwho.htm](http://www.ucalgary.ca/uofc/events/unicomm/newsreleases/queenwho.htm)) It is also speculated that the gifts exchanged with Solomon were meant to open up trade relations between the two regions. ([freemasonry.bcy.ca/texts/gmd/999/sheba.html](http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/texts/gmd/999/sheba.html))

The point should be made, however, that despite these cultural exchanges between Aksum and the Arabian peninsula, there are no scholarly grounds for the common belief that South Arabian immigrants actually peopled and created Aksum, even if many of them visited or came to live there. Nevertheless, it was this ancient cultural exchange across the Red Sea that became enshrined in the Ethiopian legend of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon. (Edward Ullendorf, *opcit.*) Lastly, the legend also attests to the role of women in Ethiopian history and life generally. This role was not a minor one as is clearly indicated in the person of the Queen of Sheba. Rita Pankhurst has argued in support of this premise that:

While we have no concrete evidence of the existence of the queen of Sheba, it is important to note that at least in the mythical tradition, the women of Ethiopia could have access to enormous wealth and power. Perhaps this myth is reflective of the very real possibility of the status of women in ancient Ethiopian society. ([kensey.schema.ca/GWH-Lecture 5b.htm](http://kensey.schema.ca/GWH-Lecture%205b.htm))

The legend debunks the popular dictum of seeing the role of women as just being in the domestic sphere or in the kitchen. Here was a woman who succeeded in such a powerful way that three major world religions still remember her. ([www.csmonitor.com-2007](http://www.csmonitor.com-2007)). It is significant to note that the Arabian documents have portrayed all of Arabia as matriarchal and ruled by queens for over 1000 years. This was not unusual as women played a large role in government especially in the Near East where there is evidence of their prominence in economics, the family and religion ([www.freemasonry.bcy.ca/texts/gmd/999/sheba](http://www.freemasonry.bcy.ca/texts/gmd/999/sheba)).

### **Conclusion:**

The claims of the legend of Queen Sheba do not help us to concretely understand the foundation of the Ethiopian ruling house because it cannot be proven historically. The legend seemed to have been used to legitimize the claims by the ruling house to be descendants of Abraham, the chosen people, in order to remain in power in perpetuity. This has affected the identity of the ruling house and the entire people of Ethiopia, their heritage, political standing in Africa as well as their being the probable evolutionary home of the whole of mankind. But while the claims of the legend are preposterous, it has been argued that if not for anything, the legend goes on to show the influence of the Arabian and Jewish culture on the people dating back to the 8th or 7th centuries BCE.

### **References**

- Avshalom Zousmann- Disken et al. (1991). Genetic Affinities of Ethiopian Jews, *Israel Journal of Medical Sciences*, 27: 245
- Bahn, Paul G. (Ed.) (1996) *Archaeology*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Bahru Zewde (1991) *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1974*, Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press.
- Brief History of the Kebra Negast . Retrieved on April 5, 2007 from <http://www.moonchild.ch/library/kebranegast.html>
- Clapp Nicholas (2001). *Sheba: Through the Desert in Search of the Legendary Queen, USA*: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Curtin, Philip (1995). *African History*. London: Longman Press.
- David H. Shinn, Thomas P. Ofcansky (2004). *Historical Dictionary of Ethiopia*, Oxford, London: The Scarecrow Press.
- Embassy of Ethiopia, Washington DC. Accessed on 28th March, 2007 from <http://www.ethiopianembassy.org/history.shtml>
- Ethiopian Airlines- Shebamiles Accessed: 28th March, 2007 from [www.Ethiopianairlines.com/shebamiles/default.asp](http://www.Ethiopianairlines.com/shebamiles/default.asp)
- Ethiopia's Felasha Village and Beth Israel, Retrieved on 30th April, 2007 from [www.africaata.org/contents](http://www.africaata.org/contents); <http://www.wikipedia/BetaIsrael> <http://www.BetaIsrael@Everything.com>
- Ethiopian History 500BC 1857.htm (2003). Accessed: 29th March, 2007 from <http://www.spaansen@wanadoo.nl> .
- Ethiopian Treasures - Queen of Sheba, Aksumite Kingdom (2007) Retrieved on 29th March, 2007 from [www.csmonitor.com](http://www.csmonitor.com)

- Giblin, James (1999). *Diffusion and Other Problems in the History of African States*. Department of History, University of Iowa, 7th March, Global Women's History- Retrieved on 9th May, 2007 from <http://www.kenseyschema.ca/GWH- Lecture 5b.htm>.
- Hansberry William Leo (1974). *Pillars in Ethiopian History*. USA: Horward University Press.
- Henze, Paul B. (2000). *Layers of Time*. London: Palgrave Publishers.
- Hip Hop Republican: Was the Queen of Sheba black? Accessed: 1st April, 2007 from <http://www.hiphoprepublican.com/2006/03>.
- History of Ethiopia ( No date) Retrieved on 1st April, 2007 from <http://www.historyofnation.net/africa.ethiopia.html>
- Illife, John (1995) *Africans. The History of a Continent*, Cambridge University Press.
- Imperial Ethiopia Homepage <http://www.angelfire.com/ny/ethiocrown>  
Accessed: 3rd April, 2007
- Juvenile Skeleton Enlightens Human Evolution (No date)  
<http://www.themoneytimes.com/articles> Accessed on 3rd April, 2007.
- Jones, A.H.M. and Elizabeth Munroe (1935). *A History of Ethiopia*, London: Oxford.
- Kevin Shillington (1994). *History of Africa*, London: Macmillan Press.
- Lucotte, Gerard and Pierre Smuts (1999). The Distinctiveness of the Y-Chromosome Haplotype Distribution of Beta Israel Jew from Conventional Jewish Populations. *Human Biology*, Vol. 71, Dec. pp989-993.
- Mamman Musa Adamu(2007). "The Challenges of African Identity: A Case Study of the Tigray Region in Northern Ethiopia", Paper Presented at the 7th Association of Third World Studies Conference: Kenya Chapter, held at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, 16th-18th May.
- Megalommatis, Mohammed K. P., "Yemen's Past and Perspectives are in Africa, not a fictitious Arab World.
- Miquel F. Brook trans. (1996). *Kebra Negast*. London: The Red Sea Press, Inc.
- Muhammad Zafrulla Khan trans. (1996) USA: Qur'an Interlink Publishing Group-Olive Branch Press.
- Onolemhemhen Durenda Nash (2002). *The Black Jews of Ethiopia*, Oxford: Scarecrow Press.

- Pankhurst, Richard K.P. (2003). "Let's Look Across the Red Sea 1", *Addis Tribune*, January, 17, 2003.
- Queen of Sheba <http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethiopia/History>  
Accessed: 12th February, 2008
- Robert W. July (1998). *A History of the African People*. USA: Wave Land Press.
- Robertino Solarion (2005). Legacy of the Queen of South Sheba. Retrieved on April 10, 2007 from <http://www.apollonius.net/sheba> Accessed: 8th April, 2007.
- Sheba. Retrieved on April 10, 2007 from <http://ca.encyarta.msn.com/encyclopedia>
- Sheba, *Highbeam Encyclopedia* <http://www.encyclopedia.com>  
Accessed: 30th April, 2007.
- Stuart Munro-Hay, Aksum (1991) *An African Civilization of Late Antiquity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Tadesse Tamrat (1972). *Church and State in Ethiopia, 1270-1527*. London: Oxford University Press.
- The Holy Bible, (King James Version)*, Gideons International, 1977.
- The Queen of Sheba's visit to King Solomon. Retrieved on 9th May, 2007 from <http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/texts/gmd/999/sheba.html>
- 3.3 Million- Year Old Human Remains Found in Ethiopia <http://www.unexplainable.net/artman> Accessed: 9th May, 2007.
- Ullendorf, Edward (1991). *The Ethiopians: An Introduction to Country and People*, Oxford: University Press for the British Academy.
- Who was the Queen of Sheba? <http://www.ucalgary.ca/uofc/events/unicomm>  
Accessed: 5th May, 2007
- Wood, Michael (2007). The Queen of Sheba" <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/cultures/sheba> Accessed: 26th January, 2007
- Zeresenay Alemseged, The New Face of Evolution <http://www.archaeology.org/0701/abstracts/evolution.html>  
Accessed: 5th May, 2007