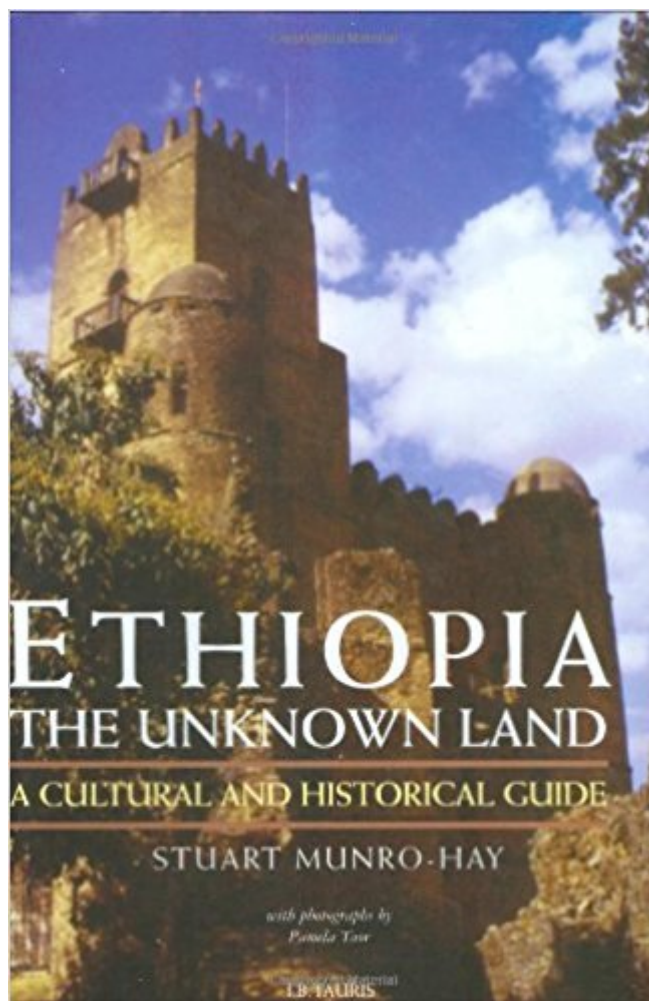


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# Ethiopia, The Unknown Land: A Cultural And Historical Guide



## Synopsis

A result of a lifetime's study of the mysterious country, this book is the first truly comprehensive work on the monuments and art of Ethiopia, as well as a literary companion to its land and history. Stuart Munro-Hay provides a valuable guide to the country's architecture, geography, peoples, art, and history which covers all the major sites of the land from ancient times to the present.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Munro-Hay (*Aksum: An African Civilization of Late Antiquity; Ethiopia and Alexandria*) is a leading Western authority on Ethiopian history and culture. In his latest book, he fills an existing void by providing a much-needed comprehensive guide to the history, culture, and art of that ancient and mythical African nation. Regions, historic sites, monuments, and various religious and cultural treasures are introduced with background histories that clarify their place and reinforce their significance in Ethiopian history and life. Such information, a wealthy resource for any historian, may also be used by travelers to the region. The balance between popular and academic is masterfully achieved through a personable style that does not sacrifice the required rigors of historical research even as it remains entertaining throughout. An exciting and informative reading for larger public library audiences, this book also musters enough intellectual authority and historical detail to earn it a place on the shelves of any academic library as well. Edward K. Owusu-Ansah, CUNY Coll. of Staten Island Lib., New York

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""Dr. Munro-Hay is a scholar of distinction. His work, always readable, delves deeply into all aspects of Ethiopia's ancient history. It can be read with profit alike by the scholar, the ordinary reader, and the tourist intent on unraveling the mysteries of the beautiful Ethiopian wonderland."" --Richard Pankhurst, Director Emeritus, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa""Munro Hay is one of the foremost academic authorities of the region's history and culture...""--African Business""This is a highly interesting book, providing a valuable and up-to-date account of the state of knowledge concerning all the major sites of the country."" --Dr. Patrick Gilkes, journalist and author of A Modern History of Ethiopia

Outstanding information especially after visiting Ethiopia.

We know very little about this country, this ex-Abyssinia that has remained estranged from the outside world for a long time. Read this book to learn really a lot about this only country in Africa that did not get colonized. Its history is more than rich, amazing and surprising. The people are marvellous.

Was a gift. Not as in depth about the country as I would have liked, but just about all that was available out there. Also, was for a Christmas gift and paid expedited shipping but did not arrive on scheduled date. did refund shipping cost.

Although not a "tourist guide" this book is a handy reference for anyone with interest in this land. Munro-Hay's subtitle: The Unknown Land provides a clue to the problem he faced in summarizing the history and culture of this ancient country. Known to early Christians as the land of "Prester John," Ethiopia's nearly landlocked location and rugged terrain has made it a challenge to scholars for millennia. Munro-Hay makes an earnest effort to enlighten us on many aspects of Ethiopian history and culture. Rather than provide a surface overview, he divides the country into regions based on ancient kingdoms. It's an effective means of organizing the complex store of research he's brought to the task. After an opening overview of Ethiopian history, the author provides a survey of the role of the Church in the society. For Ethiopia, this element cannot be overstated. Churches and their rituals are a fundamental part of Ethiopia life. He details the structure of church hierarchy and the roles assigned the various officers. Rituals and other aspects such as religious art are also described. Munro-Hay then gives a brief survey of the foreigners who entered the country, evaluating their published accounts. Foreign impact played a major role in how Ethiopia came to be

a modern nation, with Portuguese, Arabs and others providing architectural expertise, trade and political developments. Some lasting impact of the Italian invasion in this century is added. The theme of this book relates the histories of ten important regions making up historical Ethiopia and into modern times. While all had their impact, three are of particular import. Gondar, situated near Lake Tana, was considered to be ruled by descendants of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Munro-Hay sees the political patterns set in ancient Gondar to carry through Ethiopia history until modern times. The heritage was so important that even usurpers found ways of establishing legitimacy by claiming descent from those origins. Munro-Hay provides diagrams of ancient Gondar and vivid descriptions of what remains from a glorious imperial city. Next in significance is the ancient site of Aksum. Certainly, as Munro-Hay notes, it's of vital archaeological importance and worth any visitor's time and effort. Well north of Addis Ababa and on the way to the Red Sea, Aksum nearly disappeared until extensive excavations during the 1970s revealed its importance. The remnants of the city are dotted with numerous stone stelae, possibly inspired by similar constructions in Egypt, Ethiopia's neighbour. Munro-Hay conducts us on a tour of these and other historical sites in a compelling chapter. As a participant in some of the exploratory work, the author is well-suited to describe what has been revealed. He does so with verve and close detail. In his Forward, Munro-Hay reminds us that at the time of writing, Ethiopia had provided the oldest representative of our ancestry, Don Johanson's "Australopithecus afarensis," the 3.6 million-year old "Lucy." It's somewhat of a surprise that Ethiopia's other prehistory doesn't emerge for another 350 pages. In Yeha, "the beginnings of Ethiopian civilization are rooted," including the distinctive script still in use. Close to the Red Sea, Yeha appears to have adopted Semitic languages and religious artefacts from its Arabic neighbours. Pre-Christian temples and other buildings may still be seen there. Munro-Hay is an acknowledged leader in the study of Ethiopia. This book is a monument to his scholarship. Rich in detail and presenting both ancient and modern aspects of Ethiopian life, it provides excellent resource material for anyone wishing to pursue the topic. At less than 400 pages, the book is also a worthwhile companion to the traveler. Clearly written and beautifully organized for both scholar and tourist, this book will remain useful for some time.

I purchased this book because I was looking for an in-depth study of Ethiopian culture, both past and present. However, it soon became apparent that the book's subtitle "A Cultural and Historical Guide" was somewhat misleading. Rather, Mr. Munro-Hay provides a detailed and scholarly analysis of Ethiopian historical sites. The publisher would have been well-advised to use the subtitle "An Archaeological Survey" instead. If that is what you're looking for, then this book is ideal. But if

you want information on contemporary Ethiopian culture, it would be best to look elsewhere.

The author shows little respect for Ethiopians in General, numerous instances he describes Ethiopians artifacts as "meager", "dingy" etc. This is unacceptable in my opinion because if your going to write about a place then at least be respectful of the place and the people, the author shows little respect for the overall Culture. Ethiopia has been through many violent episodes in the past so if little fragments of history survive in a tarnished manner take account of the fact that wars are usually unkind to places where wars were fought. I read the intro and noticed the author focused on the Names Aksum which is correct towards one of the ancient name of Ethiopia, also correctly naming Kush a neighboring country north of Ethiopia that impressed me so I bought the book anticipating some quality information. After receiving and reading the first 15 pages the author begins to show his unenthusiastic attitude for Ethiopian History which turned off this reader so I returned my copy and will continue searching for quality unbiased information for Ethiopia.

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