

Djibouti Recommended Reading List

“...The bones of the past are here, visible in evening streets.

The laurels weep for their Daphne,

Apollo is off chasing skirts in Abyssinia.

Go, drop anchor further away. Leave the Eritrean Sea
for better skies.

The bard equipped with a sword tells you:
my land is poor, there is nothing for sale.

Black gold, rare wood, azure pearls?

Nothing but wind, migratory winds
mirages of water and dreams of herds...”

Excerpt from “Yesterday’s Tales,” a poem about Djibouti by Abdourahman Waberi

History

- *Djibouti and the Horn of Africa*, Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, 1968
 - This book provides a detailed historical, political, and social analysis of Djibouti and the broader Horn of Africa region. It examines the colonial legacy, ethnic dynamics, and geopolitical importance of the area, offering an in-depth understanding of the region's challenges and developments during the mid-20th century.
- *Djibouti: A Political History*, Samson Abebe Bezabeh, 10 July 2023
 - This political history traces the evolution of Djibouti since its independence in 1977. Bezabeh examines the internal and external factors that shape the country's political dynamics. The book explores the challenges of ethnic fragmentation, the impact of foreign military bases, and the legacy of the civil war in the 1990s. It critiques the political system dominated by elite power-sharing, which has often failed to meet the needs of the general population.
- *Futuh Al-Habasha: The Conquest of Abyssinia*, Sihab ad-Din Ahmad bin Abd al-Qader bin Salem bin Utman, 1 September 2003
 - This history claims to provide an eyewitness account of the sixteenth-century jihad led by Imam Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi, also known as Ahmad Gran ("The Left-Handed"), in Ethiopia. Chronicling the period from 1529 to 1543, the

book captures the dramatic and pivotal conflict between the Christian Ethiopian Empire and the Muslim Adal Sultanate, which contained parts of modern-day Djibouti. Imam Ahmad's forces, composed of Somali, Harari, Afar, and Arab troops, nearly eradicated the Christian Ethiopian Empire, with widespread conversions to Islam and the conquest of significant portions of Ethiopian territory.

- *The Routledge Handbook of the Horn of Africa*, Edited by Jean-Nicolas Bach, 2022
 - This interdisciplinary handbook provides a comprehensive survey of the Horn of Africa, covering key themes such as authoritarianism, migration, economic integration, and the politics of religion. It explores political and security innovations, including ethnic federalism in Ethiopia, Somali Islamic Courts, and Sudanese Islamist regimes. For Djibouti, the book offers critical insight into the region's strategic importance, demographic growth, and security challenges. It is essential for understanding Djibouti's role in regional stability and its connections with neighboring countries. Given Djibouti's central position in the Horn of Africa, this work provides important context for understanding the political, economic, and security dynamics that affect the country. Djibouti's strategic importance, particularly in relation to the Suez Canal and the growing geopolitical competition, is addressed throughout the text.

Religion

- *The Quran*, traditionally regarded as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad by Allah between 610-632 CE
 - The Quran, Islam's holiest text, serves as the foundation for the spiritual, ethical, and cultural life of Djibouti, where over 94% of the population is Muslim. Comprising 114 chapters (surahs), it provides guidance on all aspects of life, including morality, law, and personal conduct. Understanding the Quran is essential for anyone visiting Djibouti, as it offers insight into the religious practices and values that shape daily life, from prayer rituals to the observance of Islamic holidays like Ramadan and Eid.
- *Islam in Africa*, by John H. Hanson, 29 October 2013
 - This work offers a comprehensive overview of Islam's historical and contemporary development across Africa, emphasizing the cultural, political, and religious dynamics that have shaped Muslim communities on the continent. This

book offers critical insight into the historical spread of Islam across East Africa and provides context for Djibouti's current political and religious landscape.

- in modern China, detailing the revival of spiritual practices and their impact on Chinese society
- *The History of Islam in Africa*, Edited by Nehemia Levtzion 31 March 2000
 - This book provides a detailed mapping of Islam's 14-century presence across Africa, highlighting its cultural, political, and religious influence. The volume offers an in-depth look at the spread of Islam in West Africa, the Sudanic zone, and subequatorial Africa, with chapters written by leading experts in African Islam. It highlights key themes like Islam's integration with African societies and its impact on governance and trade networks. For Djibouti, it provides essential context on how Islam shaped local governance and its relationship to the wider Islamic world.

Poetry and Fiction

- *Djibouti*, Elmore Leonard, 29 September 2011
 - A fictional novel about modern-day piracy, Elmore Leonard blends wit and suspense with a diverse cast of characters. Documentary filmmaker Dara Barr travels to Djibouti to tackle piracy but uncovers a web of intrigue involving a pirate commander, a shady diplomat, a playboy, and an ambitious terrorist. The story explores the dangerous and unpredictable world of the Horn of Africa through Leonard's trademark storytelling style.
- Abdourahman A. Waberi, an unofficial poet laureate of Djibouti, is a renowned writer and academic from Djibouti. His works explore themes of exile, identity, and the political dynamics of the Horn of Africa. His writing blends various genres, including political thriller, poetry, and travel narrative, often reflecting on the complexities of his homeland and the broader African diaspora. Waberi's work has been translated into numerous languages, and he has received several literary honors, including the Grand Prix Littéraire d'Afrique Noire.
 - *Passage of Tears*
 - In *Passage of Tears*, Waberi tells the story of Djibril, a Djiboutian exile in Montreal who returns to his homeland to complete a report for an American economic firm. Through a mix of genres—spy novel, political thriller, and personal diary—the novel critiques Muslim fundamentalism and reflects on Djibouti's past and its people's struggles.

- *The Nomads, My Brothers, Go Out to Drink from the Big Dipper*
 - Waberi's poetry collection presents vivid, passionate depictions of Djibouti's desert landscape and the pains of exile. The poems are a powerful response to East Africa's civil wars, offering a call for peace while intertwining reflections on Islamic extremism and a tribute to Jewish writer Edmond Jabès.
- *The Land without Shadows*
 - *The Land without Shadows* is a collection of seventeen short stories that portray Djiboutians from their own perspective, offering a nuanced view of the country's history and culture. Drawing on Djiboutian oral traditions and global literary references, Waberi weaves tales that reflect Djibouti's precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial experiences.