

## [HararianForum] Harar Review/ The pearls of Harar

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It was Ustadh Abdurahman Gutu who introduced me to the religious precepts of Shaikh Abdullahi Al-habashi some years ago. I believe that Abdurahman Gutu was one of the earliest and , perhaps, the most passionate advocates of Shaikh Abdullah Al-Harari and his Islamic teachings in Harar. He distributed magazines, booklets and books published by the Association of Islamic Charitable Projects based in Beirut , Lebanon . Even though my critics on and resistance to accept some of the Islamic practises and teachings of his "Gemeyaa" irritated him, he kept me as good friend and supplied me with so many Islamic materials that he thought would be good for my spiritual development. In my recent visit he supplied me with 16GB electronic Islamic materials that i have yet to read and digest.

Abdurahman Gutu is a good friend mine. I have known him since my elementary school days at Harar Abadir School. I still have vivid memory of him as being a down-to-earth, calm and articulated classmate whom every one of us wished we were his best friends. He always wore neat clothes; and came to school with some fancy pencils, pens and exercise books to the class. He was very good in drawing pictures and paintings. Abdurahman comes from a decent and humble family with inclination to learn and Prentice Islam. I guess that it is these attitudes and family backgrounds that won him quickly the love, praise and respect of many people who saw in him the best exemplary characters . He is confident, independent and to the point.

He studied Islam under the guidance of Shaikh Abdurahman Tebalali, Shaikh Ahmed Abdullahi, Shaikh Mohammed Yunis, Shaikh Abdurahman Khaya, Shaikh Abdulkarim, Shaikh Ahmed Duaali, kebir Abdulwadud, etc, and travelled a lot in search, appreciation and understanding the spirit of Islam. He distributed Islamic materials, taught Islam, provided community services and designed the logo and flag of the Harari National League (HNL). Simply put, Ustadh Abdurahman Gutu is the pearl of Hararis.

His habit of carrying responsibility is quiet astonishing.

As soon as he heard that I am in Harar, he made the first call that I received in Harar.

&ldquo;Hello, Asselamu Alaikum Maneeli,&rdquo; I asked.

&ldquo;Walaikum u-salam. This is Abduraham Gutun. Where are you?&rdquo; he asked. &ldquo; come over and let us have a coffee. We might not see other again because I might be leaving tonight&rdquo;

I met him at his stationary store just happened to be mid way between the office of Awe Basha Birign and the Ahbashi centre in Feres Megalla street.. I thought that it can not be by chance that the store of this Harari person is sandwiched between &ldquo;Al-wahabiyya and Al-ahbashi Centres in Harar&rdquo;. It is as if he is there to mediate between the two.

&ldquo;What has been happening with you, Ya Abdurahamn?&rdquo; I asked while we sat down around the table in one of the coffee shop across street. &ldquo;I heard that you have become a Wahabi, Hisbutahrir and Ikhwan Muslimin. Is that true?&rdquo;

&ldquo;Ya Salah, I am the same Abdurahman you have known. I did not change a bit. I am the same Abdurahma who is direct and straight. But there are few individuals who put so many more unnecessary and unsubstantiated allegations against me. What can you say, Ya, Salah, except waiting for what comes next.&rdquo;

I looked at him in the eyes and felt very sorry for him.

I have never known anyone in Harar who is more knowledgeable, focused, orderly and enthusiastic than Abdurahman Gutu to promote &ldquo;Al-Ahbashy&rdquo; and fight against &ldquo;Wahabiyya&rdquo; interpretations of Islam in Harar with all the resources at his disposal. Unfortunately, his efforts has been watered down by the very people whom he had sacrificed his resources for educating and nurturing them. His suggestions for changes in the strategies for communicating Deen and minimising religious conflicts and tensions were taken advantage of by self centred individuals seeking personal gains and presenting themselves as better candidates for the position and respect he has gained in the Harari community in Harar. Consequently, he set himself aside but that was actually the begining of character assassination, insults and unsubstantiated allegations against the good character of Abdurahman.

His gentle nature, tolerance and non-confrontational approaches made him retire to Addis Ababa for some years. But the love of his birth place, Harar, the birth place of his shaikhs and mentors won him back again. I have had much of him this time. Abduraham, as i see him, is neither Saudi nor Lebanese but Harari. He is neither Wahabiyyee nor Ahbshi but

sincere Muslim. He established a wonderful group of Islamic Gemma based on the traditional Harari cultural practises combining the teaching of Quran, Hadith, Siratul Rashul, Haytu sahib, Salatul Nabee, etc.  
Oh, youth of Harar!

What else do you need other than this in Islamr?

You will find the closest Islamic precepts and practices in the personalities of Ustadh Abduraham Gutu and the teaching of Shaikh Ahmed Abdullahi. "Oh, the youth of Harar, if i could I am more than happy to passed to you all the knowledge I have like a file or a book. There is no more left in my age and getting older and weaker by the day. Please learn Quran. If you do so you will need nothing more and you will very safe," said Shaikh Ahmed, to the row youth and audiences around him in one of the lectures he delived in month of Ramadan at the Grand Mosque in Harar while tears flowing on his cheeks. We all bent our heads down as he was unable to speak more as he was weeping.

Shaikh Ahmed is our Abdullah Ibn Makhtum of Harar. He is physically blind, but his inner light is astonishing. He is wise and a great scholar of Islam. He is a Hafiz, Mufasir, Muhadith, etc. His knowledges of the comtemporary science be it embryology, physiology, astrology, every-ology and linking them to the teaching of the Holy Quran are unparelled. Do we need other than this great scholar Islam to teach us about Islam in Harar?

Oh youth of Harar. I plead to you to stick to these individuals. They care about you and your safty. You will enjoy Islam, the religion of peace and tranquillity.

Is there anyone comparable to Ustad Abdurahman Gutu and Shaikh Ahmed Abdulahi in Harar in practicing Islam in Harar?

At the time of my arrival to Harar, religious tensions have been very intense. On one hand, Christianity has been preached 24X7 from the five monumental orthodox churches with huge loud speakers you can hear from every corner of the city. They all talk about "Hope" and the hope of coming back to power or the second coming of Jesus no one knows. But the experience is deafening; and no one can get enough sleep at night particularly in Jugal. Apparently, the Harari government is helpless in controlling these acts of public disturbance. I believe that most of the people living close by the churches and those attending the sermons regularly will eventually be complaining about hearing difficulties.

I visited the churches at few days interval. TekleHamanot church overlooking the city of Harar from Aw Hakim Mountain is the most magnificent of all. I think you have to visit them when you have time because they are beautifully designed and were built on the financial contributions of your fathers and grandfathers too. We have stake in all churches in Harar in particular the Medhanialem Church standing in centre of Gugal. I sent invitations to head priests of the churches to chat with them about my concerns but they honourably declined to accept my invitations.

Here is an offer to Harari youths in Harar.

I will be paying \$50 for one Harari youth who can provide me with the best descriptions and historical backgrounds of the five churches in Harar. You may send your answers not more than a page long for each church through my email address: skhairo@yahoo.com.au

On the other hand, in the Islamic front, the Wahabbiyaa is getting a firm grip and control over the Islamic practices and communities in the country side of Harar. Ahabshis, however, fiercely but systematically struggling to get control over isamic centres and schools in Harar with the spiritual guidance of Shaikh Abdurahman Tebalali, three Lebanese missionaries; Azamul Harari, the head of supreme Islamic Council for Harari State and Anwarul Harari, the chair person for Islamic centers in Harar. So far they have managed to chase out rebels and gotten control of Aw Abdall, Khazir Abogne, and Aw Berqa mosques but trying to get control of Islamic activities at the Grand mosque and other smaller mosques inside the Gugal. The struggle and antagonism between the Islamic factions are quiet visible from the types of discussions being held at private meetings, local gatherings and religious sermons.

On my first Friday prayer at the Grand Mosque, one of the teenager ahbashi recruits ascended to the pulpit just before prayer time by interrupting the traditional Salatul Nabbee and Duaa processions and started delivering a controversial sermon:

He advices the audience " if you are asked as to where is Allah? tell them that Allah was there when there were nothing except Him", and then carried on discussing the his thoughts on dimensions, space and time before ending by criticising and cursing those who say this or that and then labelling them as "Kafirs"

Consquently, chaos and unexpected rage irrputed in the Grand mosque.

To be continued... ..