

Hidden inside Addis Ababa's current fabric, Menelik's town still exists. Addis Ababa represents a remarkable exception among the African capitals. The short Italian colonisation has only partially altered the peculiar evolution of its urban structures and this allows reading the city's astonishing history and exceptional architecture through its old buildings and the paths linking them. These beautiful buildings still survive, largely unknown, scattered in different districts and far away from each other, often hidden by enclosing walls, by other houses or big trees. The authors identified and described 134 of these buildings, in addition to those existing inside the old Imperial compound. In this way, they intend to provide a historical guide to Addis Ababa. They also hope to contribute to the preservation of such an important historic and artistic heritage.

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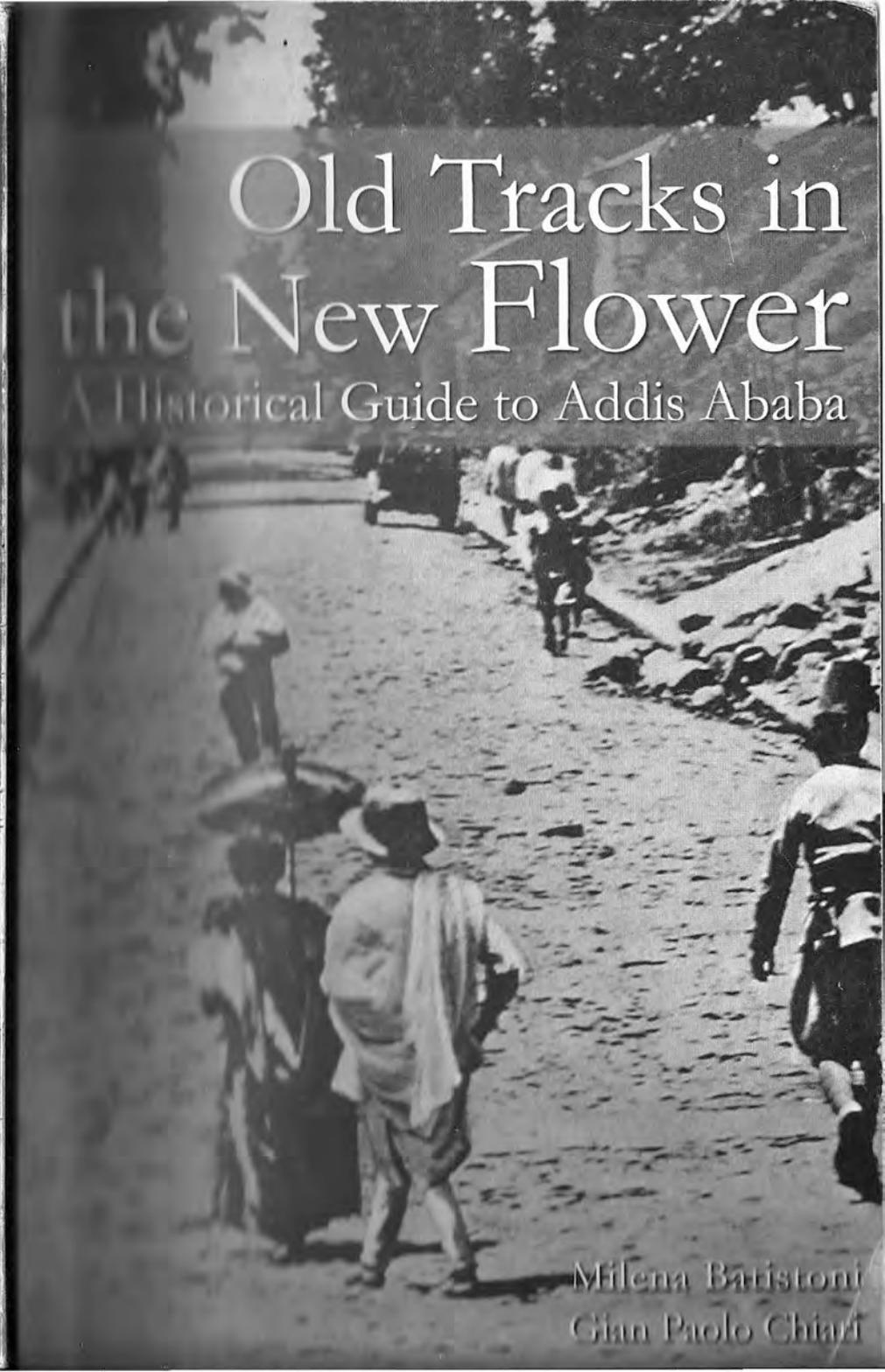
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# Old Tracks in the New Flower

A Historical Guide to Addis Ababa



Milena Batistoni  
Gian Paolo Chiari

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### ARADA BOOKS

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## Introduction

Hidden inside Addis Ababa's contemporary architectural fabric, Emperor  
 Menelik's old town still exists, only partially altered by the Italian  
 colonization (1936-1941) and by the urban development of the last half  
 century. In this regard, Addis Ababa represents a remarkable exception  
 among the African capitals. The brief Italian colonization improved  
 roads, created new buildings, and attempted to implement a master plan,  
 which would have split the living areas of the indigenous population  
 of the city from the Italians. The substantial transformation planned  
 according to the master plan was not put into practice. This allows a  
 reading of the city's astonishing history and exceptional architecture  
 through its old buildings and the paths linking them.

Off the main roads used daily by those who travel in Addis Ababa by car,  
 the city's oldest buildings survive, largely unknown, scattered far and wide  
 in different districts, often hidden by enclosing walls, by other houses or  
 large trees. These buildings often lack maintenance or are even ruined,  
 having been used for practical purposes that have disrupted their original  
 features day after day. In most cases, a lot of patience, dedication and  
 determination were needed in order to discover and reconstruct their  
 history, since no comprehensive research had been carried out on such a  
 heritage to date.

We, the authors of this book, identified more than 130 of these old  
 buildings. We managed to investigate the history of most of them and  
 of their first owners, while linking all this to the historical background of  
 the city. 'Old Tracks in the New Flower' is the outcome of this research,  
 which covers the life of the city between its establishment and the eve  
 of the Italian colonisation. The book is intended to be a contribution  
 to the knowledge of this beautiful city and it is hoped that it will draw

attention to the urgent need to preserve such an important historic and artistic heritage.

Our journey through Addis Ababa will follow seven major routes that originally linked the Imperial *Ghebbi* with the rest of the city and the country. These routes ended at, or started from the four gates located at the cardinal points of the *Ghebbi* and, despite several changes, they still play a key role in illustrating the history of the city.

In the following chapters of this guide, attention will be paid to the historic buildings existing in each of the areas crossed by the seven routes, supplemented by the history of their specific urban context and its development.

The first of these routes or itineraries leads southwest to Filoha and beyond, to the railway station and the former residence of *Fitawrari* Agunafer.

The second itinerary follows the old eastern road to Addis Alem and Wollega including the houses that belonged to *Ras* Nadaw, to *Dejazmatch* Wolde Gabriel and other historical buildings around the current market area.

The third explores Arada, the old market area, around which are located the Taitu Hotel and many private residences such as those of *Nagadras* Hayle Ghiorghis, *Dejazmatch* Webe and, more far away, *Sheik* Ojali.

The fourth includes the beautiful residences of the Armenian district and takes you northwards to discover the buildings around King George Street and beyond, up to the old churches at Entoto.

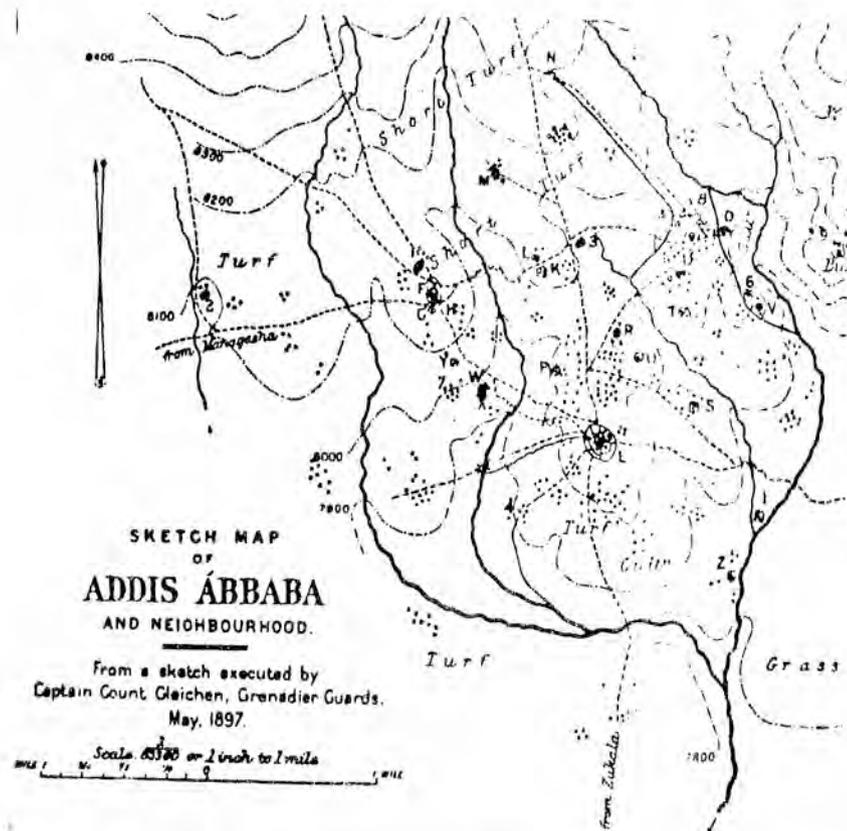
The fifth includes the area of the foreign legations, following paths that led to the beautiful houses of *Afanegus* Nasibu and *Ras* Seyoum and to what remains of *Ras* Kassa's house.

The sixth starts from the eastern door of the old Imperial *Ghebbi* and shows you the former residences of *Dejazmatch* Yilma, *Ras* Abate, and *Fitawrari* Atnaf Sagad.

The seventh and final itinerary leads south and, therefore, to the houses that belonged to *Dejazmatch* Ayleu Birru, *Ras* Kebede Mangasha, *Bitwaddad* Mangasha Atikam, and many others.

Our search in the today's Addis Ababa for the old layout designed and implemented by Menelik during his reign turned out to be a difficult – but also particularly exciting – task. We hope that you will enjoy, as we did, the beauty of the old private and public buildings included in the itineraries and the fascination of the places – hilltops, wide empty spaces or densely settled historical areas – in which they are located. We also hope that you will feel the old atmosphere of a city that was – and still is – lively, chaotic, green, elegant, and marked by a peculiar blend of architectural styles.

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that all information is accurate and up-to-date, we apologise for any error or omission we may have made and for any inconvenience this may cause to you. In an effort to continually improve this guide, your error reports and suggestions are mostly welcome and appreciated.



1. Detail of the map drawn by Count Gleichen in 1897.

destroyed during the Gragne's invasion. Only a rather high hillock, some carved stones, probably belonging to the altar, and part of an enclosure made of trees, generally used by the Abyssinians to surround their churches, were left. Next to it, there is a huge fig tree, which could shade more than one thousand, two hundred people. [...]. The King's order has started the building of the huts and the church, which will be dedicated to the holy name of Mary.<sup>1</sup>

The growth of Addis Ababa has been an odd process. From the beginning, the town occupied a large portion of territory, later filled by integrations and overlappings, often erasing pre-existent buildings and urban fabric. Despite this, it is not difficult to track down the developments of the town founded by Menelik around 1886, when he took the decision to settle

down near the spa of Filoba, as reported extensively by his chronicler, Guébré Sellassié.<sup>2</sup> In 1889, according to the Italian medical doctor De Castro, Menelik 'drove the first pole of his wooden tent into the ground where his imperial palace would be built'.<sup>3</sup> Others suggest that Menelik 'décida seulement le 2 novembre 1887 de transporter sa résidence à Foul-Ouaa (eau chaude), à qui il donna le nom d'Addis-Abeba'.<sup>4</sup> For the eyes of the first Western travellers, Addis Ababa lay scattered on a vast and uneven area, more similar to a camp, than a town. 'La ville étant éparpillée sur un immense territoire [...] Et puis, dans une marche d'une heure il faut franchir monts et vallées, parfois traverser des torrents [...] pour s'en [of the town] former un'idée exacte'.<sup>5</sup>

Viewed from the dominating Entoto Mountain, the town's landscape showed clusters of huts surrounded by fences and, overall, a large number of white tents spread everywhere, particularly at the fringes. This gave the town 'the appearance of a gigantic camp, and indeed this is actually what it is',<sup>6</sup> as pointed out by Gleichen, who was in Abyssinia in 1897 with a British diplomatic mission to Menelik. Another traveller remarked upon this feature and remembered that the Abyssinian word *katama* means both camp and town.<sup>7</sup> The establishment of Addis Ababa, however, broke the consolidated tradition of having an itinerant capital. For the Abyssinian Emperors of the past, the 'capital' was the place where they camped.

In addition to the first urban units – constituted of the Emperor's premises and the commercial area – the *Rases'* residential buildings, surrounded by their respective *ghebbi*, represent the starting-point for the development of the urban architectural fabric. These residences belonged to the members of Menelik's court and General Staff, to the extent that 'as the feudal system prevails in Abyssinia, almost every chief of a province or *Ras* has his compound in Addis Ababa'.<sup>8</sup> From the very first years of the city's life, Menelik granted land to the noblemen of his court for residential purposes, or, as claimed by malicious observers, in order to control his most powerful *Rases* and prevent their conspiracies. The establishment of the *safars* – i.e. those areas individually allotted to lords – continued to represent the model according to which the different city zones were subdivided and named. In addition, the *safars* were districts inhabited by people sharing the same profession or ethnic origin (e.g. Wollo *Safar*). Similarly, after the Italian invasion some districts received names referring to the Italian presence. The allotment of the *safars* was carried out at the



2. Detail of the map drawn by De Castro in 1909.

expenses of previous Oromo landholders, after which some urban areas were called (e.g. Gulele).

Eventually, the first tents or huts hosting the notables of the city became more complex buildings, enriched by elaborated architectural features. Some of these buildings followed criteria that were Abyssinian, such as the oval houses still existing in the city. They were simple, essential or adorned only by a veranda around them. Others houses, made of wood, *akka* or stone, reflected different styles and structures, in accordance with European, Indian and Arabic architectural models. You can still observe houses entirely made of either wood or stone, others combining the two, enriched by verandas, pillars, decorations, and bay windows reminiscent of the Arabic *mancharabie*. The development of these buildings took place

## Addis Ababa in a Foreign Glimpse

Une cité naissant (J.-G. Vanderheyem, ca. 1895)

Une agglomération de huttes assez semblables à une réunion de meules de foin, dont les toits coniques se découpent sur le ciel (J.-G. Vanderheyem, ca. 1895)

A gigantic camp (Gleichen, ca. 1897)

Un grand camp militaire (Henry d'Orléans, 1897)

Un village, un camp immense, et non encore une ville (Charles Michel, 1897-1998)

A collection of villages (Powell-Cotton, 1900)

Cité Champignon (Merab, 1910s, about Addis Ababa between 1892 and 1909)

Uno sterminato gruppo di capanne (Lincoln de Castro, 1909) [An immense group of huts]

Pollajo arcadico (Lincoln de Castro, 1909) [Arcadic chicken-run]

L'ébauche d'une grande ville (Le Semeur d'Ethiopie, 1910)

La città senza limiti (Arnaldo Cipolla, 1910) [The city with no limits] (because of the continuous movement of armies and camps)

Città improvvisata, metropoli accampamento (Arnaldo Cipolla, 1910) [Improvised city, camp-metropolis]

In mezzo al verde di numerosissimi ed alti eucalyptus, e, frammisti, pochi olivi, pini, acacie (Carlo Annaratore, ca. 1914) [In the green of many high eucalyptuses and a few olives, junipers and acacias]

On s'y trouve à la campagne en même temps qu'on est presque au centre de la ville (Merab, 1910s)

Un immense campement qu'un mulet «sagar» (qui va l'amble) met deux heures à traverser (George Remond, Voyages, ca. 1924)

A large, straggling, ramshackle and picturesque town, delightfully situated among groves of eucalyptus (Arnold Hodson, first half of the 1920s)

Une grande superficie, coupée de petites prairies à l'ombre d'eucalyptus (Herman Norden, 1928)

L'unica metropoli del mondo nascosta in un fitto bosco (Antonio Zischka, ca. 1935) [The only metropolis in the world hidden in a thick wood]

in an urban context whose architectures had been, for a long time, chaotic. Around 1910, Western visitors on the one hand began to be surprised at the certain effervescence of the building sector, whereas on the other they expressed their disappointment for the number of works left partly built. Menelik himself undertook various improvements, including an attempt to make the roads more practicable. However, one observer commented that some steamrollers purchased for this purpose were lying 'scattered, rusty and disused',<sup>9</sup> while the city's roads continued to be in poor condition.

It would appear that the number of buildings increased after an official urban land market was introduced in 1907 and landowners began receiving formally registered titles. In the early 1920s, C.F. Rey pointed out that: 'Building is very costly, mainly owing to the extortionate price of all imported materials, and land commands an almost incredible value,



3. Arada market area in ca. 1909.



4. Italian Legation area in ca. 1909.

costing from half a dollar to four dollars per metre'.<sup>10</sup>

In fact, many remarkable buildings existed at that time. In 1912, according to De Castro, they were around 200, generally owned by Indian and Greek traders and characterized by 'the most disparate shapes'.<sup>11</sup> There were public buildings such as the Bank of Abyssinia – 'almost the only reasonable respectable building'<sup>12</sup> – the Etegue Hotel and the foreign legations; the construction of the first masonry buildings in the Emperor's *Ghebbi* was completed; also, there were beautiful residences belonging to *Rases* or high-rank personalities like *Nagadras*, *Afanegus* and *Abuna*.

In 1914, Carlo Annaratone highlighted the buildings' chaotic identity and layout, but he also remarked that 'there are many houses built in the

European style, covered with corrugated metal sheets and having beautiful windows and balconies, that, like in a dream, bring us a civilized town'.<sup>13</sup> This character of Addis Ababa and the model of its development had already crystallized when Menelik died in 1913, and few have been altered by the buildings and improvements made by the Emperor's successors.

Architectural historians generally agree on that the change from a circular house plan to a rectangular plan was a key factor that impacted on Addis Ababa's urban landscape between 19th and 20th Centuries. Garretson and Johnson stressed this in the early 1970s and Amare and Fassil hinged their analysis of the city's building morphology upon it.<sup>14</sup> They claimed that the transition from a circular to a rectangular plan began in Addis during the time of Menelik and they identified the oval plan as an intermediate stage of this process.



5. Construction of the Addis Ababa-Addis Alem road in early 1900s.

Foreign travellers who visited Addis in its early development support these interpretations. Piazza, for instance, wrote in 1912 about the 'progress' of the indigenous 'tucul', which 'began to become, from circular, square or rectangular'.<sup>15</sup> Others, like Annaratone in 1914, stressed the conflict between the "European", "modern" rectangular plan and the "Indigenous", "traditional" circular plan.<sup>16</sup> Berlan argues that the Europeans living in Addis only improved the rectangular house, for it was already common at the very beginning of Abyssinian culture.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, arguments and categories such as European and indigenous, modern and traditional, were not only applied to the plan of the buildings, but they also involved house construction techniques and building materials, particularly the use of stone or the mixture of mud, dung and straw known in Amharic as *cikka*.



6. (Top) View of the *Ghebbi* in the 1900s; 7. (Above left) and 8. (Above right) House building in the 1900s.

However, the purpose of this work is not scientific, in the sense that it does not have the pretension to attempt to analyse the architecture. On the contrary, it aims to document and, hopefully, communicate the fascination that stems from the syncretic complexity of early Addis Ababa architecture. Over time the complex and different aspects of Ethiopian cultures were influenced by those which were Armenian, European, Indian and Indo-Muslim in nature, through a dynamic process that turned out to be much more interesting than simplistic, evolutionary, and often ethnocentric perspectives. The following chapters aim to show how the result of that process is something different from and something more than the sum of the concurring elements.

## Early Descriptions of Addis Ababa

All the huts in the town are in the same form, circular or elliptical, with thatched conical roofs. There are very few two storeyed buildings: but some of the houses, non notably those of the Europeans, are oblong in shape, and the roofs are of the ordinary pent shape, with three or four small beaks copped with circular wooden moulds, serving the double purpose of keeping the thatch in position and of ornament. As the feudal system prevails in Abyssinia, almost every chief of a province or Ras has his compound in Addis Ababa, and, the hut accommodating generally an insufficient number of followers, it is supplemented by tents of all shapes and uses (Lord Edward Gleichen, *With the Mission to Menelik, 1897*, London, Gregg International, 1898, p. 157).

[Addis Ababa is] a vast camp with numbers of straw- or grass-roofed huts standing in hedged compounds (...) In the centre of an agglomeration of compounds distributed over a very wide area, on a slight elevation dominating the plain, is the royal enclosure known as the *Gébi*, and round it are grouped the establishments of the chief officers of the country (James Rennel Rodd, *Social and Diplomatic Memories 1894-1901*, London, Edward Arnold, 1923, p. 149).

The first distant glimpses of Addis Ababa which the traveller obtains to-day as he winds his circuitous way upwards the city are very attractive. So extensive and so dense are the woods in which it lies that one seems to be about to enter a forest, and it is only on a near approach to the town that houses begin to stand out amongst the trees, and the rays of the sun sparkling and glittering on the metal roofs and the white-washed walls make one realize that a town, and an extensive one at that, is hidden in the foliage. Gradually as one gets nearer and nearer the place begins to take shape; the few white walls thrown into relief by the sun are seen to be but islands in a sea of lesser and browner habitations; (...) and as he draws near to the end of his journey the extraordinary mixture of buildings of every kind of which Addis is composed begins to make its striking first impression on the traveller's mind (Charles F. Rey, *Unconquered Abyssinia*, London, Seely & Service, 1923, pp. 145-146).

A brief account of the presence of foreign communities in Addis Ababa at the time of Menelik will help to understand and identify the different cultural influences that have contributed to the city's architecture.

The Armenians established an important and closely integrated community in Addis Ababa, facilitated by their Orthodox Christian faith. The Armenian presence in Addis increased after 1895, when the Turkish Sultan Abdul Amed II ordered persecutions and massacres against the Armenians living in Turkey. However, the first Armenian in Ethiopia, Dikran Ebeyan, was invited by Emperor Yohannes IV specifically for the task of making a golden crown. He left Ethiopia after he completed his work, but Menelik requested that he and his family return to Addis. At that time, there were three Armenian goldsmiths working permanently at the *Ghebbi* and they would have taught Ethiopians the art of filigree. According to informants, there were around 60 Armenians living and working in Addis during the reign of Menelik. One of the most renowned was Krikor Hovian, who was responsible for the construction and maintenance of roads and bridges. Krikor came to Addis in 1904 and designed the bridges – entirely made of stone without using cement – that linked the city with the French, Italian and Russian legations. With the construction of these bridges, the foreign legations were no longer cut off from the rest of the city during the rainy season. According to the current President of the Armenian community in Addis, Mr. Vartkes Nalbandian, Krikor's 'signature' should feature on those bridges. Krikor died in Addis and his successor was Minas Kherbekian. Other well-known Armenians who worked in Addis as constructors and carpenters were Haroutin Avakian, Hapet Oughourlian and Sarkis Terzian. At that time, Armenians also worked in the town as goldsmiths and businessmen.

In their native land, in the meantime, the situation worsened, particularly after the Unity and Progress nationalist party took over in Turkey in 1908. Among the movement's aims was the destruction of the Armenian nation, which, it believed, hindered the making of a pan-Turkish empire. A second wave of Armenian migration into Ethiopia occurred after the massacres of 1905. The railway already operating between Djibuti and Dire Dawa facilitated their coming. In addition to working as craftsmen, Armenians took up new opportunities as engineers, traders and, particularly, liquor merchants. In 1910, their number in Addis was 146.<sup>18</sup> According to Bahru Zewde 'they thrived mainly as craftsmen catering to the upper classes.

But one of their pioneers, Sarkis Terzian, made his fortune as an arms trader and his fame by introducing the steamroller (aptly named 'Sarkis *habur*', the steam-engine of Sarkis) into the country'.<sup>19</sup> The most famous Armenian buildings constructor was Minas Kherbekian, who came to Ethiopia in 1881 and designed a great number of churches, roads, bridges and houses from 1895.<sup>20</sup> Minas's own residence is included in Itinerary 3 and the Armenian district is in Itinerary 4. The use of cut stones, round arches and pyramidal domes are some of the Armenian additions to Addis architecture. A remarkable example is the building that belonged to the Armenian Kevorkoff and that is included in Itinerary 3.

The Indian community in Addis shares similarity with the Armenian in it being compact and well organised. Indian-Muslims represent the majority. The relationships between India and Ethiopia have a long history,



9. Weatheral Street in ca. 1936-1937.



10. Adwa Avenue in ca. 1936.

characterised by their 19th Century commercial penetration into the Horn of Africa through Aden. The rich Indian merchants operating in Ethiopia – particularly one named Mohamedally – played a key role in controlling the subsequent Indian migratory flows. Among these, the post-Adwa flux was relevant, also due to the British encouragement.<sup>21</sup> Key figures of the early Indian community in Addis were *Haji* Kawas and Mohamedally. The first, according to what Count Gleichen wrote in 1897, was an Indian Muslim coming from Peshawar who led the group of Indian workers who had constructed several buildings in the *Ghebbi*.<sup>22</sup> The second was the most powerful importer-exporter before the Italian invasion.

A great number of Indians in Addis worked in the construction sector. Some of them, for instance, were directly employed for the building of the

British Legation.<sup>23</sup> Other worked as tailors, goldsmiths, and hairdressers. In 1909, their number in Addis was 149 and, apart from those working for trading companies such as Mohamedally, most of them were living in poor conditions.<sup>24</sup>

Indians left one of the most visible marks on Addis Ababa architecture, as shown by the old buildings in Piazza area. Aged members of the local Indian community that we met, identified traditional Indian architectural features in Addis as the external walls double the thickness as those of Ethiopian dwellings, buildings whose height reaches approximately 3.5 metres and two-tier roofs with windows openings between the tiers. These features, they explained, were common in Gujarat buildings and aimed at alleviating the external heat through adequate ventilation. Other concurring elements include verandas – open and supported by



11. Arada in ca. 1926-1928.



12. Aerial view of Arada in ca. 1937.

wooden posts in the oldest buildings, closed in the most recent ones – and main entrances sheltered by double doors, the outer usually multi-glazed. Roof finials and the decorations on the eaves represent other important Indian marks on Addis architecture. In India, such roof top decoration of Indian noblemen's residences featured a symbol or the owner's name. Other Indian influences found in Addis include tower-like structures which featured in several houses of the time and are still strongly evident in the small building opposite Mr. Shashibaiseth's residence described in Itinerary 2. Mr. Shashibaiseth himself explained that these watchtower houses, called *Bangali*, were common in Gujarat, the Indian region from where most Indian constructors and carpenters who worked in Addis originated. Among the most interesting example of Indian style architecture in Addis are the buildings of the Arada Post

Office compound described in Itinerary 3 and the old Haile Sellassie Church.

The presence of a small Greek community dates back to the end of the 19th Century. Their number increased dramatically around 1904, when many Greeks came to Addis after their contracts with the Franco-Ethiopian railway expired. Their presence created some problems in town, because they expected better salaries than those earned by other competing foreign workers and because the Greek community was not well organised and had to depend on the protection given – and, in turn, withdrawn – by different foreign legations. Once a proper community was established, it agreed, according to Menelik's wish to limit the immigration of Greeks formerly working for the railway in Djibouti.<sup>25</sup> According to Bahru Zewde, the Greeks were 'as successful as the Indians [...] thanks largely to the ease with which they adapted to the Ethiopian milieu, possibly, among other things, because of their Orthodox Christian faith'.<sup>26</sup> Greek traders played a major role, together with the Armenians, in supplying Ethiopia, and particularly Addis, with European goods. In addition, Greeks were also involved in building construction, shoemaking, and dressmaking. As shown by Itinerary 3, many Greek traders had their house and shops built in Piazza area. The same Itinerary 3 also shows how these buildings stand out for their neoclassical style, as in the case of Paulos Kordas' and Karakachiani's residences.

The first kernel of the Italian community in Addis consisted of members of the Italian army defeated at Adwa in 1896 and brought to the capital as prisoners of war. Here they were mostly involved in construction works, as was the case of Sebastiano Castagna. Other Italian workers arrived when Menelik asked the Italian Minister Ciccodicola additional labour force to participate in the construction of the Addis Ababa-Addis Alem road started in 1902 and after the works of the Franco-Ethiopian railway came to a halt in 1905. Ciccodicola played a major role in the rehabilitation of the Ethio-Italian relations to the extent that Italy was the first country to be diplomatically represented at Menelik's court the year after Adwa.<sup>27</sup>

Before 1936, the Italian influence on Addis architecture is limited to a few, although remarkable examples. Among them is St. George Church, designed by Sebastiano Castagna and described in 1938 by an Italian tourist guide as an interesting example of European interpretation of the

typical Abyssinian church.<sup>28</sup> Another landmark is the current Ras Desta Hospital, built in 1932 and funded by the association Italica Gens. It was designed by the Italian architect Alessandro Molli Boffa and was among the first Addis buildings made of armed concrete.

Arabs, French, Britons, Russians, Germans and other foreigners lived in Addis Ababa during the period taken into consideration. Among them, Arabs were initially the most important both in terms of presence and economic influence, although figures of the time often confused Arabs and Muslim Indians. In 1909, there were 227 Arabs in town, mostly trading incense and coffee or working as cameleers.<sup>29</sup> However, the influence of all these other foreign presences on Addis architecture is limited to the work of specific architects and constructors. Those who worked in Addis in those years include the French architects Péne and Barrias, the German architects Haertel and Kametz, the Swiss Ilg and the Russians Konovaloff and Bartenoff.

#### Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Guglielmo Massaja, *I miei trentacinque anni di missione nell'Alta Etiopia*, Milano, Roma, Tipografia Pontificia, 1885-1892, IX, p. 106 (Translation by the authors)
- <sup>2</sup> See Giučbré Sellassié, *Chronique du Règne de Ménélik II*, Paris, Maisonneuve, 1930-1931
- <sup>3</sup> Lincoln De Castro, 'La città e il clima di Addis Abeba', *Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana*, 46, 1909, p. 410 (Translation by the authors)
- <sup>4</sup> Charles Michel, *Mission de Bouchamps - Vers Fachoda*, Paris, Plon, 1900, p. 105
- <sup>5</sup> 'Une excursion au pays de Ménélik', *Le Semeur d'Éthiopie* (Diré-Daoua), novembre-décembre 1910, p. 773
- <sup>6</sup> Lord Edward Gleichen, *With the Mission to Menelik, 1897*, London, Gregg International, 1898, p. 157
- <sup>7</sup> Henri-Philippe d'Orléans, *Une visite à l'Empereur Ménélik*, Paris, Dentu, (1898), p. 140-141
- <sup>8</sup> Lord Edward Gleichen (1898), p. 157
- <sup>9</sup> Lord Cranworth, *Kenya Chronicles*, London, MacMillan, 1939, p. 159
- <sup>10</sup> Charles F. Rey, *Unconquered Abyssinia*, London, Seely & Service, 1923, p. 150
- <sup>11</sup> Lincoln De Castro (1909), p. 413 (Translation by the authors)
- <sup>12</sup> Lord Cranworth (1939), p. 159
- <sup>13</sup> Carlo Annaratone, *In Abissinia*, Roma, Voghera, 1914, p. 150 (Translation by

the authors)

- <sup>14</sup> See Peter Phillips Garretson, *A History of Addis Ababa from its Foundation in 1886 to 1910*, London, University of London, 1974, Ph.D. thesis; Martin E. Johnson, *The Evolution of the Morphology of Addis Ababa*, Los Angeles, University of California, 1974, Ph.D. thesis; Amare Dawit and Fassil Giorgihs, 'Early Architectural Development in Addis Ababa', in: *Proceedings of the International Symposium on the Centenary of Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa Council*, 1987
- <sup>15</sup> Giuseppe Piazza, *Alla Corte di Menelik*, Ancona, Puccini, 1912, p. 99 (Translation by the authors)
- <sup>16</sup> Carlo Annaratone (1914), p. 150
- <sup>17</sup> Edouard Berlan, *Addis Abeba - La plus haute ville d'Afrique*, Grenoble, Imprimerie Allier, 1963, p. 68
- <sup>18</sup> Peter Phillips Garretson (1974), p. 179
- <sup>19</sup> Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia: 1855-1991*, Oxford, James Currey, 1991, p. 98
- <sup>20</sup> Vartkes Nalbandian, interview, Addis Ababa, 12 February 2003
- <sup>21</sup> Peter Phillips Garretson (1974), p. 172-173
- <sup>22</sup> Richard Pankhurst, 'The Foundation and Growth of Addis Ababa to 1935', *Ethiopian Observer*, VI, 1, 1962, p. 42
- <sup>23</sup> Peter Phillips Garretson (1974), p. 174
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>25</sup> Peter Phillips Garretson (1974), p. 164-167
- <sup>26</sup> Bahru Zewde (1991), p. 98
- <sup>27</sup> Bahru Zewde (1991), p. 150
- <sup>28</sup> *Guida dell'Africa Orientale Italiana*, Milano, Consociazione Turistica Italiana, 1938, p. 487
- <sup>29</sup> Peter Phillips Garretson (1974), p. 171-172

## The *Ghebbi*



'Finfinni (Addis-Abebà) 15 November 1887. I write by Finfinni hot springs, named Addis-Abebà by King Menelik, who has a sort of villa built in the neighbourhood'.<sup>1</sup>

With this letter Traversi – scientist and Menelik's physician – gives us one of the first written evidences of the establishment of Menelik's *Ghebbi* in the area and, consequently, of the foundation of Addis Ababa. The linkage between these two events is solid, since it was on the position and organisation of the *Ghebbi* that most of the future townscape and urban development had to depend. The *Ghebbi* explained and justified the city's growth because it represented its kernel, the centre of political and administrative power.

Today, after more than one century, its pivotal and strategic importance remains tangible, as demonstrated by the fact that most of its area is off-limits to visitors. Here we aim to alleviate the effects of this restriction by providing you with historical images and descriptions of the *Ghebbi* and its most relevant buildings.

The place chosen by Menelik for his "villa" was a hill, northeast of the hot springs. At that time – it was the end of the 1880s – his residence had a temporary character, since the permanent *Ghebbi* remained at Entoto until 1890-1891. Two prints, published in 1893, but based on earlier drawings by Pulini, show the very first stage of the new *Ghebbi* and illustrate some of the typical features that characterized the Ethiopian royal camps (Figures 13 and 14). A fence encircles the compound where stand the royal premises (*elñit*), a church, and a roofing that probably functioned as a reception hall (*aderash*). A following step of the camp's development can be observed in a map drawn in the early 1890s (Figure 15), which shows

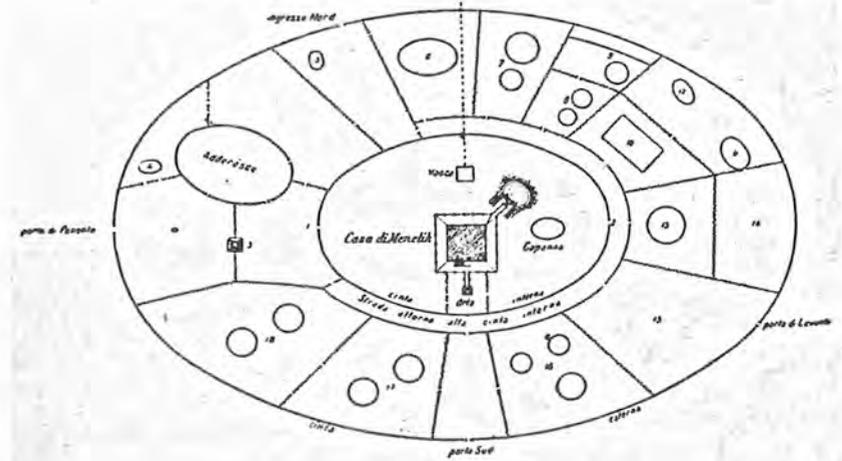
the four entrance gates, opened approximately at the cardinal points and through the first of the surrounding fences made of stone and *cikka* walls reinforced by stockades.

The organisation of the inner space began to give the *Ghebbi* the structure of a real town within the town, with dwellings, offices, streets and districts. The territory between the outer and the inner fences was portioned and allocated to blacksmiths', goldsmiths' and carpenters' workshops, brew-house, kitchens, stores, and stables. At the heart of the *Ghebbi* stood Menelik's and Taitu's residence, the new *elfiñ* probably designed by Luigi Capucci in 1889<sup>2</sup> and still existing today, despite several changes and the fire that, according to de Coppet<sup>3</sup>, destroyed part of the *Ghebbi* in 1892. As shown by the above-mentioned map and by a picture taken in the first half of the 1890s (Figure 16), the *elfiñ* was a two-storey square building



13. and 14. The *Ghebbi* in the late 1880s.

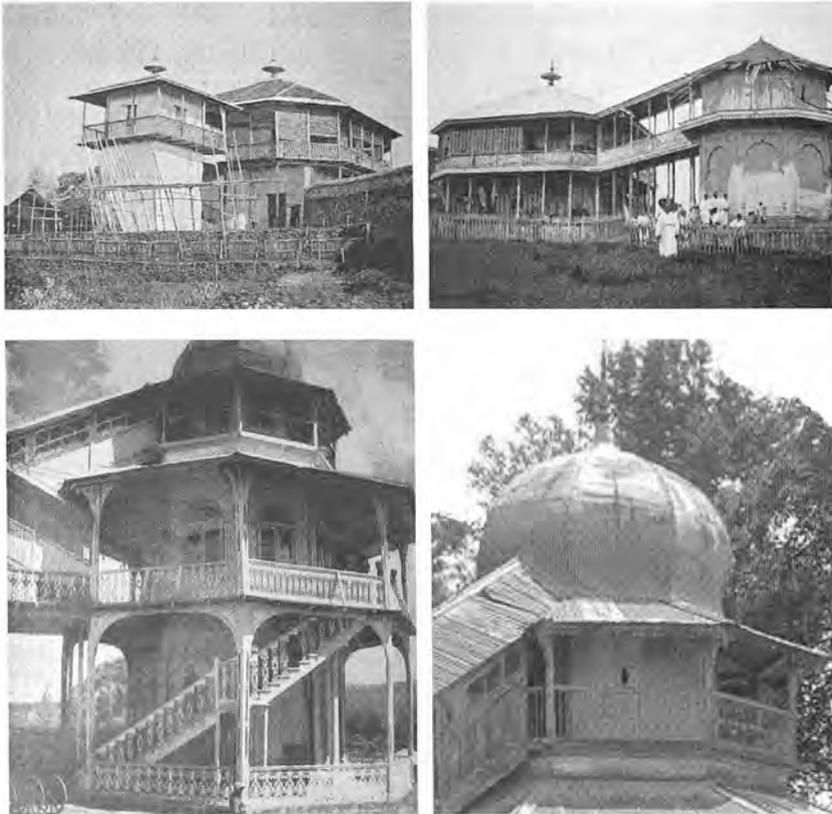
surrounded by a projecting wooden balcony, from which Menelik used to take great pleasure in watching the town through his telescopes.<sup>4</sup> Each storey consisted of a square room that a square of wooden columns divided into five areas: one located along each of the four walls – approximately 15 metres long – and one in the middle.<sup>5</sup> According to the map (Figure 15), the *elfiñ*'s clay tiled roof which was originally square in shape, was transformed into an Indian style octagonal roof a few years later (Figure 16). At the back of the house – behind a small square tower (Figure 17) dismantled shortly afterwards – flowers, together with onions, maize, peppers and other vegetables were cultivated in a small garden, irrigated by the water that a pipeline began to bring to the *Ghebbi* and the *elfiñ* in 1894.<sup>6</sup> A joyful note was added to the *elfiñ* when, not later than 1896, doors, windows, balcony and external stairs were painted in green, blue,



15. (Top) Plan of the *Ghebbi* in ca. 1896; 16. (Above) *Elfiñ* in the early 1890s.

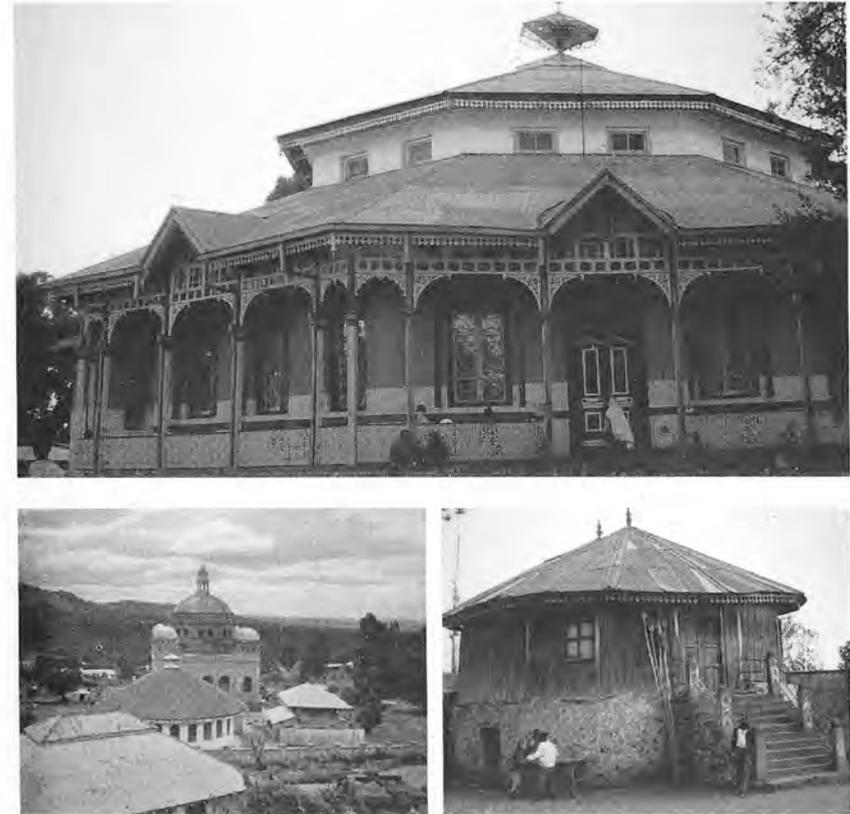
yellow and red.<sup>7</sup> By the end of the 19th Century, it seems probable that the long wooden bridge which led to the northeast corner of the balcony was no longer accessible from the double stairway located on the ground (Figure 16), but from a staircase inside a new octagonal tower. Rather stubby in the beginning (Figure 18), the tower was turned, by 1909, into what became one of the most characteristic and fascinating buildings in the *Ghebbi*. Later its charm was further increased by an Indian-influenced domed metal roof that justifies the building's popular nickname of *inqulal bet*, i.e. egg-house (Figures 19 and 20).

Another key element of the *Ghebbi* is represented by the reception hall, the *aderash*, which in the early 1890s was a thatched roof oval building located northeast of the *elfiñ* (Figure 15). In 1897-1898, the need to give



17. (Top left) *Elfiñ*'s backside in the early 1890s; 18. (Top right) *Elfiñ*'s pavillon in the late 1890s; 19. and 20. (Above) *Elfiñ*'s pavillon in the 1930s (left) and in 2004 (right).

hospitality to an increasing number of guests explains the construction of a much larger *aderash* southwest of *elfiñ*. The building still exists today and is a single rectangular room, approximately 30 metres wide and 60 long, made of stones and *akka*, and covered with three gable roofs. The hall was divided into three aisles by 34 wooden and painted pillars supporting the roof and at the ridge of each gable there were fifty cupolas. Each of them had an ostrich egg<sup>8</sup>, although, a few years later, metal sheets replaced the original cover. The Ethiopian concept of internal spaces and functions, the European-influenced design, and the Indo-Islamic style decorations of the windows and main doors (Figure 24) make the *aderash* a typical example of that architectural syncretism that characterizes many of the historic buildings of the *Ghebbi* and, generally, of Addis Ababa. The



21. (Top) Gabriel Church; 22. (Above left) Kidane Mehret and Beata Mariam in ca. 1936; 23. (Above right) Zamanuel's house.

dimensions of the *aderash* – where up to six-seven thousands people could participate in huge traditional banquets – contrasted with the small and pleasant shape of the *sagannet*. Built in the first half of the 1890s near the square (*addababay*) where justice was administered, this little tower had a veranda all around it and a clock at its top, as an early 20th Century picture illustrates (Figure 25). Initially, the *sagannet* functioned as a tribunal, headed by the *afanegus* and, when the case was important, by Menelik himself, although the administration of justice was later transferred to a low semi-hexagonal shaped building nearby.

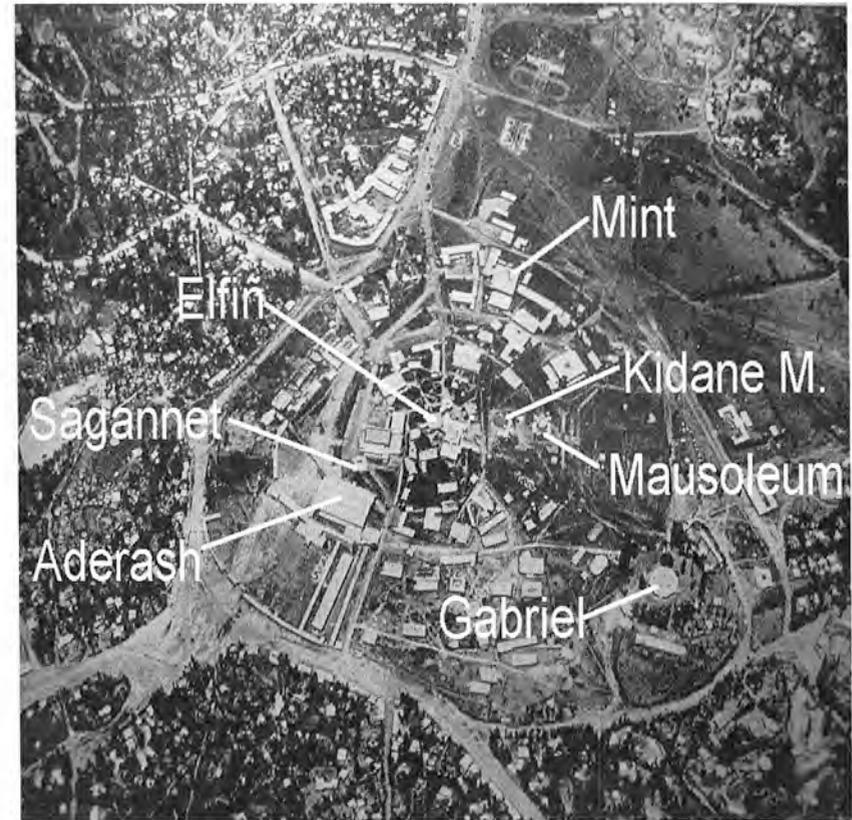
Religious matters were dealt with at the other side of the *Ghebbi*, in the only area currently accessible to visitors. Here you will find the old circular



24. (Top) Main door of the *Aderash* in the late 1900s; 25. (Above left) *Sagannet* in the late 1900s; 26. (Above right) The main Hall in the 1930s.

shaped church of Kidane Mehret and the octagonal Indian style Gabriel Church (Figure 27). The latter was completed in 1908-1909<sup>9</sup> to replace the *Elfiñ* Gabriel chapel in which Menelik used to pray every day and that he ordered to be transferred and improved.<sup>10</sup> The church was built on the land that Menelik had previously granted to *Azraj* Zamanuel, who was the official in charge of Taitu's household.<sup>11</sup> Zamanuel's residence is still in the compound (Figure 23) and it is the very interesting building that now functions as a storehouse for the church.<sup>12</sup>

Next to Kidane Mehret is Beata Mariam (Figure 22), the church that Empress Zawditu wanted to be built in memory of Menelik.<sup>13</sup> It was designed by the German architect Carl Haertel, who left Berlin in 1906



27. Digital elaboration of an aerial photo of the *Ghebbi* in ca. 1936.

and came to live in Addis with the wife Anna.<sup>14</sup> The construction of the building – also known as Menelik Mausoleum – started in 1917-1918, but the inauguration ceremony took place ten years later.

Over the years, many buildings were added to the late 19th Century nucleus of the *Ghebbi*, especially after the plan to move the capital to Addis Alem was abandoned in 1902-1903. Among them is the new mint, with its chimney, that Menelik wanted in the northern part of *Ghebbi*. Another important contribution was the beautiful hall built in the 1920s near the *sagannet* and expanded in the first half of the 1930s with the addition of the two panoramic windowed aisles (Figure 26).

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Leopoldo Traversi, *Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana*, XXV, 1, 1888, p. 126 (Translation by the authors)
- <sup>2</sup> See Carlo Zaghi (ed.), Augusto Salimbeni, *Crispi e Menelich*, Torino, Ilie, 1956, p. 193; Leopoldo Traversi, 'Addis Abeba', *L'Illustrazione italiana*, XXIV, 14, 1897, p. 211; Lincoln De Castro, *Nella terra dei Negus*, Milano, Treves, 1915, p. 192
- <sup>3</sup> See Richard Pankhurst, 'The Foundation and Growth of Addis Ababa to 1935', *Ethiopian Observer*, VI, 1, 1962, p. 40
- <sup>4</sup> J.-G. Vanderheyem, *Une expedition avec le Negus Ménélik*, Paris, Hachette, 1896, p. 108
- <sup>5</sup> Lincoln De Castro (1915), p. 193
- <sup>6</sup> Guèbrè Sellassié, *Chronique du Règne de Ménélik II*, Paris, Maisonneuve, 1930-1931
- <sup>7</sup> J.-G. Vanderheyem (1896), p. 63-64
- <sup>8</sup> Guèbrè Sellassié (1930-1931)
- <sup>9</sup> Haile Gabriel Dagne, 'The Establishment of Churches in Addis Ababa', in: *Proceedings of the International Symposium on the Centenary of Addis Ababa, 24-25 November, 1986*, Addis Ababa, 1987
- <sup>10</sup> Guèbrè Sellassié (1930-1931)
- <sup>11</sup> Peter Phillips Garretson, *A History of Addis Ababa from its Foundation in 1886 to 1910*, London, University of London, 1974, Ph.D. thesis, p. 119
- <sup>12</sup> Haile Sillasse G. Egziabher, *A Historical Development of Case Incis (Cazanchis) Safar up to 1974*, Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University, 1984, senior paper, p. 7
- <sup>13</sup> Elyas Gabra-Egziabeher, *Prowess, piety and politics: the Chronicle of Abetu Iyasu and Empress Zewditu of Ethiopia (1909 - 1930)*, Köln, Köppe, 1994, p. 457
- <sup>14</sup> Brigitte Beil, *Maskal - Das Ende der Regenzeit*, Bergisch-Gladbach, Gustav Lübke, 2003

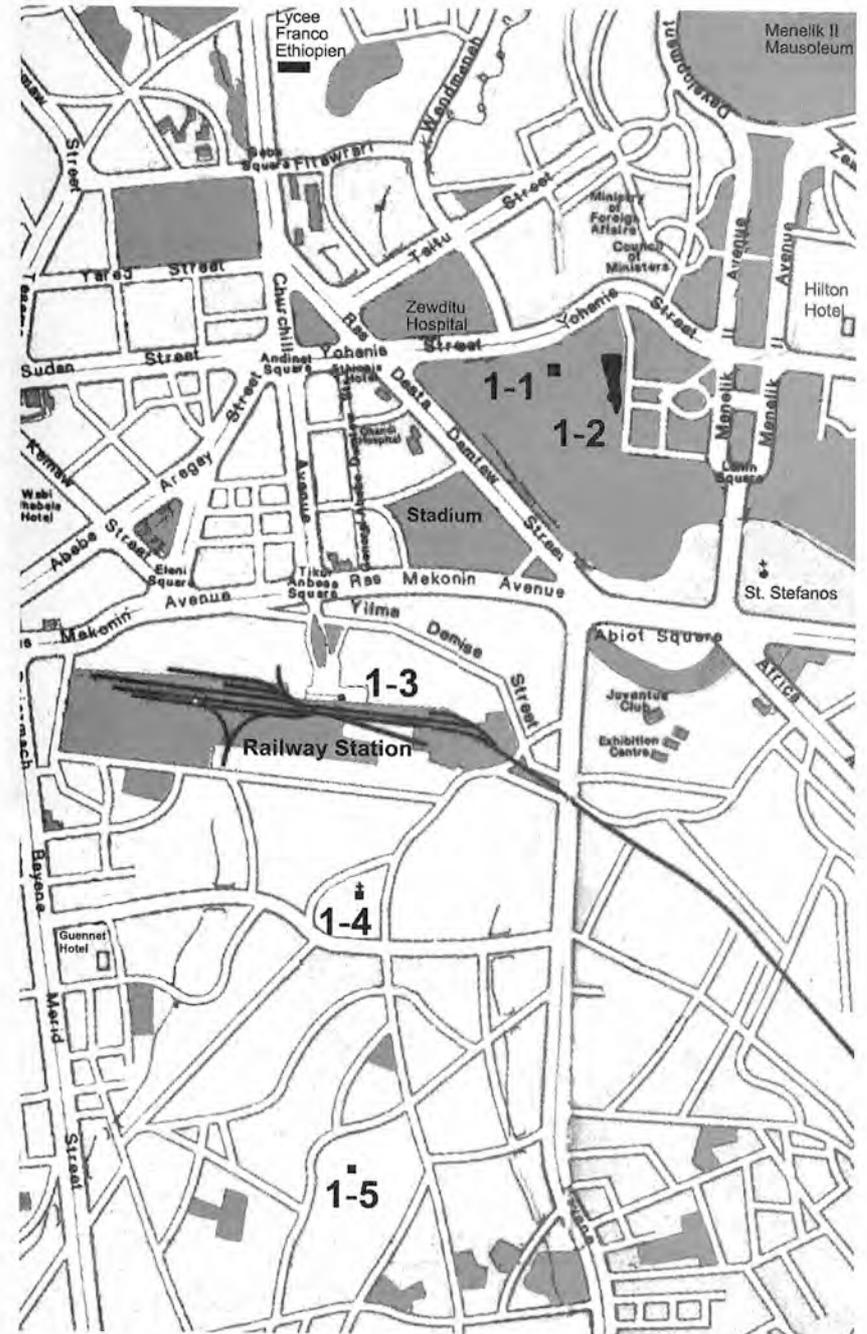
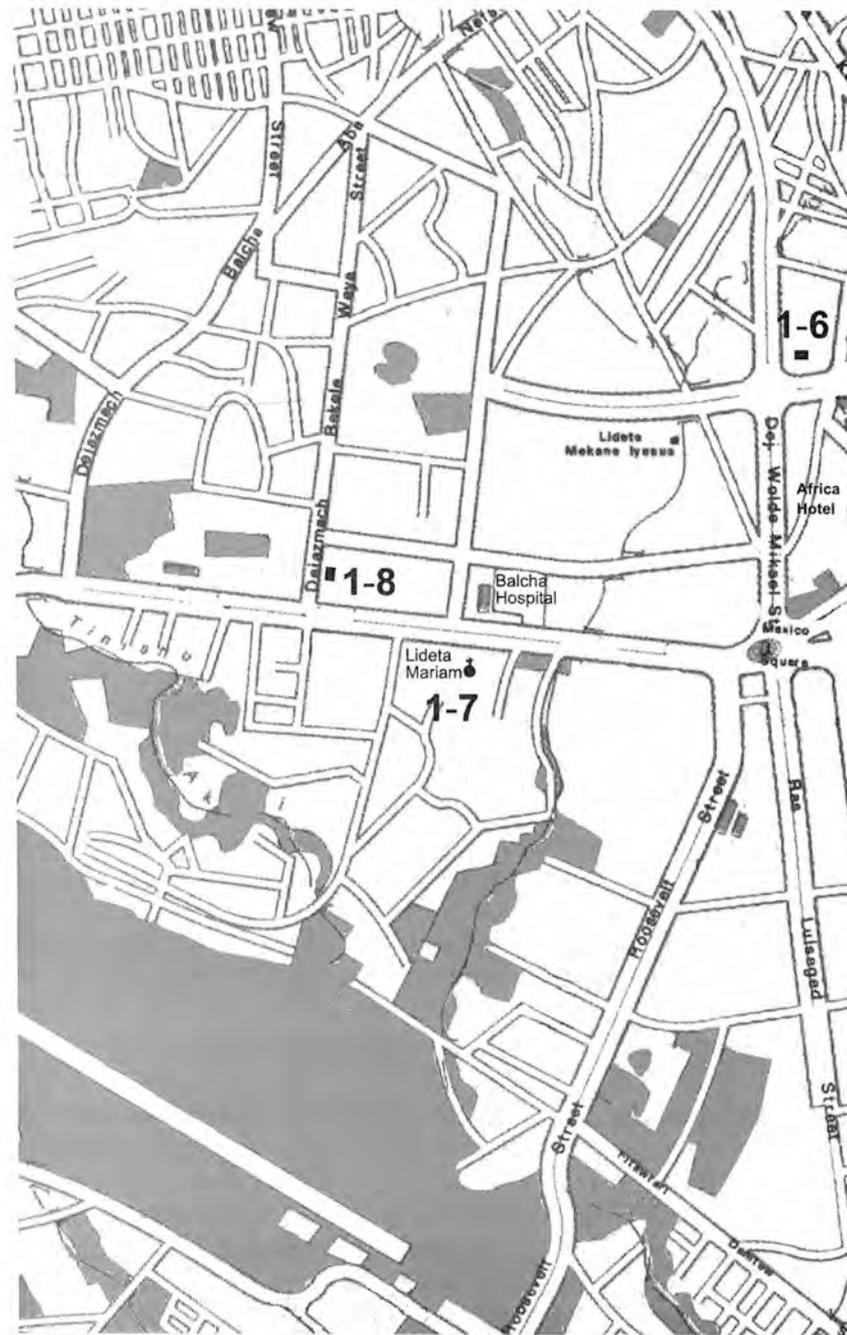
## Itinerary 1



On studying the paths found on the oldest Addis Ababa maps, we decided that the most significant choice as a starting point for our journey of discovery was the short and direct track that linked Filoha spa with the *Ghebbi*. Following this path, which is approximately one kilometre long, allows you to relive and discover the very roots of the city.

When Menelik used to go to the thermal waters from his new *Ghebbi* nearby, the main hot spring was surrounded by a wooden fence and, inside it, stood the two huts built by order of himself. The first one allowed Menelik and his court to bath in the steam that was coming out at a temperature of 52 degrees Celsius, whereas immersion was made possible in the second hut by the confluence of hot and cold water in a small pool.<sup>1</sup> Outside the fence, the spa was public and, at the end of the 19th Century, its therapeutic properties were well known and used by the Oromo people, coming here to water their herds, as well as by lepers, syphilitics and people affected by skin diseases.<sup>2</sup>

During the reign of Empress Zewditu (1916-1930), the "huts" used by Menelik were replaced by better thermal spa facilities, in addition to the public lavatory requested by *Lij Iyasu* a few years before. Thanks to these improvements, Filoha gained renewed popularity and emerged as a centre of urban life, to the extent that 'de l'Impératrice et du Prince Taffari-Makonnen, jusqu'au moindre seigneur de la cour, le Tout-Addis ne manque point de consacrer quelques heures, chaque semaine, à ces Eaux Chaudes, reconstituantes et curatives'.<sup>3</sup> The rehabilitation of Filoha area included the erection of a masonry wall all around the springs and the construction of three small hangar-type spa buildings, the access to which depended on money, but also on health status. At the end of the 1920s, one Marie Theresa thaler was charged to enter the most exclusive of these



buildings, the one subdivided into bathing huts, each provided with a small cement pool. Customers used to spend the whole day there talking and bathing. Half a thaler was the entrance fee for the second building, where a large common pool was usually very crowded with women, men, children, though not by sick people – who were allowed to bath in the third building only. The latter's pool was open to everybody who could pay one piastre, i.e. 1/16th of a thaler.<sup>4</sup> Still in the 1930s, cattle were allowed to access the muddy swamp outside the buildings.

### 1.1 Hôtel d'Europe (Finfine Hotel)

In the early 1930s the spa facilities were further improved by Haile Sellassie, who also decided to reform the administration of the hot springs by appointing *Ato* Gebrè Medhin as a manager and a board of directors that included twelve state ministers.<sup>5</sup> The Emperor requested the opening of a hotel in the area, initially named Hôtel d'Europe, then Duke Hotel during the Derg and now named Finfine Hotel. The hotel had its own bathing huts – still in use – the floors and the baths of which were covered with majolica tiles. The building, representing one of the most interesting and characteristic examples of the city's old architecture, is two storey, rectangular in plan (approximately 12m x 25m), made of wood, *akka* and stone. A veranda runs all around the garden and connects the main building to the two one-storey front wings where the hotel rooms and the bathing huts are located. Beyond the entrance and the beautiful hall of which is currently the restaurant, two symmetrical wooden stairways lead to the lounge as large as the first floor. Interestingly, a painting attributed to the famous Afework Tekle and displayed in this room illustrates the circular pavilion that existed at the back of the hotel and that was replaced by the current concrete one. Local informants claimed that the hotel was established in the former residence of *Ras* Hailu Teklehaimanot, who had it built in the early 20th Century on the land given to him by Menelik. To date, we did not collect any evidence to support this claim. It is more probable that the design of the present hotel is one of the two works that the Armenian Minas Kherbekian developed in the area around 1915.

### 1.2 Seventh Day Hospital

Just behind the Finfine Hotel and still visible, is the complex that was once the Seventh Day Adventists' Hospital, established in 1933 and later transferred to the present site of Zawditu Memorial Hospital. Most of the complex was included in the Jubilee Palace compound, excluding



1-1

the building at the back of the restaurant's garden that functioned as a laboratory and currently accommodates the hotel personnel.

### 1.3 Railway Station

The next stop on this southwest itinerary is the railway station, a real landmark of the historic urban fabric. The construction of the 784 km Franco-Ethiopian railway line started in Djibouti in 1897 and was completed twenty years later, when the rail tracks reached Addis Ababa in 1917. However, ten years more had to elapse before the building of the current station began. The Railway Company had the idea to build a rest house for travellers and, for this purpose, brought an architect from Paris at the end of the 1920s.<sup>6</sup> The architect was Paul Barrias, born in Rueil in 1875 and son of the famous sculptor Louis Ernest Barrias. On 13 February



1-3a (Top) 1936; 1-3b (Above left) ca. 1926-1928; 1-3c (Above right) 2004.

1928, the Crown Prince Tafari Makonnen put the first foundation stone at the corner of the future building, inaugurated on the 3rd December 1929 by Empress Zawditu together with *Ras* Tafari himself.

#### 1.4 Kirkos Church

Just south of the railway station is located the church of Kirkos (or Qirqos). To get there, stand with your back to the railway station's façade and take Yilma Demise Street, which is the road that you will find on your right between the station and *Ras* Makonnen Avenue. Follow it south-eastwards and turn right at the first intersection with an asphalt road. Then pass under the small railway overpass and turn right. Follow the street westwards until, after a few hundred metres, the street splits to flank on both sides the church compound. It was Menelik who ordered the

building of a church in this place in 1908, on the suggestion of *Afanegus* Katama.<sup>7</sup> However, the old building was destroyed in the early 1960s and was replaced by the present modern style church.

Further south, beyond Kirkos church, lies the vast Tabanya Yaji *safar*, the riflemen's quarter. Informants pointed out that the first Tabanya Yaji *safar* was located in the area of the present Sheraton Hotel and was later transferred here by order of Menelik. It was the Emperor who gave the command of the riflemen to *Fitawrari* Sebberu, a notable from Wollo who was also put in charge of the administration of the whole area. The Emperor and Sebberu himself assigned land to notables and soldiers here, transforming into a quarter an area that previously was scarcely populated by Oromo Gulele and mainly used as grazing land for horses and pigs.<sup>8</sup>

#### 1.5 *Fitawrari* Agunafer Sebberu

One of the first remarkable examples of the architecture of that time is the house where the son of *Fitawrari* Sebberu, Agunafer Sebberu lived and is still inhabited by his descendants. To get there, start from the point where the street you took from the railway station splits just before Kirkos compound. Take the street on your left (the one that leaves the church on the right) and from this point, turn right onto the fourth intersecting road. Follow it for about 300 metres and just after the third bend turn left onto a small paved road and you will see the house's roof finials. This old residence is slightly elevated from the ground, due to the big foundation stones on which it is built and is located in the centre of a round area which constituted its *ghebbi* and that was later filled by other houses. Quadrangular in plan, the Agunafer's building has a two-tier roof without windows opening between the tiers and it has a front door which opens as a recess in the *cikka* wall functioning as a small veranda. The house represents an early example of the transition from the circular to the quadrangular plan and it is particularly interesting because it did not suffer any structural changes since the time of Menelik, when Agunafer – according to the current owners – lived there with his wife, Mentwab Ali, niece of Empress Menen. Northeast of Agunafer's *ghebbi* and not very far from it lived *Likamakwas* Katama, who became the first Minister of Interior in 1907 and was the overall chief of the area.<sup>9</sup> His house, unfortunately destroyed, was located on the right side of *Ras* Birru Avenue and just after the rail tracks going southwards, on the site currently occupied by military barracks. Still existing nearby, although not particularly interesting, are the

houses that belonged to two other important people of this *safar*: the first, at the junction between *Ras Birru Avenue* and the road leading to Kirkos church, was the residence of Katama's son, *Fitawrari Fikre Sellassie*. This one-storey, rectangular in plan building currently functions as a *Kebele* 25. The second belonged to *Fitawrari Mashasha Yemane* and is located a few hundreds metres south, on the same side of *Ras Birru Avenue*.<sup>10</sup>

Back to the junction with *Ras Makonnen Avenue*, turn left onto it and head westwards. Before reaching Mexico Square you leave on the right *Ligaba Wedajo Wube Safar*, called after a high-rank official of Menelik's court who lived here. Opposite, across *Ras Makonnen Avenue*, *Dejazmatch Beyene Abba Sabsib* had been allotted a vast tract of land and this explains why a street is still called after him.<sup>11</sup>



1-5



1-6

### 1.6 *Dejazmatch Habte Mikael*

As you reach Mexico Square roundabout, turn onto *Dejazmatch Wolde Mikael Street*, which is the second street on your right after *Ras Makonnen Avenue*. At the first major crossroad, after the Hotel d'Afrique, turn right onto Sudan Street. Follow it until you find the first break in the traffic island that allows you to make a U-turn. As you go back, turn onto the first non-asphalt small road on the right. This will lead you – after a few steps – to a crossroad, and if you take the small street on your right you will find *Dejazmatch Habte Mikael's* former residence in front of you. The building dates back to the time of Menelik, when the *Dejazmatch* worked in the imperial protocol office.<sup>12</sup> One-storey and quadrangular in plan, the house has *aikeka* walls and its four entrances – located in the middle of each side – are overhung by Indian style pediments. Despite the building's

poor condition, a woodwork decoration still runs around the roof's eaves and a finial stands on the top of the roof. Wolde Mikael bequeathed the house to his children – *Woizero Debrework* and *Fitawrari Demissie* – who lived here during the reign of Haile Sellassie.

### 1.7 Lideta Mariam Church

Beyond Mexico square, proceed on Smuts Street until you find the compound of Lideta Mariam church on the left. Next to the new church, you can see the old Lideta Mariam, built in the compound of the father confessor of Zawditu, *Melake-Gennet Tedla*, who became *Echegue* with the name of Gebre Menfes Qiddus.<sup>13</sup> He was the founder and patron of the church, which was inaugurated on 29 February 1924.<sup>14</sup>



1-7



1-8

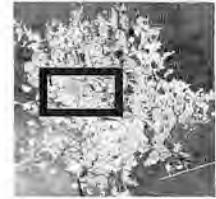
### 1.8 *Dejazmatch Bekele Weya*

This itinerary ends at the secondary school named after *Dejazmatch Bekele Weya*. The building – located a few hundreds metres on the right after the junction between Smuts Street and Bekele Weya Street – dates back to the time of the Italian invasion, but it is included here because it represents a noteworthy example of the architectural syncretism of the period. It is one-storey, rectangular in plan, and with a nice polygonal veranda at the right corner. Originally designated to function as the residence of an Italian air force general, the house was given to *Dejazmatch Bekele Weya* after the Italians left, in return for his 5-year patriotic fight against them. Moreover, most of the land in the neighbourhood belonged to his relatives.<sup>15</sup>

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Leopoldo Traversi, 'Addis Abeba', *L'Illustrazione italiana*, XXIV, 14, 1897
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>3</sup> Jean D'Esme, *A Travers l'Empire de Ménélik*, Paris, Plon, 1928, p. 59
- <sup>4</sup> Jean D'Esme (1928), p. 58-59
- <sup>5</sup> Nicola Gallelli, 'Addis Abeba e le sue terme', *Le vie d'Italia*, febbraio 1937, p. 130
- <sup>6</sup> Elyas Gabra-Egziabeher, *Prowess, piety and politics : the Chronicle of Abetu Iyasu and Empress Zewditu of Ethiopia (1909 - 1930)*, Köln, Köppe, 1994, p. 505
- <sup>7</sup> Haile Gabriel Dagne, 'The Establishment of Churches in Addis Ababa', in: *Proceedings of the International Symposium on the Centenary of Addis Ababa, 24-25 November, 1986*, Addis Ababa, 1987, p. 66
- <sup>8</sup> Ayelu Meshasha, interview, Addis Ababa, February 2003
- <sup>9</sup> Endalew Djirata, *A History of Tabanja Yazb Safar from its foundation to 1974*, Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University, 1987 (senior paper), p. 31
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup> Endalew Djirata (1987), p. 17
- <sup>12</sup> Abaye, interview Addis Ababa, 15 January 2004
- <sup>13</sup> Elyas Gabra-Egziabeher (1994), p. 423
- <sup>14</sup> Haile Gabriel Dagne (1987), p. 72
- <sup>15</sup> Elias Bekele (grandson of *Dejazmatch* Hailu Tesfaye), interview, Addis Ababa, February 2003

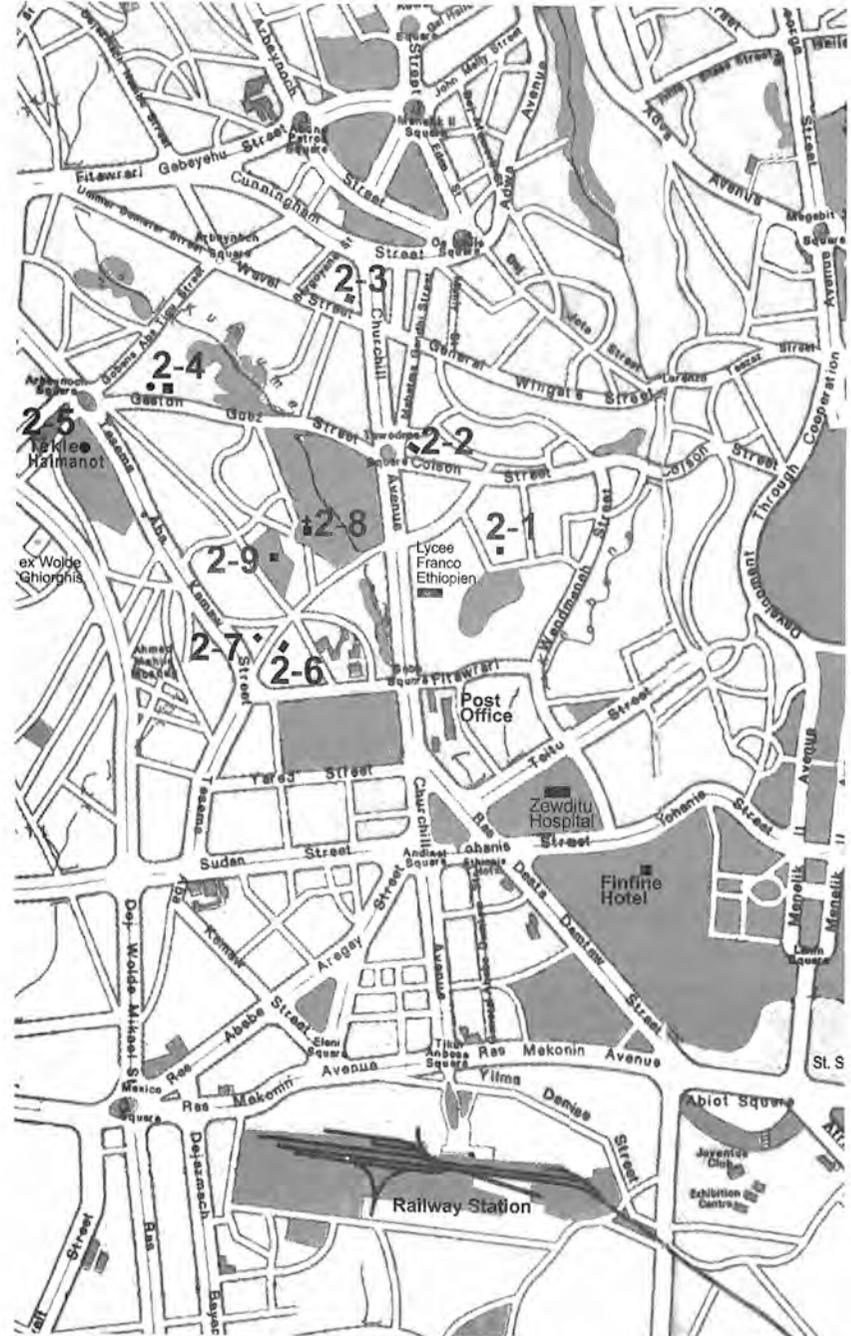
## Itinerary 2



During the time of Menelik, people who wanted to leave the Imperial *Ghebbi* through the western gate had no easy and immediate options other than going northwest and take what is now Colson Street, or going southwest on Taitu Street. The steep slopes of the Kechene River valley carved the *Ghebbi* out of its western neighbourhood and this explains why the road pattern of the area is still the same as when the city was founded.

It is from these slopes that the itinerary starts, through what the map depicts as a vast and homogeneously grey area, but corresponds in fact to a lively and densely populated settlement. The unfavourable physical features mentioned above played a major role in the development of the area, which at the end of the 19th Century was specifically designated to accommodate the Palace's domestic slaves.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the district became known as *Sera-Bet Safar*, i.e. the servant or slave quarters.<sup>2</sup> As early 20th Century pictures show, small round huts scattered the western slopes and although the dwelling density progressively increased over the years, the lack of important buildings still characterizes the area.

Further westwards, beyond the Kechene River, you enter what was once the *Segabiet Safar*, literally the meat district, a large triangular area delimited by that river, by Colson Street and Churchill Avenue. In this vast grassland grazed the royal herds and here was located the slaughterhouse, still existing in the 1930s on the west bank of Kechene River, just south of the bridge on Colson Street. It was in the 1940s and 1950s, according to Berlan, that the grazing land was progressively turned into a settlement: the slaughterhouse was transferred to the south of the town and land was allotted to soldiers and officials who had their residences built here. Until then – as the old maps show – a few houses existed in this area, and the residence of *Ras Likamawas* Nadaw stood



among them as the only important example of a nobleman's dwelling in the district.

### 2.1 *Ras Nadaw*

The building is located to the east of the present Guebre Mariam High School and it probably dates back to the first decade of the 20th Century. The presence in this area of a *tukul* belonging to the *Likamakwas* was mentioned in 1897 by an Italian prisoner brought to Addis after the Battle of Adwa and it is legitimate to suppose that the hut was turned into the present building a few years later. Situated on a small hill, it faces south in order to fully enjoy its panoramic position, a characteristic that typifies the residences of the court's dignitaries. It is a one-storey building, rectangular in plan, with stone walls and a roof covered with corrugated iron. Four columns, their capitals, and a pediment highlight the façade. The four



2-1



2-2

front windows have stone frames, with decorated keystones. However, the neoclassical style of the façade is combined with Indian-influenced typology so common of the notables' house of the period. After the beautiful stairway, in fact, the carved wooden front door leads to a central hall, on which the doors of smaller rooms open to. Together with *Ras Abate*, *Nadaw* was Menelik's *likamakwas*, his double, and therefore he dressed like the Emperor in public, and particularly on the battlefields. Describing *Nadaw's* duties in the first years of the 20th Century, Le Roux explained that 'le jour de bataille, pour égarer l'ennemi, le liquamaquas se tient sous le parasol impérial. Il est vêtu des ornements distinctifs du Roi des Roi. Ainsi le Négus anonyme est libre de courir du centre aux ailes de son armée, là où le péril rend sa présence nécessaire'.<sup>3</sup>

### 2.2 '*Satan Bief*'

Proceed westwards on Colson Street until you reach Tewodros Square, at the intersection with Churchill Avenue. It is from here that Ghandi Street begins climbing, that is the original northern tract of the Arada-railway station road, modified by the Italians in favour of the current straight north-south axis. At the corner between Colson and Gandhi Streets is located a very interesting historic building, once known as the devil's house, *satan bief* in Amharic. This big two-storey, rectangular in plan stone building got its popular nickname because it was one of the first cinemas in Addis, at a time in which media were surrounded by mystery and already feared for their power. In this area there was the Hotel de France complex, which, in turn, was one of the first "modern" hotels in town between the first decade of the 20th Century and the early 1930s. The hotel was run by the French Terras, whose name is still in use to identify the *safar*. At the end of the 1910s, he leased a large tract of land from Queen Taitu and established a restaurant and the hotel. Later, he added the Club de l'Union, particularly attended by the French community.<sup>4</sup> The travellers who visited it at the end of the 1920s describe it as a huge hall, which functioned, often at the same time, as a renowned bar, dancing hall, cinema, casino, and club.<sup>5</sup>

### 2.3 Shashibhaiseth

The next stop will allow you to appreciate some of the most fascinating examples of Indian style residential architecture of early Addis. From Tewodros Square go uphill on Churchill Avenue and turn left onto Wavel Street. As you turn onto the street you will see the first example of this building typology on your right, at the corner with Churchill Avenue. From this house, continue a few metres on Wavel Street and then turn onto the first small path on your right. Initially, the path will lead you into a large courtyard where stands the residence that has belonged to the Shashibhaiseth family for more than seventy years. The one-storey building is square in plan and has a two-tier roof and an elegant stone stairway. An interesting veranda enclosed by multi-glazed windows leads to a large square central hall, which gives access to all of the other rooms in the house. The particularity of the hall lies in the very high ceiling and the small windows opened at the top of the four walls. According to the current owner, Mr. Shashibhaiseth, the building reproduces, on a smaller scale, a typical noblemen's residence of the Indian region of Gujarat.<sup>6</sup> Of clear Indian influence is the roof finial of Shashibhaiseth's house,

representing a crescent moon. This type of finial, so common in Addis old houses, can not only tell you the religion of the owner, but also the name, as in the case of the finial of the building located immediately east of Shashibhaiseth's house. Also noteworthy are the neighbouring buildings and particularly the one that you will find, as you come from Wavel Street, on your right just before Shashibhaiseth's house. The shape of this building is also very common in Addis and represents another example of Gujarat architectural influence, that is the Bangali watching-tower type of house.

Since the beginning of the 20th Century, the area west of Churchill Avenue and found between Cunningham Street and Gaston Guez Street was used for residential purposes by generations of rich Arada Indian merchants. This makes the area particularly interesting not only in terms of Indian



2-3a



2-3b

style but also for its architectural syncretism, as the itinerary will show. Thus, follow it by going back to Tewodros Square and then westwards on the road – Gaston Guez Street – leading to the church of Tekle Haimanot. Before reaching the church, it is worth mentioning four buildings, the first two on the left, and the others on the right side of Gaston Guez Street. The first, almost at the corner with Churchill Avenue, is a very old and dilapidated building, the interesting Indian-influenced architecture of which is still visible a few metres below the street level. The difference in height is due to the fact that the street was elevated recently with the creation of Tewodros Square and the diversion of the northern tract of the present Churchill Avenue. Immediately west of the first house and in a similar low position stands the second building, that has nothing to do with local architecture, but it is entirely prefabricated and was brought

2-4a (Top) 1995; 2-4b (Above left) 2003; 2-4c (Above right) The *aderash* in 2003.

to Addis and assembled here by its French owner. The third building, approximately half-way between Tewodros Square and Arbeynoch Square, is currently functioning as a Muslim school, but it was the Armenian Karaseferian who had it built in the first decades of the 20th Century.

#### 2.4 *Dejazmatch* Wolde Gabriel 1

Finally, there is the most beautiful house of this group and one of the most interesting examples of early 20th Century architecture in Addis. It is constituted of *Dejazmatch* Wolde Gabriel's residence and its *aderash* nearby, both located approximately 150 metres before Arbeynoch Square, just behind the first row of houses on the right, at the corner between Gaston Guez and the last intersecting street before Arbeynoch Square. The two buildings are in a dominant position over the Kurtume River and represent

one of the few existing *ghebbis* in Addis in which nobleman's residence and *aderash* still survive. The residence is rectangular in plan, two-storey, and has a covered veranda running all around the first floor. The balustrade that closes the veranda still exists on two sides of the house and some of its wooden carved elements are still visible. A two-tier roof covers the first floor, with one window between the tiers on each of the house's side.



2-5

On the ground floor, a staircase links the residence with the *aderash*, a big one-storey circular building that, like the former, is made of stone, *cikka*, wood and covered with corrugated iron. The owner, according to Merab, 'est un homme d'une cinquantaine d'années, aux traits à la fois fins et énergiques, à l'œil ouvert sous les apparences de bonhomie naturelle. On le dit excessivement pieux, et on lui prête l'intention de vouloir se retirer pour vivre dans un monastère. Il a certainement un bel avenir devant lui (...). Il commanda sous le Dédjaz Loul-Segued en 1910'.<sup>7</sup>

### 2.5 Tekle Haimanot Church

As you reach Arbeynoch Square, enter the compound where stands the historic church of Tekle Haimanot. The church's foundation took place at the end of the 19th Century, at the same time of Ghiorghis'.

The construction of the latter, however, became a priority, whereas the completion of Tekle Haimanot was delayed up to the reign of Empress Zawditu.<sup>8</sup> The building is octagonal in plan and is made of masonry and wood.

### 2.6 Ras Tasamma Nadaw



2-6

During the time of Menelik, the area immediately south of the present Tikur Anbesa Hospital belonged to Ras Tasamma. According to a local informant,<sup>9</sup> Ras Tassama wanted the land and therefore established his tents in this area. The following day Menelik, who used to control the territory around the *Ghebbi* aided by his telescope, spotted the camp and got angry when he knew that it belonged to the Ras. The Emperor was aware of Tasamma's shrewdness and ambition and eventually granted that land to him. The Ras had his house built here, a two-storey masonry construction with a lantern opened above the roof. The date of its construction is not known, but a mention of the house and of its location in 1909 lead to suggest that it already existed at that time.<sup>10</sup> One of the lantern's windows faced the *Ghebbi* and allowed Tasamma to keep visual contact with Menelik and to control the territory between their houses.

The *Ras*' residence does not exist anymore and this makes the description provided by this account particularly interesting. The account also illustrates the power of *Ras* Tasamma, whose fame began in 1901, when Menelik appointed him *ras*. After a brilliant and rapid military career he earned the popular name of 'great fighter'.<sup>11</sup> *Ras* Tasamma was member of the Shoan nobility and son of Menelik's tutor *Dejazmatch* Nadaw Abba Bahr, who died in 1886.<sup>12</sup> 'Haut de taille et de caractère – thus Merab described Tasamma at the beginning of the 20th Century – il reste à l'âge de bientôt soixante ans, un soldat dans l'âme, aux allures franches et dégagées, ennemi de intrigue et de la duplicité'.<sup>13</sup> In 1909, when Menelik appointed *Lij* Iyasu as his successor, *Ras* Tasamma Nadaw was made *ras bitwaddad*, (lit. the preferred *ras*), and became Iyasu's regent. Because of his opposition to Taitu's policy, when *Ras* Tasamma died on 11 April 1911, the Queen was suspected of his murder, although the court eventually cleared her.<sup>14</sup>

In the former *Ras* Tassama's *ghebbi* stands an interesting and elegant building, constructed after the *Ras*' death and probably owned by his heirs. The building, which dates back to Zawditu's reign, is located down Arbeynoch Square, around 150 metres to the right of the road that from Aba Kemaw Street goes north-eastwards and reaches Churchill road between Arbeynoch Square and Saba Square. It is a solid and sober building, rectangular in plan and made of greyish-brownish squared stones. It has quoins at the corners and at the sides of the main windows and the doorway, the latter surmounted by a small pediment. The building has an Indian-influenced two-tier roof, with six small rectangular windows opening between the tiers on the front and back sides. It is highly probable that this is one of the three houses that, according to written documents, the Armenian constructor Minas Kherbekian built in the former *Ras* Tassama's *ghebbi* in the early 1920s.

### 2.7 *Tsahafi Taezaz* Wolde Ghiorghis

Just opposite *Ras* Tasamma's heirs' residence, there is a house that stands out for the historical importance of its first owner, more than for its European style architecture. The building, recently turned into a cultural centre after being *Kebele* 33, belonged to *Tsahafi Taezaz* Wolde Ghiorghis, a Minister Scribe. The house was built before the Italian invasion.

### 2.8 *Azaj* Gezaw – Gola Mikael Church

A few hundred metres northwards of the area where *Ras* Tasamma had his house you will find the hill on the top of which Gola Mikael Church is located. In the same site stood the house of *Azaj* Gezaw. The *Azaj* was so deeply involved in the administration of the city (e.g. supervision of public works, dealing with foreigners, urban land distribution to the royal court's members), that he could be considered as the "mayor" of Addis Ababa.<sup>15</sup> When Gezaw died, the two round houses that constituted his residence were given to the Ethiopian Church by Gezaw's daughter, *Woizero* Bekelech, and turned into a church in June 1942. Between 1971–1972, unfortunately, the buildings were totally destroyed to give room to the present church. Therefore, it is not for architectural interest that the place is worth visiting, but because it represents a fascinating example of nobleman's *ghebbi*. The *Azaj*'s residence dominated the whole town



2-7

2-9

centre and the forest that entirely covered the hill gave the place a sense of serenity that is still found today.

### 2.9 Kachini

From Gola Mikael compound, you will see, just beyond the southwestern wall, the roof of an interesting house, which dates back to the first two decades of the 20th Century. The building – which needs urgent rehabilitation – is rectangular in plan and consists of two intersecting parts. These are built at different levels, although most of the construction is one-storey. The external walls, made of wood and *sikka*, stand on a stone base. A stone stairway leads up to the main door, sheltered by a nice veranda enclosed by multi-glazed windows. The entrance is highlighted by a pyramidal dome and under the roof's eaves runs a 'gingerbread'

decoration. Part of the front side is covered by metal plaques, similar to those decorating some of the buildings that you will visit later in the Armenian *sajar*. In fact, it was an Armenian, Kachini, who had this house built.

Next stop is *Dejazmatch* Hailu Tesfaye's *ghebbi* and Emmanuel Church, in the western outskirts of Addis. To reach them, one option is to cross the interesting, but usually very crowded, Merkato area. This route will give the opportunity of visiting the huge area that began functioning as a marketplace since 1938, when the Italians inaugurated the 'Grande mercato indigeno' (big indigenous market) by moving here the market traditionally held at the Arada. This was the first step taken by the colonial master plan to split of the city and its functions into 'Indigenous' and 'Italian', according to the fascist racial policy officially inaugurated by Mussolini at the end of the 1930s.

The establishment of the present market removed most architecture that had existed in the area, among them, the *ghebbi* of the powerful *Fitawrari* Habte Ghiorghis. His residence was located in the present Raguel Church area and it was one of the city's hallmarks due to the political importance of its owner. He was a leading general of Menelik's army, who also became Ministry of War and played a pre-eminent role in government affairs until he died in 1926. A few hundred metres south of Habte Ghiorghis' house – just south of the current junction between Aba Nefso Street and *Dejazmatch* Wolde Mikael Street – stood the residence of another key figure of 19th Century Ethiopian history, *Negus* Wolde Ghiorghis Abboye. Cousin of Menelik, he became *ras* in 1893 and *negus* in 1917. In 1903, his house became the U.S. mission's temporary residence<sup>16</sup> and this explains why we owe a detailed description of the building to a member of that mission, the American envoy Robert Skinner: 'An adobe wall, such as they build in Mexico, surrounded the large park, which was subdivided into numerous compounds. In the central compound stood the palace. The palace was probably 100 feet long by 80 feet wide, one storey high, and divided into two rooms. The external walls were made of sun-dried bricks, such as we saw in process of manufacture as we approached from the Guebi'.<sup>17</sup>

However, for those who want to escape the traffic of the market area there are some alternatives for reaching Emmanuel Church, like taking

the Jimma Road (Jan Smuts Street) westwards and at the height of the old airport, turn down the first road on the right after the compound of the Supreme Court, and then the second road on the left that goes slowly up, passing in front of the church, on the left.

#### 2.10 Emmanuel Church

The church of Emmanuel was built by order of Empress Zawditu, although, according to a local informant,<sup>18</sup> it was *Lij* Iyasu the first who had the idea of building it. The church was completely renovated in recent times and has lost historical charm. At the time of its construction, all the area belonged to *Dejazmatch* Hailu Tesfaye, who gave his name to the whole *sajar*. It was *Fitawrari* Hapte Ghiorghis who asked him, and obtained, a tract of land for constructing the church.

#### 2.11 *Dejazmatch* Hailu Tesfaye

His residence is close to Emmanuel Church, but it was almost entirely destroyed during the Derg. What remains can be seen by taking the road in front of the entrance of the church compound. Follow it downhill and turn right after a few hundreds metres, when you will see the gate of Hailu Tesfaye School. Opposite the gate there is the big circular area that constituted the *Dejazmatch's* compound and in which still exists the servants' old house, rectangular in plan and with Indian-influenced roof finials. A few metres south of the recent house (1960) located in the centre of the compound you will see the ruins of Hailu Tesfaye's former residence, the impressive character of which gives evidence of the building's importance. One-storey and rectangular in plan, it covered the significant area of 110-120 square metres. The house was built around 1921<sup>19</sup> on a stone base and it was made of *akka* and cedar wood, the latter imported from Addis Alem and particularly appreciated for its lasting strength.

#### 2.12 *Dejazmatch* Wolde Gabriel 2

From Emmanuel Church proceed towards the last stop of the itinerary by going back to Jan Smuts Street. As you reach it, turn westwards (right) and follow the road until you find the roundabout leading onto the Ring Road. At the roundabout, turn right onto the slip road leading to the Ring and then follow it northwards up to the next roundabout, which allows you to go back on the same Ring Road. On your way back, after around 150 metres from the roundabout, turn right onto the road running just beside



2-12

the Ring Road and parallel to it. Just after the third pedestrian overpass, turn onto the asphalt road on your right and follow it uphill. As you reach the top of the hill, turn left onto the road leading to Keranio Medhane Alem Church and, shortly afterwards, you will see the large compound of Keranio M/Alem Primary School on your right. Inside the compound, in a beautiful position with a spectacular view over the city, there are some school buildings and, close to them, an old two-storey house, probably built between the 1910s and the 1920s. The house belonged to the same *Dejazmatch* Wolde Gabriel who owned the above-mentioned buildings at Merkato and the land which was granted by Menelik to the *Dejazmatch* as a reward for his participation in the Battle of Segele in 1916. The building, similar to his residence at Merkato, is quadrangular in plan, with *cikka*-plastered stone walls. According to local informants, the house was never

restored and all its parts are original, including the corrugated metal sheets of the roof. An external wooden staircase leads to the first floor, which is entirely surrounded by a balustrade. The wooden elements of the latter create a pleasant decorative pattern. A veranda runs around this level, which is covered by a two-tier roof with windows opening between the tiers. A single large room occupies the floor, with internal walls covered by imported wallpaper and the floor made of large wooden boards. *Dejazmatch* Wolde Gabriel was the administrator of this *safar* and in this house he used to hold the periodic meeting of the religious association



2-13

(St. Mary), to which he belonged. This tradition was maintained by the *Dejazmatch's* daughter, *Woizero* Genet, who lived in the house until the Derg expropriated the building. Since then, it began functioning as a store and for accommodating the neighbouring school's personnel.

#### 2-13 Keranio Medhane Alem

The church building stands 400 metres southwards. It is octagonal in plan and it was built between 1930 and 1933.<sup>20</sup> The first church was established in 1823-1824 during the reign of King Sahle Sellassie and, therefore, it is older than the city itself. At that time it was under the authority of *Abba* Zewelde Maryam and depended on Etissa parish. In 1908-1909, Menelik made the church independent and named it Keranio. In those years, *Dejazmatch* Wolde Gabriel administered the church with the title of *gebez*.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> See Edouard Berlan, *Addis Abeba - La plus haute ville d'Afrique*, Grenoble, Imprimerie Allier, 1963, p. 66
- <sup>2</sup> Endalew Djirata, *A History of Tabanja Yazb Safar from its foundation to 1974*, Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University, 1987 (senior paper), p. 16
- <sup>3</sup> Hugues Le Roux, *Ménélik et Nous*, Paris, Nilsson, 1902, p. 248-49
- <sup>4</sup> Lincoln De Castro, *Nella terra dei Negus*, Milano, Treves, 1915, p. 282
- <sup>5</sup> See Alexandre Liano, *Ethiopie. Empire des nègres blancs*, Paris, Pierre Roger, 1929; Jean D'Esme, *A Travers l'Empire de Ménélik*, Paris, Plon, 1928
- <sup>6</sup> Shashibhaiseth, interview, Addis Ababa, 10 February 2003
- <sup>7</sup> Paul Merab, *Impressions d'Ethiopie*, Paris, Ed. Leroux, 1921-1929, p. 78
- <sup>8</sup> Haile Gabriel Dagne, 'The Establishment of Churches in Addis Ababa', in: *Proceedings of the International Symposium on the Centenary of Addis Ababa, 24-25 November, 1986*, Addis Ababa, 1987, p. 67; Martin E. Johnson, *The Evolution of the Morphology of Addis Ababa*, Los Angeles, University of California, 1974, Ph.D. thesis, p. 182
- <sup>9</sup> Admasu Haile Mariam Gubere, interview, Addis Ababa, 31 October 2003
- <sup>10</sup> Lincoln De Castro (1915); see also the map in Lincoln De Castro, 'La città e il clima di Addis Abeba', *Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana*, 46, 1909
- <sup>11</sup> 'Le Ras Tessama', *Le Semeur d'Ethiopie*, novembre-décembre 1910, p. 764
- <sup>12</sup> Chris Prouty and Eugene Rosenfeld, *Historical Dictionary of Ethiopia*, Metuchen (N.J.), Scarecrow, 1981, p. 170
- <sup>13</sup> Paul Merab (1921-1929), p. 67
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup> Eshetu Assen, 'The Growth of Municipal Administration and some Aspects of Daily Life in Addis Ababa', in: *Proceedings of the International Symposium on the Centenary of Addis Ababa*, Addis Ababa, 1986, p. 79
- <sup>16</sup> <http://www.ethiopianembassy.org/GWSpeech.shtml> (speech of the new Ethiopian Ambassador to the United States, Kassahun Ayele, at the Elliot School of International Affairs, Washington, D.C., December 12, 2003)
- <sup>17</sup> Robert Skinner, *Abyssinia of To-Day*, London, Edward Arnold, 1906, p. 81
- <sup>18</sup> Hullu Fantay, interview, Addis Ababa, 22 February 2003
- <sup>19</sup> Elias Bekele, interview, Addis Ababa, 22 February 2003
- <sup>20</sup> Werku Sahle, Keranio Yetarik Mezeke, Addis Ababa, 1986 E.C. (Text in Amharic)

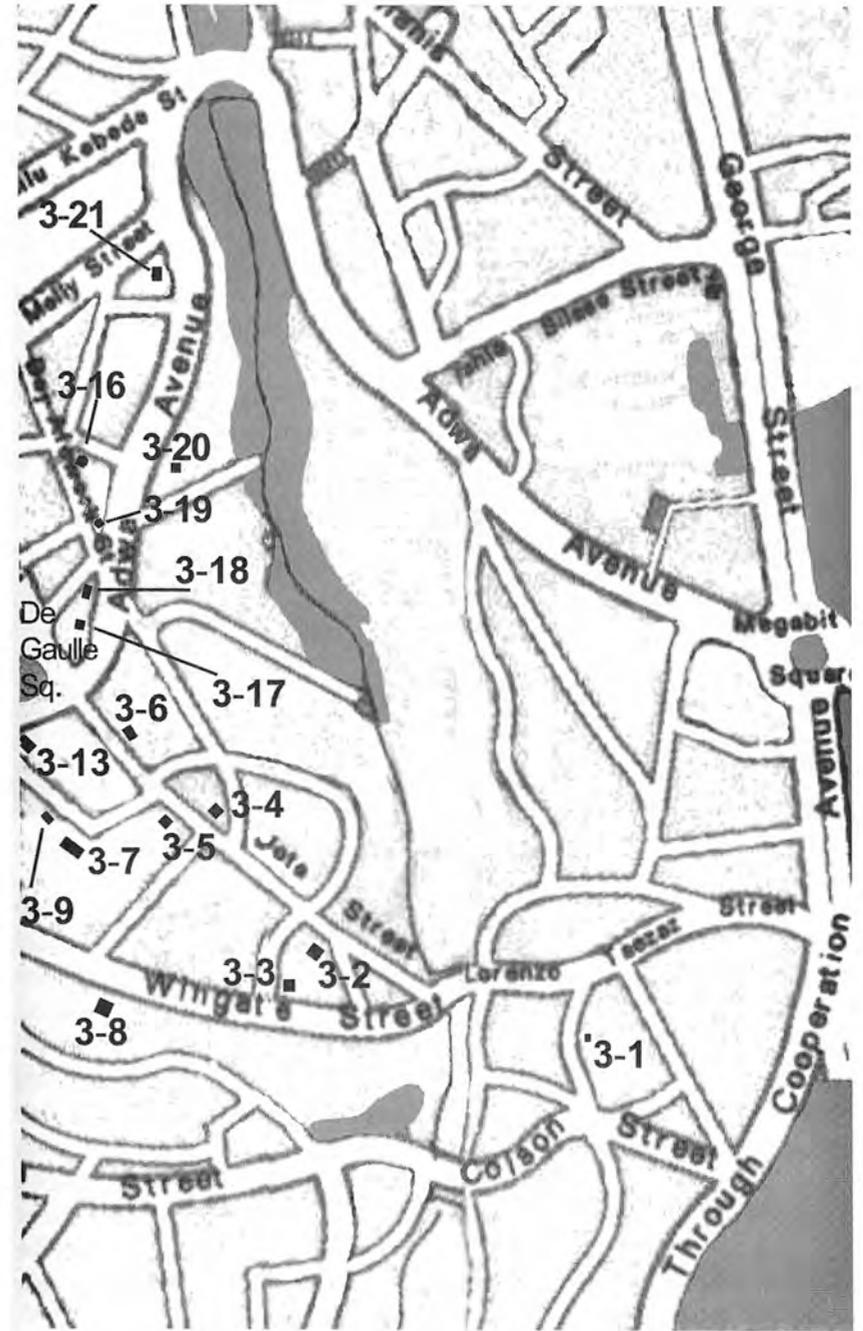
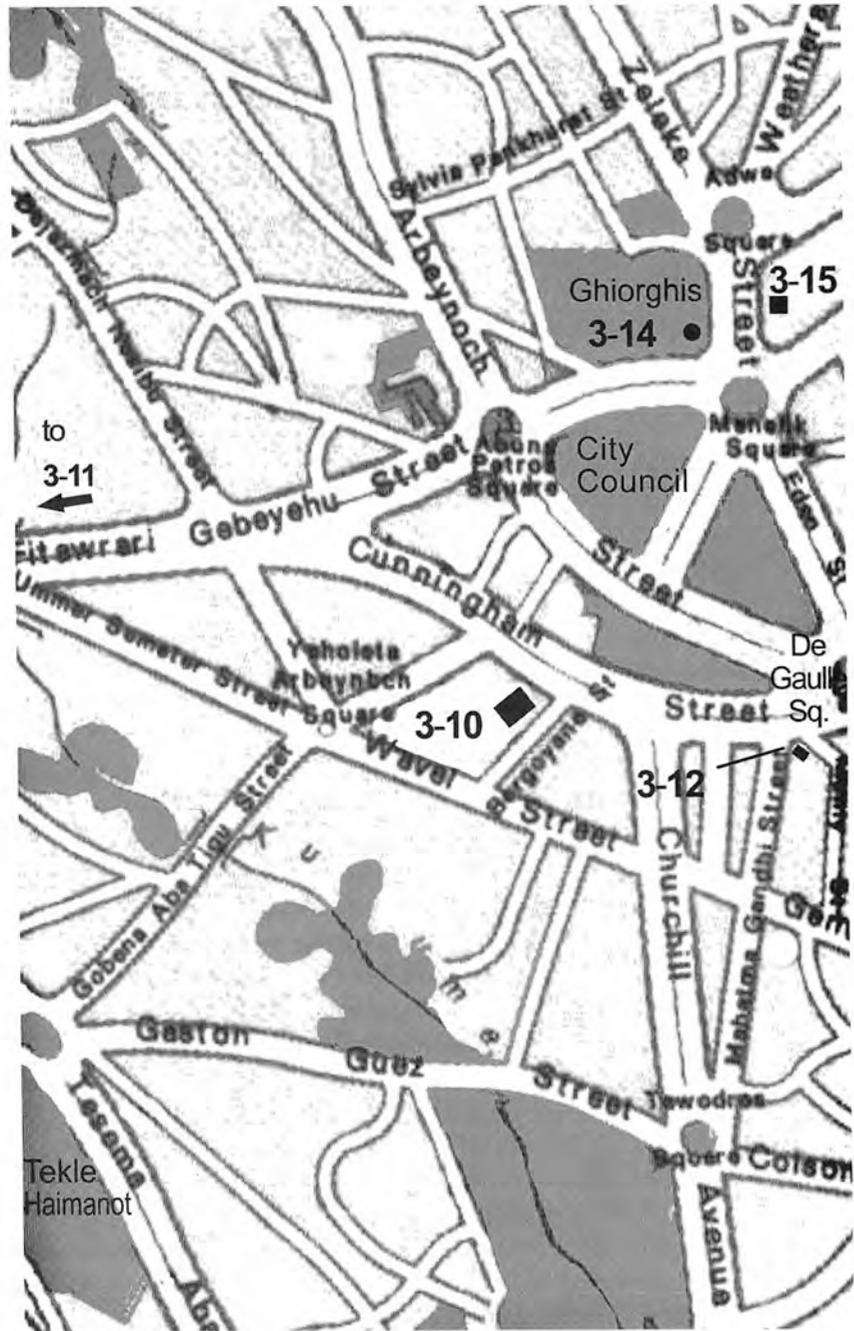
## Itinerary 3



According to the current maps, there are no more direct routes linking Imperial *Ghebbi* and Arada, although this axis played a historic role in the development of the city. In fact, it connected the centre of political power with a district that, in the early period of Addis, was the core of the city's economic life. Here, in addition to the custom offices and the most important shops, a weekly market was held until 1938, when the Italians moved it to the present location.

In the past, however, and despite the steep slopes of the Kechene River valley, there were two main routes directly linking the government and business areas and it is through their identification that is possible to understand the current strange road pattern northwest of the *Ghebbi*. Here is located the latter's most important access, the northwest gate, which was the one in everyday use in the first years of the 20th Century, except when the Emperor was in the capital, since it was thronged from morning to night.<sup>1</sup> Through this gate passed one of the first urban roads, the one directly linking Menelik's residence – the *elfiñ* – with Arada. The French traveller George Remond reported in the early 1920s that initially only Menelik had the right to use this road and those who dared to venture there were immediately beaten up by the guards. This happened to the French Consul, though after this episode the road was opened to the public.<sup>2</sup>

The first tract of this road still exists today, interrupted by the intersection with Lorenzo Tazaz Street. In the past, however, it continued westwards, crossed the river and, probably, led into Adwa Avenue becoming the road where the Indian National Community School is located and, passing beside the current Cinema Empire, it continued uphill in the present *Dejazmatch* Afewerk Street. This was the route usually taken by



Empress Zawditu when she travelled by mule from the Imperial *Ghebbi* to Ghiorghis Church.<sup>3</sup> The second route linking *Ghebbi* and Arada stemmed from the same northern gate but ran south of the first. It began with what is now Colson Street, turned northwest after a few hundred metres from the *Ghebbi*'s gate, crossed the Kechene River, became the current Eden Street and finally climbed up to Menelik Square.

### 3.1 Ymtubezznas

The itinerary begins by relying on a combination of what remains of the above-mentioned old routes, with the purpose of giving the journey some historical flavour. Thus, stand with your back to the *Ghebbi*'s northwest gate and set off by taking the road that passes through the Sera-Bet *Safar* and intersects Lorenzo Taezaz Street. At the junction, proceed westwards on Lorenzo Taezaz Street and turn onto the first asphalt road on your



3-1



3-2

left. After a 2-300 metres, on the left side, you will find one of the few interesting houses still existing in the area from Menelik's time. It is a small "tower-like" building with a nice and panoramic veranda on the first floor of the "tower", on the top of which stands a metal round decoration with a finial. The house is made entirely of *cikka* and wood and despite its precarious condition it is still inhabited. It belonged to Ymtubezznas, a rich Shoan landowner who was the daughter of Hapte Mariam, a judge at Menelik's court.<sup>4</sup> After this short diversion, go back to Lorenzo Taezaz Street and cross the Kechene River on one of the city's earliest bridges. Immediately after the bridge, at the junction where Lorenzo Taezaz Street changes its name in General Wingate Street, turn right in order to take *Dejazmatch* Jote Street. This road goes uphill through the old Serateña *Safar* and it is particularly rich in beautiful historic buildings.

### 3.2 Ethiopian School

You will find one of these buildings inside the vast compound at the corner between *Dejazmatch* Jote Street and the first road on the left, in the area where is currently located the Red Sea Hotel. Three different buildings constitute this complex: the first, low and circular in plan, is attached to a one-storey, rectangular in plan building; immediately southwest of them stands a two-storey house, square in plan and with a quadrangular lantern that opens above the roof. The historical interest of the complex lies in the fact that most of it was built around 1912-1913 to function as



3-3

one of the very first schools of Menelik's time. It was in this school that Haile Sellassie studied French.<sup>5</sup> The buildings, which probably were first owned by an Armenian, would have been granted by Haile Sellassie to Dr. Lorenzo Taezaz before the Italian invasion, together with a very large tract of land northwards, subsequently divided and allotted for housing. Dr. Taezaz (1900-1946) played a major role in Ethiopian diplomacy during the Italian occupation and in the 1940s he served as a Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Posts and Telephones, and President of the Chamber of Deputies.

### 3.3 Artin Avakian

Not far from here you will find the house that once belonged to Artin Avakian. To get there, go uphill from *Dejazmatch* Jote Street and turn onto



3-4

the first road that you will find on your left, after the compound of the former Ethiopian School. The house is located on the left at the end of this road, at the corner with General Wingate Street. The interest of this building lies in the interaction between its two storeys, the irregular disposition of which decorates the house by creating a movement effect. In addition, a veranda with wooden balustrades runs all around the ground floor, whereas large multi-glazed windows characterize the first floor. Despite the fact that the building materials are still those used in the early period, i.e. stones, *cikka* and wood, the house was probably built in the 1930s. The first owner – according to his niece, still living in the same house – was an Armenian constructor who had migrated out of Armenia after the 1917 revolution and had come to Addis in 1924.

### 3.4 Minas Kherbekian

Back to *Dejazmatch* Jote Street and a few hundred metres uphill, on the right side of the road, you will find an outstanding example of the early 20th Century architecture and its blend of different influences and styles. Its design is attributed to Minas Kherbekian, a key figure in the local building and road construction sector during the first three decades of the 20th Century. It is worth noting that this is the tallest building among those of the pre-Italian period. It is quadrangular in plan and its five storeys are made of stone, wood and *cikka*. If you walk a bit down the small road immediately south of the building you can enjoy a view of its structure and appreciate architectural details such as the lateral wall's texture and the projecting veranda of the third floor. After the Italian invasion, the house was turned into the Shoa Hotel and just beside it was opened the Omar Khayyam restaurant, which functioned from then on.



3-5



3-6

### 3.5 Karakachiani

Opposite Minas' house, across *Dejazmatch* Jote Street, the Philis Hotel occupied the building where is now the United Printers, whereas immediately uphill is located an interesting two-storey, rectangular in plan, neoclassical building, currently functioning as the local *Kebele's* finance office. It dates back to Zawditu's time and was the residence of the Greek dentist Karakachiani. It was Zawditu herself who gave him the land on which the house was built as compensation for his services as a dentist.<sup>6</sup> Inside, you can admire the elegant wooden stairway leading up to the first floor.

### 3.6 Elias Bessmelian

Among the several houses located in this road and originally owned

by Armenians, it is worth noting the architectural style of the one immediately uphill of Minas Kherbekian's former residence, on the same side of the street. It belonged to Elias Bessmelian, brother of the Samuel who became the first secretary of the US Embassy in Addis and who had his villa in General Wingate Street.<sup>7</sup> Elias' residence – recently restored – is rectangular in plan and entirely made of stone. The elegant two-storey building is characterized by the tower-like effect of the large room built above the roof. The façade is enriched by a nice veranda, which is supported by tall cedar posts on the ground floor and has a wooden balcony on the upper floor.

### 3.7 Taitu Hotel

As you go a little back down *Dejazmatch* Jote Street, turn right onto the small street in front of Omar Khayyam restaurant. A few hundred metres on the left you will see the Taitu Hotel, another historical landmark in the city's life and architecture. The hotel was built in 1907 and was also known as Etegue Hotel and Hotel Imperial.<sup>8</sup> It was the Empress herself who wanted this hotel and she gave the task of designing it to the Armenian Minas Kherbekian. The building's present design is still the original and it is characterized by a two-tier roof and by verandas running all around the two floors. Access is also possible from General Wingate Street and this explains the hotel's symmetrical façade, in the centre of which a wooden balcony overhangs the main door. The hotel was built rapidly and once completed, the Empress ordered to put on the front side 'a sentence in Amharic saying, more or less this: People coming from the sea, do you believe Abyssinia is one of the last countries in the world? Here you can sleep and eat according to your customs'.<sup>9</sup> At that time, mostly Ethiopian dignitaries, diplomats, and foreigners used the hotel facilities, since room prices were too high for the majority of the population. Around 1920, for instance, these prices varied from 30 to 100 thalers per month,<sup>10</sup> although, according to many foreign travellers of the time, the quality of the service and furniture justified the cost. In the 1920s, the hotel offered 'ample accomodation (including a bathroom)'<sup>11</sup>, and another foreign customer tell us that 'le lit de cuivre est écuisoné, en son dossier, aux armes d'Ethiopie, au centre desquelles le lion emblématique, superbe et magnifique, veille sur notre sommeil'.<sup>12</sup> In that period, the hotel was particularly appreciated for its park, with eucalyptus trees and flower-beds of carnations.<sup>13</sup> Initially, the hotel had an Ethiopian manager who worked under Taitu's direct supervision, but during the 1910s the Greek Bollolakos took over.<sup>14</sup>



3-7a (Top) ca. 1909; 3-7b (Above left) ca. 1926; 3-7c (Above right) 2004.

However, the Empress remained very fond of the hotel and sometimes, even in her late age, she used to send strawberries to the customers,<sup>15</sup> most probably those strawberries cultivated in the *elfin's* garden at the *Ghebbi*. In the early years of the Italian colonization, the Hotel Imperiale, as it was named then, was "modernized" and in 1937 the present masonry annexes between the main building and General Wingate Street were added. Today, after more than one century, the hotel is still functioning and it does not only maintain the original name, but also the charm.

### 3.8 Bank of Abyssinia

While visiting the Taitu Hotel's garden, it is sufficient to go out from the gate entrance in General Wingate Street to find – just across the street – another building that used to be part of the same first, historic nucleus



3-8a (Top) 2004; 3-8b (Above left) ca. 1936-1937; 3-9 (Above right).

of Arada: the Bank of Abyssinia. This institution was founded in 1905 as an Anglo-Egyptian company, although capital and personnel were mostly British. In 1931 it became the Bank of Ethiopia, with British and French capitals.<sup>16</sup> The building was completed in 1907,<sup>17</sup> but it was only in January 1910 that it became the headquarters of the Bank of Abyssinia.<sup>18</sup> Designed by Sebastiano Castagna (see Ghiorghis Church below) and built by the Italian constructor Vaudetto,<sup>19</sup> it became one of the most important city buildings of that time. Entirely built in masonry according to a design that highlights a foreign influence, the building has a neoclassical style, emphasized by the presence of tympan and columns in the façade.

### 3.9 First Greek Church

Go back to the northern entrance of the Taitu Hotel and turn left as you

exit the main gate: the house beside the hotel reveals another sign of the Greek presence in Addis. This long and low building, that now functions as a bar, was born for a quite different purpose. In fact, it was the first Greek church in town. Its construction was wanted by the former Taitu's manager, Bollolakos, who also invited a Greek-Orthodox priest from abroad in order to carry out the church services.<sup>20</sup>

As you follow this road westwards and northwards, the concentration of beautiful historic buildings reaches a peak. This suggests stopping the house-by-house description for a while to enjoy this unique architectural landscape in a more relaxed way. The itinerary of this walk includes the street of the Taitu Hotel up to the intersection with Muniy Street and then downhill to General Wingate Street. Then you can go back uphill by taking Gandhi Street, which is the original upper tract of the road



28. Ghandi Street in ca. 1935.

29. Houses near Jote Street in 2004.

that linked the railway station with Arada and that later became Churchill Avenue. However, many other diversions can be added to fully admire these streets, their houses, and their atmosphere. Here, the Indian architectural influence dominates, a remainder of the time – the first decades of the 20th Century – in which Indians ran most of the permanent shops and stores at Arada.

As shown in the introducing chapter, Indians were not only particularly active in the business sector, but they were also very skilful carpenters and house-builders. At the beginning of the 20th Century, their houses in the area 'rise as if by magic, with bizarre architectures between Swiss chalet and pagoda, all polished outside by the means of dazzling and multicoloured paints'.<sup>21</sup>

At the end of Gandhi Street, before entering the Arada former market area, it is well worth visiting a group of beautiful old houses located in the compound of the Arada Post Office. To get there, turn westwards (left) onto Cunningham Street. Shortly after the intersection with Churchill Street, you will find the Post Office on your right.

### 3.10 Mohamedally

This large one-storey, rectangular in plan building is entirely made of stone and has an Indian style two-tier roof, with small rectangular openings between the tiers (3-10a). The symmetrical façade is characterized by two series of arched windows, separated by a higher body with an arched door and a circular opening below the pediment. According to written documents found in the archives of the Armenian community in Addis, Minas Kherbekian designed the building in

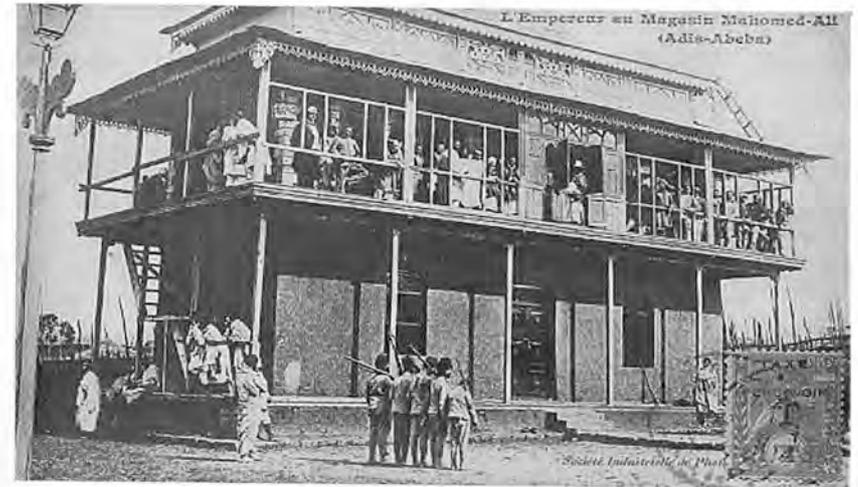


3-10a



3-10b

1920. The compound belonged to the renowned Indian firm G. M. Mohamedally, one of the most powerful trading companies in Addis and Ethiopia during Menelik's reign. At that time, the company's owner – the Gujarati Indian Mohamedally – was also the Indian community's spokesperson at the imperial court.<sup>22</sup> Inside the compound, there are two beautiful examples of Indian style buildings that date back to Menelik's reign. The first – located across the courtyard as you enter the compound – is a two-storey stone building, the back door of which is overhung by an elegant veranda (3-10b). The latter, supported by wooden posts, is enclosed by multi-glazed panels and has a two-tier roof adorned by a finial and elegantly decorated eaves. Particularly noteworthy is the exquisite symmetry of the building's façade, characterized by a beautiful double stairway (3-10e). From a historical perspective, however, the



3-10c (Top) ca. 1904; 3-10d (Above left); 3-10e (Above right).

most interesting building is the two-storey one on the right as you enter the compound (3-10d). Partly hidden behind trees, it has a veranda in the façade and a two-tier roof with beautifully decorated panels between the tiers and nice cornices running all around the eaves. The building's historic interest lies in the fact that when it was opened – at the end of 19th Century or the very first years of the 20th Century – it was one of the first 'modern' general stores opened in Addis. The event was so important that a postcard celebrated its inauguration, which occurred in the presence of Emperor Menelik. The picture in this guide refers to a postcard sent on 1904 and it shows the building when it was not yet finished and still lacked the decorations of the posts supporting the veranda, the wooden balustrade, and a proper stairway (3-10c).

### 3.11 The first Italian ‘Casa del Fascio’

Further westwards, a few hundred metres after the junction between Cunningham Street and *Fitawrari* Gebeyehu Street, you will see on the right another historic palace, which currently houses the Hagbes Shop. This two-storey construction has a façade adorned by arched windows and a door on the ground floor and nice covered balconies on the first floor. The building was the first ‘Casa del Fascio’ used by the Italians after the invasion.

The choice of establishing the first ‘Casa del Fascio’ here was most probably influenced by the close proximity with the core settlement area of the Italian community in Addis between the 19th and 20th Century. To get there, go back towards Piazza by following *Fitawrari* Gebeyehu Street and turn onto the last road that you will find on your left before



3-11

30. House in the *Talian Safar* in 2004.

reaching *Abuna* Petros Square. After a very short distance you will see the old houses of the district, which still bears the name of *Talian Safar*. In this area, the telegraph office run by the Italians and connecting Addis Ababa with Asmara was opened in the first half of the 20th Century, not very far from the compound of the first Italian Legation established in Addis. The *Talian Safar* grew up around the telegraph office in the late 1900s, when the area began to be settled by Italians<sup>23</sup>, many of whom were soldiers of the Italian army defeated at Adwa in 1896.

After this short diversion, go back to the junction between Cunningham Street and Gandhi Street, from where the visit to the former market area begins. The market was located at 2,460 metres above sea level in the area currently named Arada or Piazza, after the name Piazza Impero

(Empire Square) given during the Italian occupation. It was around this square that the business district began to develop at the end of the 19th Century. In 1908, the Italian medical doctor De Castro remarked about the presence in the area of a growing number of houses of most different shapes and shops and bazaars run by Greeks, Armenians and Indians.<sup>24</sup> In the early 20th Century, shops and warehouses lined up around the market square, in buildings that a local newspaper described as being of European character.<sup>25</sup> In these shops it was possible to find high quality weapons with all their accessories; tools; rolls of American cotton fabrics, special cotton fabrics for the making of the local *shamma*, embroidered silk clothes; shoes and hats; a variety of canned food, liqueurs and wines, rice, pasta, sugar, oil, and also tobacco and the most common drugs.<sup>26</sup> Among the shops located near the market area in the 1910s, one was run on behalf of Menelik by *Nagadras* (lit. head of merchants) Haile Ghiorghis,

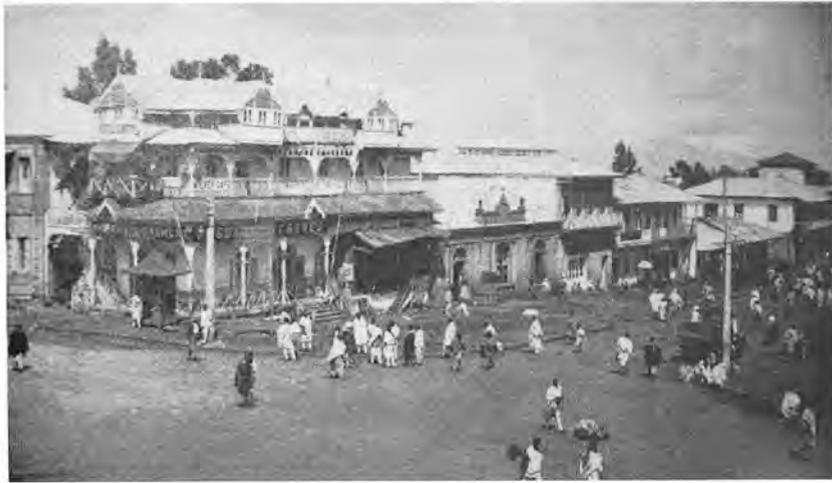


31. Cunningham Street in the 1900s.

32. The Arada Triumphal Arch in ca. 1930.

a key person of the time who we will return to later in the chapter. On sale in this shop, according to De Castro, there were items coming from the *Ghebbi*'s warehouses after having been discarded by Menelik: knick-knacks, liqueurs, Italian cigars, and even ladies' hats in Paris fashion.<sup>27</sup> Meat trade was another activity in which the *nagadras* and other court members were involved. Butcher's shops were introduced for the first time in the Addis market at the beginning of the 20th Century, probably by Greeks or Armenians, and they were immediately followed by those owned by the *nagadras*, where meat was sold 'at reasonable prices, under municipal control'.<sup>28</sup>

Among the very first buildings to be erected in the area, two deserve a special mention (and a picture) here. The first – and probably the oldest –



33. (Top) Corner Jote Street-Adwa Avenue in ca. 1936; 34. (Above left) Jewazi's store (to the left) in the early 1900s; 35. (Above right) Magdalinos' shop in ca. 1909.

was a two-storey simple building that was located on the now-named Cunningham Street, a few hundred metres westwards of De Gaulle Square. Characterized by its two gable roofs, it hosted the store of the Indian merchant Jewazi until it was demolished before 1936.

The second, destroyed around 1937, was a beautiful Indian style building, rectangular in plan, three-storey and with six gable-roof dormers. Located at the corner between the present *Dejazmatch* Jote Street and Adwa Avenue, it stood out for its elaborate level of decoration of roof and veranda. Until the Italian invasion, the Madgalinos brothers had their bazaar on the ground floor, while between 1930 and 1936 the first floor hosted first a hotel and then the Wiener Café.

The transfer of the market in 1938 was certainly a shock for the Arada businesses, but it did not interrupt the trading vocation of the district. Piazza continues to play a major role in the city's shopping and it is very interesting to see how its historic buildings are still functioning as shops, bazaars, and workshops.

This is the case, for instance, of the building at the corner between Adwa Avenue and Eden Street, one of the first constructions to be built in the area, probably in the 1910s. On the eve of the Italian invasion, the building hosted the cinema Apollon. Others were turned into bars or restaurants, as the one formerly owned by Matig Kevorkoff and currently occupied by the Italian restaurant Castelli, south of the former market esplanade, at the corner between Ghandi Street and Cunningham Street.



36. Cinema Apollon in 1936.



37. De Gaulle Square in 1936.

### 3.12 Matig Kevorkoff

This building stands out for its beautiful architecture, whose style, type of stone used and external decoration reveal its Armenian influence. Two-storey and circular in plan, it was built by order of the Armenian trader Matig Kevorkoff in the 1910s to be used as a shop, a store and, up to the Italian invasion, as the headquarters of the tobacco monopoly.<sup>29</sup> Its strong structure was proof against the fire that broke out inside it on the eve of the Italian invasion. In fact, the external walls and their stone decorations are original, whereas the constructions at the back were built during the Italian occupation. In this period, the building functioned as the 'Casa del fascio'.



3-12a (Top) 2004; 3-12b (Above left) 1936; 3-12c (Above right) Detail of the stone decorations.

Immediately to the west of the former Kevorkoff's shop, at the corner of Ghandi Street, stood the building that hosted the first Addis Ababa municipality. Most of this historic construction has been destroyed, but part of it still survives at the back of the five-storey, blue and white building that presently occupies the area. The 1960s façade hides walls and quoined windows (now closed) made of the same blackish stone used for Kevorkoff's shop and for many other buildings constructed by Armenians.

### 3.13 Old Arada Post Office

To the east of former Kevorkoff's shop, at the corner between Cunningham Street and the road leading to the Taitu Hotel stands the building that once



3-13a (Top) ca. 1935; 3-13b (Above left) ca. 1937; 3.13c (Above right) 2004.

hosted the first post office to be opened in the Arada district. Inaugurated on the 20th of July 1908, it functioned up to the Italian invasion. This two-storey stone building had a simple, but elegant façade, highlighted by a veranda at both floors and by a pediment at the centre of the roof. However, all wooden parts were destroyed by the fire that raged during the turmoil of 1936. The building underwent restoration during 1936-1937 and began functioning as a Cinema Italia until the end of the Italian occupation. Since then, its name has been changed to Cinema Ethiopia, as it is called today.

The southern and western sectors of the vast esplanade that extended up to Ghiorghis Church were the core of the old market, held in the large area that the Addis Alem road divided into two in the first years of the

20th Century. From the city's old maps it emerges very clearly the close relationship that existed between the development of the market and the growth of the city. A European businessman gives us a vivid image of that linkage in 1895, stressing the fact that Addis Ababa 'est une cité naissant. Les maisons sortent de terre à vue d'œil pour ainsi dire, et le marché y prend de jour en jour plus d'importance'.<sup>30</sup>

Although the market day was Saturday, the growing number of shops and bazaars around the market area turned it into a permanent trading district. The only exception was on Sunday, the day that one of Menelik's proclamations had designated as a holiday and during which every business was banned. In 1910, a local newspaper wrote that the market 'qui se tient chaque semaine occupe une immense étendue. Il est bien établi et s'alimente de tous les produits de la contrée, depuis les mulets et les



38. Arada market in the 1900s.

bœufs jusqu'au café et au piment'.<sup>31</sup> In addition to satisfying the growing urban demand, Addis Ababa market was the crossroad either for goods imported from abroad and directed to the Ethiopian provinces, or for domestic goods on their way to the coastal ports and the foreign markets. An Italian traveller who was in Addis just after the death of Menelik wrote that the city represented the trading centre of Ethiopia and described the 'picturesque chaos' of goods and livestock on market days.<sup>32</sup>

In fact, at the beginning of the 20th Century the market had a proper organisation and, as it occurs today at Merkato, goods were sold in specific market sectors according to their type. On the market days of the early 20th Century, it was possible to buy salt blocks, also used as currency; grain, spices, coffee, red peppers (*berbere*), raw cotton, leaves and bark

of *gesho* for beer making; different types of fabrics; pottery, glass works, jewels (crosses, ear-cleaners, necklaces, ear-rings, brooches) in silver and gold; solid gold in marked rings mostly coming from Wollega; more rarely, skins of leopard, lion, otter; weapons; fodder; timber and firewood; harness and saddles; and finally – in three different enclosures – cattle; horses, mules and donkeys; sheep and goats.<sup>33</sup>

In 1909, in the market area not far from the big conifers functioning as gallows, there was the only state-run shop licensed by the government for the sale of *tej* (hydromel) and beer. At that time, the state monopoly on alcoholics represented, according to Cipolla, one of the measure enforced by the government for public order purposes: 'These drinks were sold only in the so called "house of libations", located at the centre of market square under *zabañias*' watch, who checked the drinkers by asking them



39. Proclamation at the market in ca. 1909.



40. The sycamore at Arada in ca. 1909.

to undergo the test of standing on one leg, preventing who failed from circulating with the typical sentence: 'My friend, you are not a saint, but a drunk. Only Teklehaimanot managed to stand on one leg for incalculable time. Because of that, he became saint'.<sup>34</sup>

In the past, however, the market was a place where it was not only possible to find goods, but also to meet artists: 'Poets and bards, a sort of rhapsodists invited to the private parties to sing warriors' deeds or ladies' beauties; musicians who had to gladden banquets and painters who offer their curious paintings illustrating religious themes, as saints or our ladies, or Negus' portrait'.<sup>35</sup> The market was also the place where the imperial proclamations were made public, usually on Saturday: 'People gather, soldiers make a circle, drums roll, the standards are thrust beside, and, at

the centre, taking his hat off, the official, once obtained a religious silence, reads the proclamation: 'Hear, hear! The Lion of the Tribe of Judah has won! Menelik the second, our Lord, orders that...'.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, the market square was the place where justice was administered and public sentences were executed by the means of whipping, stoning, cutting hands off and hanging. The latter was carried out, at the beginning of the 20th Century, by using one of the big trees in the market area, near the long and low building where many shops were opened. It was the *nagadras* who led the execution, together with the *kantiba* – i.e. the mayor – and other low-rank chiefs. According to Cipolla, death sentences were not very common there, since in the case of murders the relatives of the victim usually carried out the execution by themselves, if they did not want to accept any compensation in cash.<sup>37</sup> Public executions by hanging stopped at the market during the reign of Haile Sellassie, with an exception: the hanging of Menghistu Neway, one of the culprits of the 1960 coup, in the square of the new Merkato.<sup>38</sup>

At the beginning of the 1910s, fearing that Menelik's death could cause serious turmoil, the regent *Ras* Tasamma ordered the market to be transferred five kilometres away from the *Ghebbi*. But apart from this short period, the market was regularly held at Arada until 1938, when the Italians inaugurated the Grande Mercato Indigeno (i.e. big indigenous market) in the area that was subsequently called Merkato.<sup>39</sup> In the meantime, and in parallel with the urban growth, the market expansion had included the whole slope down Ghiorghis Church, to the extent that in 1928 the area was 'une immense carré qui peut contenir cent mille personnes, en plus des marchandises et des animaux'.<sup>40</sup>

Between the core market area and Ghiorghis Church there were the customs buildings. Customs already existed in this place in 1897, when they consisted of a sort of tribune made of stone and wood from which the *nagadras*, under a wicker umbrella, set the disputes between traders at the Saturday market.<sup>41</sup> Not far from the tribune, the customs activities were carried out in a large area that was transformed into a fenced compound at the beginning of the 20th Century. Taxes were drawn in kind or cash, by the Marie Theresa thaler and its piastres, whereas a cash tax had to be paid in case of livestock sales.<sup>42</sup> In 1909, De Castro informed that: 'A few years ago the market was free of access; today, who enters the



41. Aerial photo of Arada and Ghiorghis Church in ca. 1936.

area with goods has to pay a toll, a sort of municipal tax, and if before the toll area included the market square only, now it is expanding more and more and one day it will probably comprehend the whole city. However, real customs checkpoints do not exist, but they are signalled by red flags at the roads of access, with customs officers ready to cry: Ba Menelik! (In the name of Menelik!).<sup>43</sup> It happened, however, that in addition to the standard one, another toll had to be paid in "stones". An early 20th Century picture portrays a lady going to add a stone to the bunch on which sits a custom officer. This special tax was levied when, for instance, stones were needed for the paving of the road that crossed the market area by linking the Imperial *Ghebbi* with Addis Alem.<sup>44</sup> Around 1910-1911, the *nagadras*' tribune was replaced by a long and narrow building trapezoidal in plan and enclosing a wide courtyard. These became the places where

the customs activities were dealt with, although the offices were already decrepit in the early 1920s and they were repaired probably several times before being demolished when the current market area began functioning. The Arada customs remained in operation even after the railway came to Addis, and therefore all goods had to be brought here from the station until 1925, when all the offices were transferred to the station area.<sup>45</sup>

### 3.14 Ghiorghis Church

On the northern boundary of the market esplanade is located the church of Ghiorghis, a real landmark not only of the area, but also of the whole city. It is a beautiful stone building, octagonal in plan and surmounted by a small dome covered with aluminium sheets. On the top of the dome, a gold-plated star has an ostrich egg at the end of each of its seven points: a symbolic invitation for the followers to protect their soul as carefully as the female ostrich looks after her eggs.<sup>46</sup> According to Merab, the church was built between 1905 and 1911 by the Italian Sebastiano Castagna and designed by the Greek Orphanides.<sup>47</sup> Information provided by the Greek community in Addis supports the hypothesis that the church's construction was actually carried out by the contractor Panaiotis Mirialis, a Greek who had come to Addis together with many other Dodecanese workers after the completion of the Suez isthmus.<sup>48</sup> Conversely, the church was designed by Castagna, who elaborated the typology of local religious buildings and, with probable inspiration from the Coptic church in Jerusalem, he added architectural elements belonging to the Italian Renaissance style, particularly the dome, the arched windows and their decorated pediments. Castagna was neither an engineer, nor an architect, but a sergeant of the engineers corps of the Italian military forces that were defeated at Adwa in 1896. Imprisoned, he was brought to Addis where he remained even after his liberation followed the Ethio-Italian peace agreement. He married *Ras* Desta Damtew's aunt and had several posts in the public administration, such as that of general director of the Ethiopian Ministry of Public Works in 1935.<sup>49</sup> The present building replaced another church dedicated to St. George and built in 1895: the second church in Addis Ababa after the *Ghebbi's*. Old pictures portray it as circular in plan, surrounded by a veranda, and with a conical thatched grass roof, on the top of which an iron cross was decorated with ostrich's eggs. According to Berlan, the church was built, in turn, on the ruins of the Finfinni Capuchin Mission's chapel constructed in 1865.<sup>50</sup> Not far from it there was the huge sycamore tree mentioned earlier and the whole



3-14a (Top) ca. 1905-1909; 3-14b (Above left) ca. 1905-1909; 3-14c (Above right) 2004.

area was sacred for the Oromo people. It was in this place that – the tradition says – Menelik decided to have a church entitled to St. George to celebrate the victory in the famous battle fought at Adwa on the 1st of March 1896, on St. George's day. What is certain is that every 1st of March of the seven years that followed the battle Menelik commemorated the victory with a solemn ceremony. Then, the vast ground between Ghiorghis Church, the *Nagadras'* house and the customs was turned into an open theatre for the choreographic parade staged by more than 70,000 soldiers coming to Addis for that occasion from different Ethiopian provinces.<sup>51</sup> Although Menelik put an end to the ceremony in 1904, inviting people to pray for the souls of all the soldiers who died in that battle, the church of Ghiorghis continued to play a crucial role in the city's life. The church became in fact the first mausoleum of Menelik and was chosen by *Ras*

Tafari for his coronation as Emperor Haile Sellassie on 2 November 1930. During that day, an equestrian statue of Menelik was inaugurated at the centre of that large ground in front of Ghiorghis where, in the meantime, several small buildings had been demolished in order to create a proper square. The statue, designed by the German Haertel and built on a stone base by the Greek Kristodulos Litis<sup>52</sup>, was destroyed purposely by the Italians immediately after their invasion and replaced by the present one during the reign of Haile Sellassie. Also demolished at the beginning of the Italian occupation was the elegant two-storey building located just at the back of the equestrian statue.

### 3.15 *Nagadras* Haile Ghiorghis Woldemikael

Southeast of Ghiorghis Church is located the former *Nagadras*' house, one of the most beautiful historic buildings existing in Addis today.<sup>53</sup>



42. Statue of Menelik II in ca. 1935.



43. Menelik II Square in ca. 1937.

Its charm lies in the articulated plan and the harmonic combination of its bodies. Built at the very beginning of the 20th Century, the house is described by De Castro in 1909 as a 'two-storey castle', 'recently built, with two storeys in masonry, long metal roofings and currently and provisionally functioning as a French Legation'.<sup>54</sup> Its importance goes hand in hand with that of its first owner, Haile Ghiorghis Woldemikael. He was appointed 'head of merchants' (*nagadras*) by Menelik, that is 'a sort of "fermier" of custom taxes',<sup>55</sup> and his jurisdiction included the whole market area known as Gabaya or Arada. The owner became an assistant of the first *nagadras* of Addis Ababa, Aggedaw, around 1890. Four years later he took over the direction of the customs and in 1901, after the death of Aggedaw, he received the title of *nagadras*.<sup>56</sup> De Castro portrayed him as 'a man really up to his position, very shrewd,

friendly looking and always kind'.<sup>57</sup> In 1908, Menelik appointed him Minister of Trade and Minister of Foreign Affairs, but due to the hostility that Queen Zawditu had against him, the Minister of War Habte Ghiorghis replaced him in the leadership of Foreign Affairs in September of the following year.<sup>58</sup> In December 1909 he was charged of bribery, imprisoned, and deprived of the Ministry of Trade until March 1910, when he got the post back probably thanks to *Lij* Iyasu, of whom he became a close friend and adviser.<sup>59</sup> It was Haile Ghiorghis with the *Arada zabañas* – the special police corps



3-15a

created and led by him – that restored order at the market when the people pillaged it during the mourning of *Ras* Makonnen.<sup>60</sup> The *Arada zabañas* can be considered the forerunners of the Ethiopian national police and their jurisdiction was extended progressively from the market to many other urban districts.<sup>61</sup> At the end of 1914, after his marriage with *Lij* Iyasu's stepsister, Haile Ghiorghis received the title of *bitwaddad* and chaired the Cabinet, an honour, which had been reserved only for *Fitawrari* Habte Ghiorghis.<sup>62</sup> After the coup staged by Zawditu against *Lij* Iyasu in September 1916, Haile Ghiorghis was imprisoned again and all his properties were confiscated, including his residence. This was turned into the Municipality and functioned as such until the building of the new City Hall in 1964.<sup>63</sup> Since then, it functioned as a tribunal.

### 3.16 *Hakim* Workeneh Eshete

Next stop is at the former residence of a well known and reputed person in the time of Menelik. The house is located immediately after the intersection between the road that from Menelik Square goes eastwards and *Dejazmatch* Afework Street. The house was built between 1915 and 1920<sup>64</sup> and it was recently turned into the Halkan Health College - *Hakim* Workeneh Eshete Campus. Although it is not particularly interesting from an architectural point of view, it belonged to the famous *Hakim* Workeneh Eshete, also known as Dr. Charles Martin. This name was given to the Ethiopian child whom the British officer Charles Martin found wandering around the ruins of Maqdala fortress in April 1868.<sup>65</sup> The officer brought him to India, where the child grew up and became a medical doctor. The first time Dr. Martin came back to Ethiopia was in 1900, when Menelik invited him to court after having heard about him.<sup>66</sup> However, it was



3-15b ca. 1936-1937.



3-16

only in 1908 that Dr. Martin came back definitively to Ethiopia, where he worked – the first Ethiopian medical doctor – in the new Menelik II Hospital. In the 1920s he served as an Ethiopian Minister in London.

We suggest that you visit all this area, with its interesting houses and small workshops. Then, go back to Menelik Square and continue downhill to the left side of Eden Street. Towards Adwa Avenue, on your left, you can admire a row of old buildings, most of which date back to the two first decades of the 20th Century. On the right, parallel to Eden Street, five rows of low and simple buildings hosted small shops, all destroyed during the Italian occupation. Just before the intersection with Adwa road, a huge arch (32) was built for the coronation of Haile Sellassie in 1930 and lasted until 1936, when the Italians dismantled it. Then, turn left onto Adwa

Avenue, one of the city's most representative and interesting roads. The historic buildings are so many in the area, that only the most significant ones are mentioned here.

### 3.17 Badgelling Hotel

One of them is the current Badgelling Hotel, located on the left at the beginning of the road. The building has a blue façade, made of *cikka* and wood and decorated with an Indian style pediment. It was built during the reign of Zawditu and Indians probably dwelt there.

### 3.18 Palaik Yasedjian

Further on, all the area where the Cinema Empire is located belonged to the Armenian Palaik Yasedjian. With its 17 doors on the ground floor and 17 windows on the first floor this two-storey masonry building was the



3-17



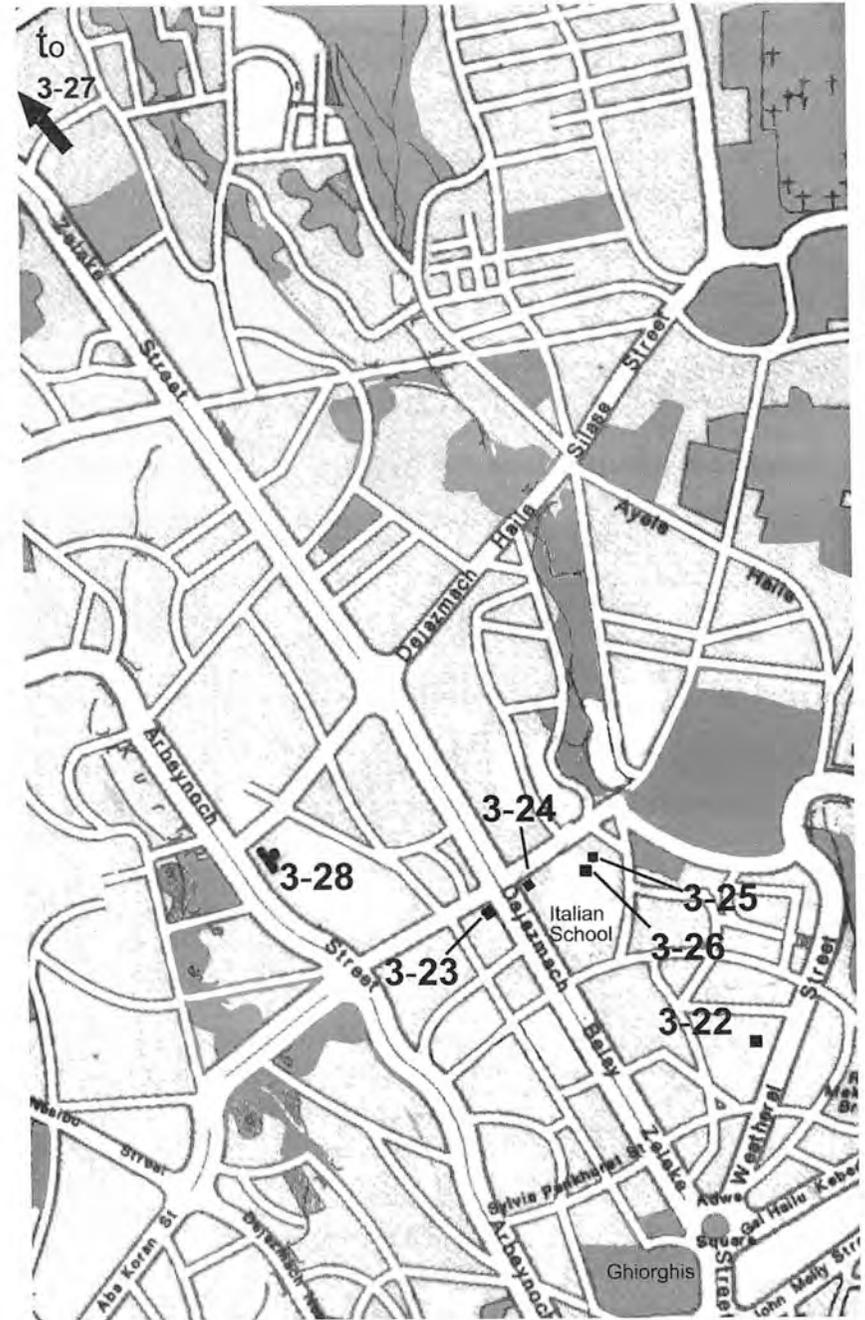
3-18 The building in 1935.

longest in the Avenue. Part of it is still visible, despite the damage caused by the fire that recently destroyed the old Cinema.

### 3.19 British Bible Society

Suddenly, at the corner with *Dejazmatch* Afework Street, a British style building that dates back to the 1930s interrupts the series of typical old Addis architectures. Entirely built by the British, the building had a bookshop on the ground floor for the sale of bibles, and the staff of the British Bible Society used the first floor as a residence.<sup>67</sup>

Across the street, you will see the intersection of the small road that, as mentioned earlier in this section, directly linked *Ghebbi* and Arada. Empress Zawditu used it to go to Ghiorghis Church. The road leads into



the Serrategna *Safar*, the vast area located between Adwa Avenue and the Kechene River. The meaning of the *safar's* name, i.e. workers' district, is explained by the fact that craftsmen settled in the area, particularly blacksmiths producing blades for knives and ploughs. In addition, many local guards were allotted land here during the 1920s and 1930s and it was from one of them that the Greek Paulos Kordas bought the land and built his residence on it.<sup>68</sup>

### 3.20 Paulos Kordas

As you follow Adwa Avenue eastwards (towards Arat Kilo), turn onto the first road that you will find on the right after the above-mentioned old road. Follow the road a few metres downhill and, when it forks, keep left and you will see Kordas' former residence on your right. It is an interesting example of Greek architecture of the time, with



3-19



3-20

a neoclassical façade decorated by a tympan. On the front, it is still possible to read the owner's name's initials (P. G. K.) in Greek letters and the date of building, 1934.

### 3.21 Greek Church

Back to Adwa Avenue after this quick diversion, proceed eastwards until you find, on the left, the Greek-Orthodox Church. The church was designed by the Greek Balanos and it was built between 1922 and 1926.<sup>69</sup> It was a member of the Greek community in Addis, the physician Zeroyakonos Zervos, who asked to and obtained from the royal family the land for constructing a church to function in substitution of the above-mentioned premises located beside the Taitu Hotel.<sup>70</sup>

### 3.22 *Dejazmatch* Webe Hayle Mariam

Immediately before Makonnen Bridge, turn left on the road that goes uphill and reaches Adwa Square. Thus, the first part to the visit of Adwa Avenue finishes, the second part being included in the following Itinerary 4. As you reach Adwa Square, turn onto the first road on your right (Weatheral Street) and after 400 metres you will find, on the left, the path leading to the Addis Ababa Restaurant. Whether you are hungry or not, we suggest that you visit the restaurant and discover its beautiful and historic architecture. The premises belonged to *Dejazmatch* Webe Hayle Mariam – a nobleman of Menelik's court – and they date back to the end of the 19th Century or the very beginning of the 20th. The building's complex architecture merges two different structures harmoniously: the present front side is semicircular in plan, whereas the back side is rectangular. The former is made of stone, whereas the latter is accessed by



3-21



3-22

a small, but elegant stairway leading to an Indian style veranda, supported by masonry columns and with a decorated pediment on the front. The building has a corrugated metal roof, at the top of which an umbrella-like finial is located. The metal cover replaced the original thatched roof that still existed in the early 1960s, when the building had already been turned into a restaurant.<sup>71</sup> Inside, the beautiful central circular room gives access to other differently shaped rooms.

### 3.23 Christo Magliaris

Back to Weatheral Street, turn right and proceed further on until the road ends in Adwa Square. From here, go northwards by taking Belay Zeleke Street. On this road, at the traffic light, you will find two beautiful buildings one opposite the other. On the left, there is a two-storey,

masonry house that is currently the Gojjam Hotel. The first owner of the building was a Greek, Christo Magliaris, who had it built between 1910 and 1913 on a tract of land that he obtained from the royal family in exchange for a velvet cloak.<sup>72</sup> The house became the residence of Christo and his wife, the first couple to have a wedding celebrated in the Greek Church on Adwa Avenue. Despite several changes, the building maintains its character, emphasized by the small columns and the veranda at the front side. Greek painters were called in to decorate the rooms, but nothing remains of their work. Conversely, an existing interesting detail is represented by the internal wooden stairway, the structure and shape of which, according the first owner's son, are typical features of the Greek Islands' traditional architecture. Also noteworthy is the Indian style roof lantern, that neighbours said was added later as an imitation of Mussolini's helmet. After the Magliaris family arrived in Ethiopia to escape the war



3-23



3-24

against Turkey, Christo settled in Addis and created a small factory for the production of lime, bringing the raw material from a place called Bulga, in the Muger River valley, southwest of Debre Libanos. This lime was used for Christo's house construction. At that time, Belay Zeleke Street did not exist, since an Italian firm constructed it later. Between 1936 and 1941, the house became the residence of an Italian general, whereas U.S. officers lived there for three years during the Vietnam War.

### 3.24 Papadopoulos

Opposite, on the right side, the North Hotel stands. It was the residence of another Greek, Professor Papadopoulos. It is a two-storey building, made of stone, and with front columns supporting two symmetrical covered terraces. The access is through a stone stairway with a wooden

balustrade. The façade is original, although the house was heavily restored in the early 1970s with major changes to the back side and the internal structures. According to the Hotel manager,<sup>73</sup> Papadopoulos was called to teach in Addis by Menelik, who granted him a tract of land. On this land he had a house built, which functioned as a school at the ground floor and as a residence on the first floor. The same division of the internal space characterizes the present building, which was probably completed in the 1920s and replaced the previous construction. Papadopoulos' heirs sold the house in 1972 and went to live to the USA.

### 3.25 Dejazmatch Berru Hayle Mariam

Leave the main road temporarily for a quick, but interesting diversion to see two other examples of historic architecture. Thus, at the above-mentioned traffic light on Belay Zeleke Street, turn right and continue approximately 150 metres downhill; then turn right again and go uphill for some 100 metres, keeping to the right side. On the left you will find a small path that leads to a beautiful three-storey building. It was the residence of *Dejazmatch* Berru Hayle Mariam, cousin of Emperor Haile Sellassie. This relatively high house is quadrangular in plan and it has lime plastered external walls, made of stone. A veranda on the ground floor and a covered wooden balcony extending from each of the two other floors run all around the building, creating a charming decorative effect. According to a local informant<sup>74</sup>, the house was built at the end of the 19th Century. The original corrugated metal sheets that covered it were imported from France, for they were not yet produced in Ethiopia at that time. When the building was over, Menelik came to see it and to participate in the inauguration party organised by the noble owner. *Dejazmath* Berru was born in Menze, Shoa, around 1870 and his father was *Ras* Makonnen's brother. He had land in Maji area, where he served as a Governor, and he also owned coffee plantations in Harar. Very often, therefore, he travelled between his house in Addis and his lands. After he died at the age of 60, the house was inherited by his son *Dejazmatch* Desta Berru. Desta Berru then died very young and bequeathed it to the daughter Kebbebushta Desta. During the Italian occupation, the house was requisitioned to function as a hotel. After 1941, the house was given to the Italian Giuseppe Amelli, who established a carpentry and blacksmith workshop there. All the land around the building belonged to *Dejazmatch* Berru, except the area on which the Italian School is located, which was owned by *Dejazmatch* Amde.



3-25

### 3.26 *Azaye* Terrafe

Stop now in front of Berru's house, northeast of the Italian School compound, in order to see a nice house the first owner of which, unfortunately, is still unknown. It is a nice, small building, with a *vikka* structure and large multi-glazed windows opening on the front side. The house was built during the reign of *Lij* Iyasu and Haile Sellassie later gave it to the *Azaye* Terrafe as a reward for his services in the palace's administration.<sup>75</sup>

### 3.27 Bessmelian

As you conclude this diversion by going back to Belay Zeleke Street, continue on it northwards. Around one kilometre after the Gojjam Hotel/North Hotel traffic light the road makes a big turn and you will see

a public park on your left. The Sheger Club stands in the centre of the park. This important two-storey building, entirely made of stone and with very nice stairways and terraces, was built before the Italian invasion. Its first owner was a member of the Armenian Bessmelian family. A drink in the bar's charming rooms can make a good break before visiting the last three buildings of the itinerary, among the most spectacular examples of Addis historic architecture.

### 3.28 Italian Hospital (*Ras Desta* Hospital)

As you go back downtown on Belay Zeleke Street turn right at the Gojjam Hotel/North Hotel traffic light. Proceed further on until the road intersects the large Arbeynoch Street and then turn right onto it. A few hundreds metres on the right you find the *Ras Desta* Hospital, one of the city's largest buildings during the 1930s and one of the few made of armed concrete



3-26



3-27

at that time. Funded by the Italian association 'Italica Gens', it was built in 1932 to function as a private clinic, mostly for the Italian community.<sup>76</sup> It was based on a design by the Italian architect Alessandro Molli Boffa, who lived and worked in Turin. The building's stone façade combines a marked historicist character (e.g. attic and arched windows) with modern elements (e.g. roller blinds). The clinic, located at 2505 metres above sea level, was widened during the Italian occupation, when it became the 'Principessa di Piemonte' Hospital, commonly known as the Italian hospital.

### 3.29 *Mousse* Fasika Wolde Mikael

Keep on going north-westwards on Arbeynoch Street until the junction, on your right, with Ojale Street, just after *Dejazmatch* Yigezu Bridge. Take Ojale Street. Around 600 metres uphill, turn left onto the small



3-28a (Top) ca. 1936-1937; 3-28b (Above left) 2004; 3-29 (Above right).

road indicated by the sign ‘Addis Ababa N. 2 Kindergarden and Public School’. Enter the compound and at the centre of the large park you will see the former residence of *Mousse* Fasika Wolde Mikael. The house is circular in plan, with a veranda running all around the ground floor. The walls are made of *aikeka*, whereas large stones pave the external floor. Its fascinating architecture is enriched by the octagonal room – with long windows opening through it – that is located at the centre of the roof and by the pediment overhanging the main entrance. Its particularly interesting style – a pleasant blend of Abyssinian and European architecture – can be explained by the fact that the first owner spent part of his life in France and became fond of the French way of living. His ‘title’, i.e. *mousse*, was common for foreigners in the early 20th Century and it is a corruption of the French *monsieur*.<sup>77</sup> Fasika was

very popular at Menelik’s court and it is to this period that the house would belong.

### 3.30 *Sheikh* Ojale Al-Hasan



3-30a

As you go back to Ojale Street, turn left and follow it uphill until you find St. Rafael Church on the left. Take the path just opposite the church’s main gate and follow it, passing the Mosque on your right. After around 250 metres, you will see, on your right, the outstanding palace that belonged to *Sheikh* Ojale Al-Hasan. It is a two-storey building, rectangular in plan with *aikeka*-plastered stone walls and verandas running around three sides of both floors. The woodwork reflects the prevailing Indo-Islami decorative influences, with windows and screens that recall some house in Massawa. Presumably, the building dates back to the beginning of the 20th Century, after Ojale had become ruler of Asosa and had helped the military expedition led by *Ras* Makonnen to conquer the Beni Shangul in 1897-1898.<sup>78</sup> In this period, however, he was brought to Addis Ababa and confined there for some time together with other Muslim leaders, as he



3-30b

was found guilty of making contacts with the British in Sudan.<sup>79</sup> He was then restored to his region, in present Welega, where he was involved in slave trading in Ethiopia and Sudan.<sup>80</sup>

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> P.H.G. Powell-Cotton, *A Sporting Trip Through Abyssinia*, London, Rowland Ward, 1902, p. 93
- <sup>2</sup> George Remond, *Voyages. La route de l'Abbaï Noir*, Paris, Crés, 1924, p. 122
- <sup>3</sup> Habtanu Hawoke, interview, Addis Ababa, 24 February 2003
- <sup>4</sup> Felleke Menghistu, interview, Addis Ababa, 28 February 2003
- <sup>5</sup> Habtanu Hawoke, interview, Addis Ababa, 24 February 2003
- <sup>6</sup> Dukas Ghiorghis, interview, Addis Ababa, 19 February 2003
- <sup>7</sup> Vartkes Nalbandian, interview, Addis Ababa, 12 February 2003
- <sup>8</sup> Paul Merab, *Impressions d'Éthiopie*, Paris, Ed. Leroux, 1921-1929, p. 121
- <sup>9</sup> Arnaldo Cipolla, *Pagine africane di un esploratore*, Milano, Alpes, 1927, p. 307 (Translation by the authors)
- <sup>10</sup> Paul Merab (1921-1929), p. 122
- <sup>11</sup> Charles F. Rey, *Unconquered Abyssinia*, London, Seely & Service, 1923, p. 152
- <sup>12</sup> Jean D'Esme, *A Travers l'Empire de Ménélik*, Paris, Plon, 1928, p. 68
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>14</sup> Guèbrè Sellassié, *Chronique du Règne de Ménélik II*, Paris, Maisonneuve, 1930-1931 p. 530; Jean D'Esme (1928), p. 68
- <sup>15</sup> Arnaldo Cipolla, *Pagine africane di un esploratore*, Milano, Alpes, 1927, p. 308
- <sup>16</sup> *Guida dell'Africa Orientale Italiana*, Milano, Consociazione Turistica Italiana, 1938, p. 482
- <sup>17</sup> Paul Merab (1921-1929), 121
- <sup>18</sup> Richard Pankhurst, 'The History of Currency and Banking in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa from the Middle Ages to 1935', *Ethiopia Observer*, 8, 1965, 358-408
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> Dukas Ghiorghis, interview, Addis Ababa, 19 February 2003
- <sup>21</sup> Lincoln De Castro, *Nella terra dei Negus*, Milano, Treves, 1915, p. 217 (Translation by the authors)
- <sup>22</sup> Peter Phillips Garretson, *A History of Addis Ababa from its Foundation in 1886 to 1910*, London, University of London, 1974, Ph.D. thesis, p. 172
- <sup>23</sup> Lincoln De Castro (1915), p. 231
- <sup>24</sup> Lincoln De Castro, 'La città e il clima di Addis Abeba', *Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana*, 46, 1909, p. 413
- <sup>25</sup> 'Une excursion au pays de Ménélik', *Le Semeur d'Éthiopie* (Diré-Daoua),

novembre-décembre 1910, p. 772

<sup>26</sup> Carlo Citerni, *Ai confini meridionali dell'Etiopia*, Milano, Hoepli, 1913, p. 50-51

<sup>27</sup> Lincoln De Castro (1915), p. 205

<sup>28</sup> Lincoln De Castro (1915) p. 206 (Translation by the authors)

<sup>29</sup> Karibian, interview, Addis Ababa, 19 February 2003

<sup>30</sup> J.-G. Vanderheyem, *Une expédition avec le Negus Ménélik*, Paris, Hachette, 1896, p. 60

<sup>31</sup> 'Une excursion au pays de Ménélik', *Le Semeur d'Etiopie* (Diré-Daoua), novembre-décembre 1910, p. 772

<sup>32</sup> Carlo Citerni (1913), p. 49 (Translation by the authors)

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.; Lincoln De Castro (1915), p. 203-204

<sup>34</sup> Arnaldo Cipolla, *In Etiopia*, Torino, Paravia, 1933, p. 97 (Translation by the authors)

<sup>35</sup> Carlo Citerni (1913), p. 52 (Translation by the authors)

<sup>36</sup> Lincoln De Castro (1915), p. 211-212 (Translation by the authors)

<sup>37</sup> Arnaldo Cipolla (1927), p. 295-296

<sup>38</sup> Angelo Del Boca, *Il Negus. Vita e morte dell'ultimo Re dei Re*, Bari, Laterza, 1995, p. 258

<sup>39</sup> *Guida dell'Africa Orientale Italiana* (1938), p. 482

<sup>40</sup> Alexandre Liano, *Etiopie. Empire des nègres blancs*, Paris, Pierre Roger, 1929 p. 20

<sup>41</sup> J.-G. Vanderheyem (1896), p. 87

<sup>42</sup> Carlo Annaratone, *In Abissinia*, Roma, Voghera, 1914, p. 155

<sup>43</sup> Lincoln De Castro (1915), p. 209 (Translation by the authors)

<sup>44</sup> Lincoln De Castro (1915), p. 224

<sup>45</sup> Edouard Berlan, *Addis Abeba - La plus haute ville d'Afrique*, Grenoble, Imprimerie Allier, 1963, p. 111

<sup>46</sup> Pietro Gerardo Jansen, *Abissinia di oggi*, Milano, Marangoni, 1935, p. 197

<sup>47</sup> Paul Merab (1921-1929), p. 129

<sup>48</sup> Dukas Ghiorghis, interview, Addis Ababa, 19 February 2003

<sup>49</sup> Beppe Pegolotti, 'Un italiano alla corte di Menelik', *Storia Illustrata*, 148, marzo 1970, p. 79-80

<sup>50</sup> Edouard Berlan (1963), p. 64, note 19

<sup>51</sup> Lincoln De Castro (1915), p. 215

<sup>52</sup> Dukas Ghiorghis, interview, Addis Ababa, 19 February 2003

<sup>53</sup> Peter Phillips Garretson (1974), p. 68

<sup>54</sup> Lincoln De Castro (1915), p. 237; Lincoln De Castro (1909), p. 413 (Translation by the authors)

<sup>55</sup> Guèbrè Sellassiè (1930-31), p. 527

<sup>56</sup> Peter Phillips Garretson (1974), p. 51

<sup>57</sup> Lincoln De Castro (1915), p. 209 (Translation by the authors)

<sup>58</sup> Guèbrè Sellassiè (1930-31), p. 527

<sup>59</sup> Peter Phillips Garretson (1974), p. 136

<sup>60</sup> Elyas Gabra-Egziabcher, *Promess, piety and politics: the Chronicle of Abetu Iyasu and Emperor Zewditu of Ethiopia (1909 - 1930)*, Köln, Köppe, 1991, p. 507, note 731

<sup>61</sup> Peter Phillips Garretson (1974), p.131-132

<sup>62</sup> Guèbrè Sellassiè (1930-31), p. 627-628

<sup>63</sup> Fisheru Assen, 'The Growth of Municipal Administration and some Aspects of Daily Life in Addis Ababa', in: *Proceedings of the International Symposium on the Centenary of Addis Ababa*, Addis Ababa, 1986, p. 82

<sup>64</sup> Susy Workench, interview, Addis Ababa, 3 March 2003

<sup>65</sup> Chris Prouty, *L'Impress Yaitu and Menilek II, Ethiopia 1883-1910*, Trenton, The Red Sea Press, 1986, p. 240

<sup>66</sup> Chris Prouty (1986), p. 311

<sup>67</sup> *Guida dell'Africa Orientale Italiana* (1938), p. 487; Habtanu Hawoke, interview, Addis Ababa, 24 February 2003

<sup>68</sup> Habtanu Hawoke, interview, Addis Ababa, 24 February 2003

<sup>69</sup> *Guida dell'Africa Orientale Italiana* (1938), p. 488

<sup>70</sup> Dukas Ghiorghis, interview, Addis Ababa, 19 February 2003

<sup>71</sup> Edouard Berlan (1963), p. 160

<sup>72</sup> Vassilis Magliaris, interview, Addis Ababa, 22 September 2001; 28 February 2003

<sup>73</sup> Interview, Addis Ababa, 21 May 1996

<sup>74</sup> Gonfa Urga, interview, Addis Ababa, 4 April 1996

<sup>75</sup> Rosa Terrafe, interview, Addis Ababa, 4 April 1996

<sup>76</sup> *Guida dell'Africa Orientale Italiana* (1938), p. 486

<sup>77</sup> Dikran Mesrubian, interview, Addis Ababa, 14 November 2004

<sup>78</sup> Chris Prouty and Eugene Rosenfeld, *Historical Dictionary of Ethiopia*, Metuchen (N.J.), Scarecrow, 1981, p. 26

<sup>79</sup> Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia: 1855-1991*, Oxford, James Currey, 1991, p. 68

<sup>80</sup> Chris Prouty and Eugene Rosenfeld (1981), p. 26

## Itinerary 4



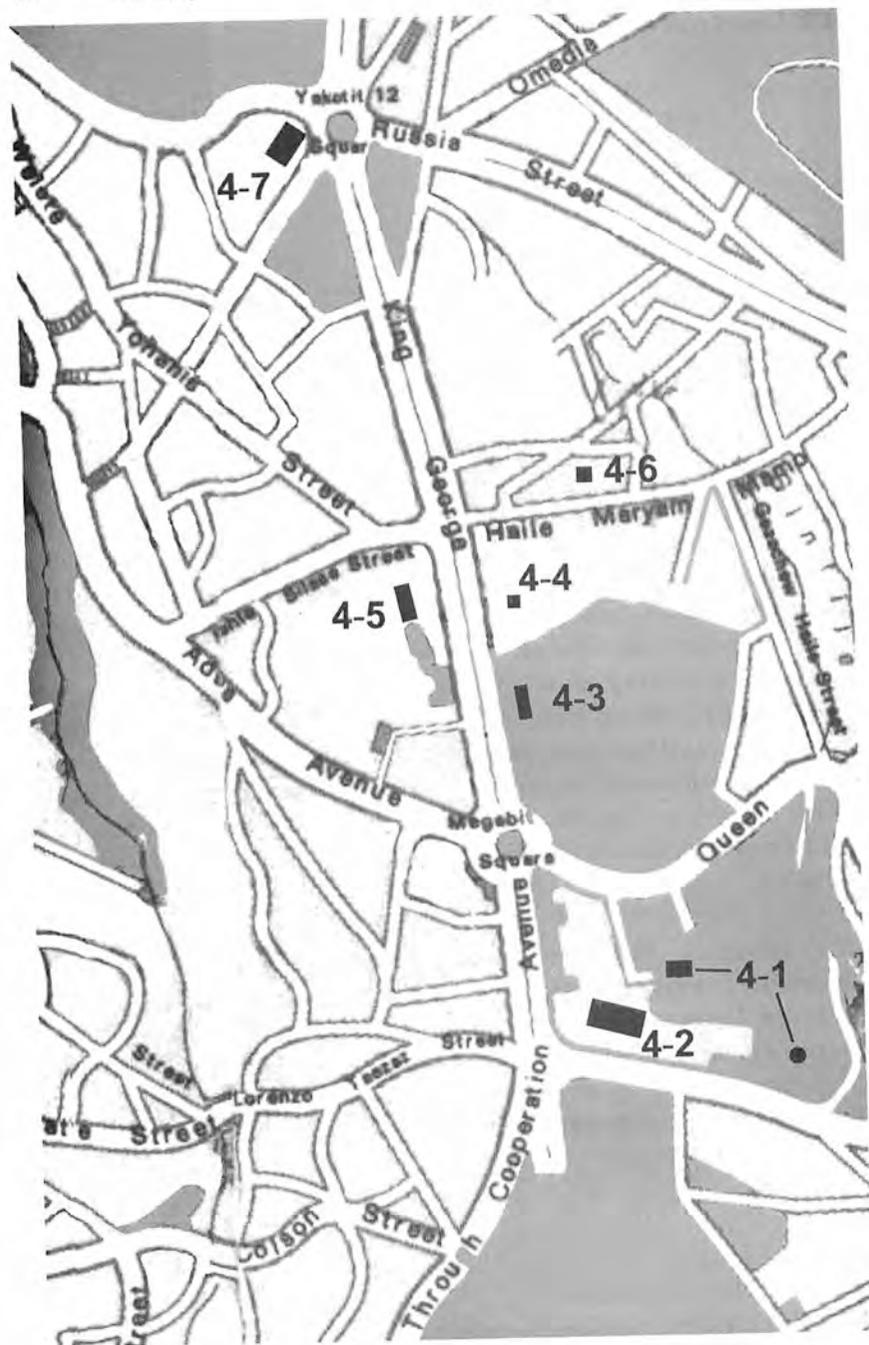
In the earliest times of the city's establishment, a road connected the old Entoto Imperial *Ghebbi* with the new Imperial *Ghebbi* near the Filoha Hot Springs. Today, that road is still part of the main avenue dividing Addis Ababa along a north-south axis. It is probably for this ancient function of connecting the two imperial courts, that the area north of the *Ghebbi* has developed a governmental role in modern times. In fact, it contains most of the representative palaces hosting all those administrative functions that were initially gathered inside the *Ghebbi*. For this reason many observers believe that this part of the city best shows the big effort of modernization attempted successfully by the latest governments. Some of these constructions are recent, but in several cases mansions and palaces of Menelik's age have been adapted for new uses. A residential district inhabited mostly, as in the past, by Armenians and rich traders is located on the east side of this area, bordered by the edge of the slope in which three series of stairways descend to the valley of the Kechene River and to Piazza.

In an attempt to discover the tracks of the old Menelik's buildings, we divided the itinerary in three parts: A) from the north door of the *Ghebbi* up to the Entoto Mountain; B) from the intersection between Entoto Avenue and Haile Melekot Street through Haile Melekot Street and Aberra Gizaw Street up to Yekatit 12 Square; C) from Yekatit 12 Square through Tewodros Street and Welette Yohannes Street down to Adwa Avenue and up again through Sahale Sellassie Street.

### Part A

#### 4.1 Haile Sellassie Churches

As you set off from the *Ghebbi*'s northern door, turn onto the road on your



4-1a (Top) "New" Haile Sellassie Church in the 1940s; 4-1b and 4-1c (Above) "Old" Haile Sellassie Church in 2004 (left) and in the 1920s (right).

right in order to admire the "new" Haile Sellassie Church, built during the 1930s in an eclectic European-like style. Emperor Haile Sellassie laid the cathedral's cornerstone in 1930,<sup>1</sup> but the construction works were suspended during the Italian occupation and were resumed only in 1941. The cathedral was inaugurated in 1944. To the left side of the church, across the cemetery, you can admire the old octagonal Sellassie Church, a beautiful Indian style decorated building that Menelik ordered around 1891. Originally, as many other buildings, it had a thatched roof. Inside there are interesting paintings and among them, images of Menelik, Taitu, Zawditu, *Lij* Iyasu.<sup>2</sup> Around the church it is worth visiting the cemetery, regretfully in poor condition.

Great personalities of the time are buried here, in graves with different elegant styles recalling European classical or Middle East architecture.

#### 4.2 The Parliament

As you go back towards Development Through Cooperation Avenue, you will see the old Parliament building on your right. The building was designed by the German Kametz and constructed in time to host the Ethiopian Parliament established in 1931.<sup>3</sup> The painted panels that decorated the halls on the ground and first floors were removed by the Italians and taken to the Colonial Museum in Rome (now African Museum of the Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente). The façade had a large mosaic of St. George, but it was painted over during the Derg regime and it remains hidden today.<sup>4</sup>



4-2 Ethiopian Parliament in ca. 1937.



4-3

Heading northwards on Development Through Cooperation Avenue, you will reach Megabit 28 Square (popularly called Arat Kilo because four roads have their beginning here), with the Freedom Tower carved cylindrical obelisk in its centre.

#### 4.3 Menelik II Secondary School

The itinerary continues northwards, although some diversions will be necessary. After Megabit 28 Square, the road changes its name to King George Street. At its beginning, on the right side, you will run immediately onto the Menelik II Secondary School, a great building constructed in massive stone in 1908. This was the first state school established in Addis Ababa and the future Emperor Haile Sellassie was one of the first students who attended it. At that time, the school was directed by the Egyptian Hanna Bey Salib.<sup>5</sup>

#### 4.4 Mega Enterprise Building

A few metres uphill, on the right side, you will see a typical Indian style house, which now hosts the offices of Mega Enterprise. Its very gracious façade is decorated with two projecting wings covered by pyramidal curved roofs with finials at their tops. Carved wooden finials are also situated along the roof edge. The symmetry of the two wings is not perfect and the irregularity gives the house a particular, gay appearance. According to a local informant, the house was built during the reign of Haile Sellassie and it functioned as an office.<sup>6</sup>



4-4

#### 4.5 Abuna Palace

In a large compound on the left side of King George Street you will see the former residence of the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the *abuna*. The two-storey, rectangular in plan stone building was designed by the French architect Pène<sup>7</sup> and, presumably, dates back to the late 1920s.

#### 4.6 Ascale Balcha

Turning right onto Haile Mariam Mamó Street, you will see the former residence of *Woizero* Ascale Balcha, currently used as a school (Atse Na Od School). The house is built on a stone base and has a two-wing façade with a covered entrance, whereas there is a veranda along the rear side. A gingerbread woodwork decoration runs all around the roof's eaves. The

owner was the daughter of the famous *Dejazmatch* Balcha, a hero of the Battle of Adwa and a fierce opponent of Tafari Makonnen in the 1920s.<sup>8</sup>

Back to King George Street, keep following it northwards and pass Mariam Church on your left. After crossing Sahale Sellassie Street, on your left you will see the recently renovated National Museum, a fine building constructed during the Italian occupation. Further uphill, turn left onto the first non-asphalt road that you will find from the National Museum compound. The road leads into a popular neighbourhood, where some ancient small houses are still used as residences. The road also leads into the Armenian quarter that you will visit later through a different path.

#### 4.7 Yekatit 12 Hospital

The Hospital is located in Yekatit 12 Square, commonly named ‘Sidist Kilo’



4-5



4-6

for the six streets beginning at its centre. The square was dedicated to the Ethiopian martyrs killed on 12 Yekatit (19 February 1937) by the Italian invaders, as revenge against the attempted killing of Rodolfo Graziani, the Italian commander in chief. The hospital was constructed in 1924 and was named Beth Saida. It was enlarged during the Italian occupation, when it was called Vittorio Emanuele after the King of Italy. The hospital complex includes several buildings, rather heterogeneous in style and shape. Some of them are still linked by the original covered passages, adorned with gingerbread decorations, Indian style pediments and wooden finials. The buildings are in stone and have quoined corners and windows. Verandas and wooden balustrades further decorate some of the constructions, as in the case of the interesting long building characterized by an apse-like structure at the western side. Two symmetrical passages link the long

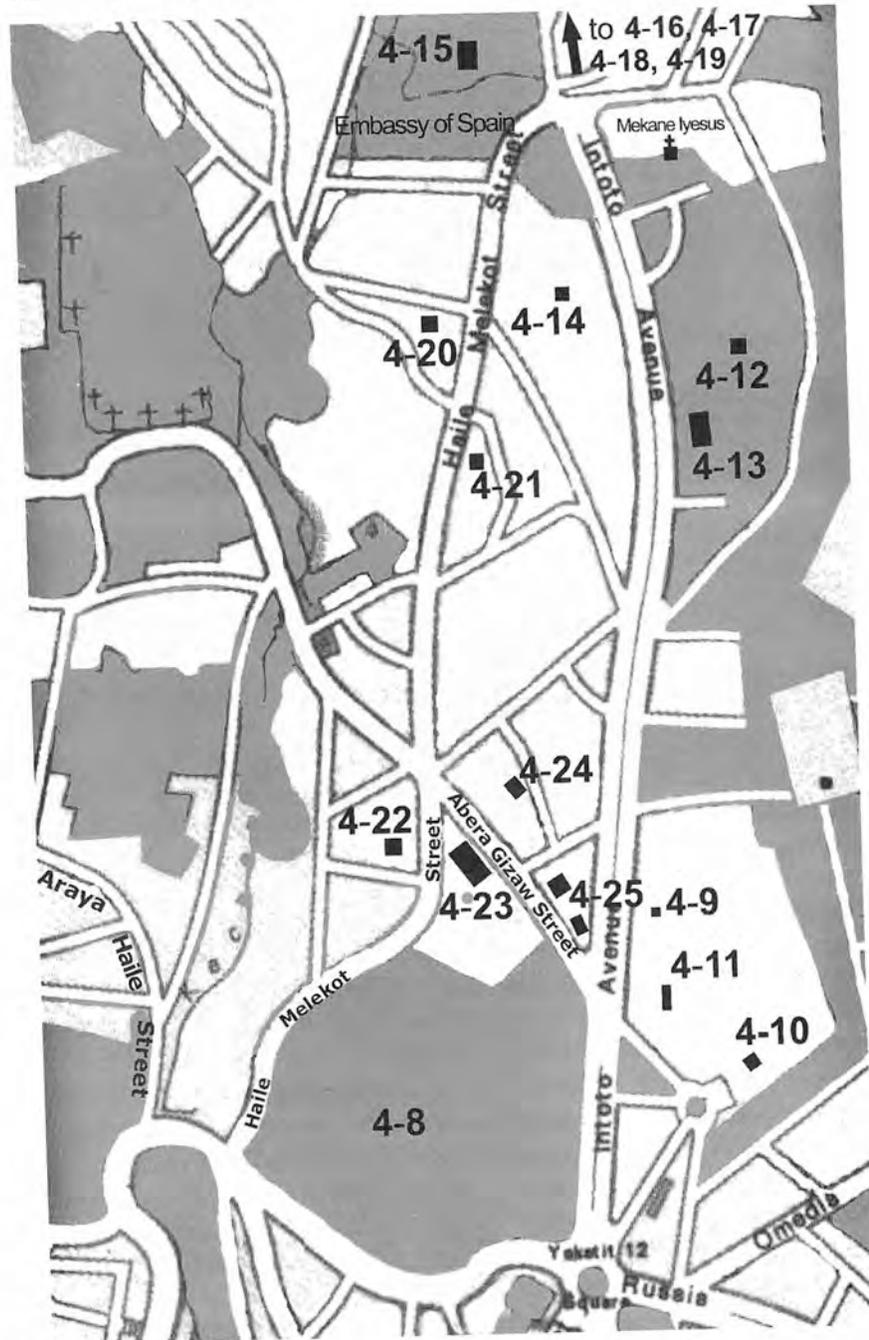


4-7a (Top) and 4-7b (Above left) Yekatit 12 Hospital in 2004; 4-7c (Above right) The Hospital in ca. 1930.

sides of this elegant building with two other constructions, also located symmetrically to the north and to the south of it.

#### 4.8 Lul Gannat Palace

Further north is the University compound, located on the left side of the road and announced by an important stone gateway. Also called ‘little *Gbebbi*’, the compound belonged to *Ras* Makonnen, father of Emperor Haile Sellassie. Menelik gave him this land when the city was founded. Initially, he had some traditional huts built here, which he used as a residence. In 1905, the offices of first Bank of Abyssinia were inside one of these buildings. *Ras* Makonnen died in 1905 and his first heir in 1907. Then, *Ras* Tafari, the future Haile Sellassie, inherited the estate. He



4-8a (Top) *Lul Gannat* Palace in 2004 and 4-8b (Above left) in ca. 1937; 4-8c (Above right) *Amsala Gannat* in 2004.

ordered the construction of the first building in 1916, the *Amsala Gannat* (i.e. image of paradise), or Guest Palace.<sup>9</sup> The construction of the palace – where the Faculty of Law is currently located – began around 1924. In 1927, the building hosted the Italian Duca degli Abruzzi, after whom it was called *Duc-Biet*. In 1934 the *Lul Gannat* Palace was built, the current Institute of Ethiopian Studies, which became the royal residence. The palace was designed by Kametz and built in eight months, just in time to host the Swedish Prince Gustave Adolph. During the Italian occupation it was the residence of the ‘vice King’ of Italy. Here Graziani suffered the famous assassination attempt. The Italians changed the structure of the main palace: they built walls to replace the curtains between the rooms and rebuilt the *Amsala Gannat* and other minor constructions. After the

war, Haile Sellassie maintained it as his royal residence until 1961, when he moved to the Jubilee Palace and converted the mansion into the Addis Ababa University.

#### 4.9 *Balambaras* Shaka Bulluhu

Heading north on Entoto Avenue, you will see – on your right – *Balambaras* Shaka Bulluhu's former residence, built after Menelik's death and probably in the early 1920s. *Balambaras* Shaka was a high-rank official of Emperor Haile Sellassie's court.<sup>10</sup> The residence has a very simple quadrangular



4-9

shape and it is built on a high stone levelled platform because of the hill's slope. It does not have any veranda, but what makes it precious is a variety of multi-glazed panels, carved lunettes above the doors and protruding volumes. It currently functions as the Meskairi Isiwana School. Despite the great deal of construction work that has started in the area, the house is still fully visible, due to the fact that it is surrounded by part of the former *Alga Worrash's ghebbi*.

#### 4.10 *Alga Worrash* Asfaw Wossen Haile Sellassie

The large area comprising of *Balambaras* Shaka's house and – just in front of *Lul Gannat* Palace – the compound of the faculty of Business and Commerce constituted the former *ghebbi* of *Alga Worrash* (Heir to the Throne) Asfaw Wossen, the elder son of Emperor Haile Sellassie.

His residence is the main building located straight after the gate of the University campus. Asfaw used the building, an elegant two-storey construction, after his first marriage to Princess *Welette* Israel Seyoum and he also lived there after the liberation from the Italian occupation. The Derg used the palace as a school for political cadres and this explains the bust of Karl Marx found in the garden at the entrance. Before Asfaw Wossen, however, the area had another distinguished owner: Emperor *Lij* Iyasu.



4-10

#### 4.11 *Lij* Iyasu

His beautiful palace was located a few hundred metres north-eastwards of Asfaw Wossen's former residence. When the latter became the owner of the whole compound, he preferred to have his own residence built instead of using Iyasu's mansion, despite its outstanding character. The building, unfortunately destroyed during the Derg, was a three-storey construction with nice verandas running around each level and a stunning domed roof. Its charm is documented by one of the rare images of the palace, a picture taken during the years 1926-1928. Behind the mansion, the picture shows the long one-storey stone building that functioned as an *aderash*<sup>11</sup> and that still stands nowadays. In turn, *Lij* Iyasu had inherited the compound from his father, the powerful *Ras* Mikael of Wollo, who had established his camp in the area in the first decade of the 20th Century. *Lij* Iyasu became



4-11a (Top) *Lij* Iyasu Palace in ca. 1926-1928; 4-11b (Above) The *aderash* in 2004.

Emperor of Ethiopia when he was still very young, after his grandfather Menelik died in 1913. His power, however, lasted for three years only and because of his unreliability and his favour towards Islam he was ousted in 1916 by a nobles' rebellion organised by *Ras* Tafari Makonnen.

#### 4.12 Princess Sehin – Embassy of Japan/U.S.A

The compound where the American Embassy is located belonged to Princess Sehin Mikael, daughter of *Ras* Mikael of Wollo, half sister of *Lij* Iyasu and mother of Haile Sellassie's wife, Menen Asfaw. The Japanese built their legation here, most probably in the early 1930s and a Japanese architect is said to have designed the present Residence building. The Japanese Legation was closed at the beginning of World War Two, when Japan broke relations with Ethiopia. In 1943, The

US Government leased ten acres of this area and the following year Emperor Haile Sellassie granted the Americans another ten acres. Originally, the area was part of the property owned by Princess Sehin, who is said to have lived in the building that currently functions as a library.<sup>12</sup>

#### 4.13 Prince Makonnen

A few hundred metres south of the US Embassy you will see the current Ministry of Capacity Building. This big mansion, characterized by a copper green-coloured roof, belonged to the Prince (*Lul*) Makonnen, Duke of Harrar and Emperor Haile Sellassie's second son. Following the death of the Prince in 1958, his wife Sara Gizaw and her sons continued to live here right up to September 1974, when the monarchy fell.



4-12



4-13

#### 4.14 *Nagadras* Tsemru

Opposite *Lul* Makonnen's former mansion stands the house of *Nagadras* Tsemru. To get there, cross Entoto Avenue and take the small street that leads you to the back of the new school building. A few steps westwards and you will see the gate of the compound where stands the old two-storey building that belonged to the *Nagadras*. It is a traditional style house in *cikka* and wood, rectangular in plan, and with a veranda running around both floors. Tsemru was the son of Guebre Sellassie, Menelik's famous chronicler.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4.15 *Kegnazmach* Beyene Yimer

As soon as Entoto Avenue begins to narrow and to climb rapidly towards Entoto Mountain, it is worth visiting another interesting palace, although

it was built during or after the Italian occupation. It was the residence of *Kegnazmach* Beyene Yimer, and it currently hosts the Dil Betil Primary School. You will find it on your left, just uphill of the Embassy of Spain. The building, surrounded by a large compound enriched with high trees, is two-storey, rectangular in plan and it has a veranda running all around each floor. At the southwestern corner there is a four-storey tower with a wooden outer staircase and a green-painted veranda. According to locally collected information,<sup>14</sup> the residence was built during the reign of Menelik, when Beyene Yimer was Director of Post and Telegraph. His neighbour was *Ras* Desta Damtew, who lived in a small house in the current Spanish Embassy area. Beyene served as an Ethiopian Minister of Foreign Affairs between 1912 and 1916.<sup>15</sup> However, his fame declined in the 1920s, whereas Desta's power rose, especially after he married Emperor Haile Sellassie's daughter Tenagne-Work. When Beyene was



4-14



4-15

imprisoned and his residence given to *Ras* Desta by Haile Sellassie, there were rumours of a *Ras*' plot to seize Beyene's house. At that time, the four-storey tower functioned as follows: the top floor was used as a prison, the second floor for residential purposes, the first floor was the *aderash* and the ground floor hosted the office. At the death of Empress Menen in 1962, her daughter – and *Ras* Desta's widow – Tenagne-Work decided to turn the building into a school and to dedicate it to her mother. This resulted in the establishment of Menenera School, which educated girls up to 1974, when it was confiscated by Mengistu's regime.

#### 4.16 Kidane Mehret Church

Immediately before Entoto Avenue begins to climb, turn onto the street on your right and follow it until the end in order to visit Hamere Noh Kidane

Mehret Church. It was built around 1930 by order of Empress Menen, to replace the church wanted by Taitu and built in 1910.<sup>16</sup> The building is in stone masonry and is constructed on a high square base. Wooden pillars support the veranda that runs all around the building, which is square in plan. The particularity of this church lies in the semicircular domed apses located at the centre of each of the building's four sides and in the elegant rectangular and triple-windows beside each apse. A large and decorated roof covers both church and veranda.

#### 4.17 Kuskuum Church

Further uphill, take the asphalt road on the left to visit Kuskuum Church, located on the top of a low hill on the slope of Entoto Mountain. From this silent place, beautifully surrounded by high trees, you will enjoy a fine view of woods and hills and the landscape of the basin in which



4-16



4-17

Addis Ababa lies. The church is very simple, built in stone in 1926 by order of *Ras* Tafari and Empress Zawditu.<sup>17</sup> Octagonal in plan, the building has doors and windows opening alternately at each side, but with one exception. In fact, the doors are three, and not four as expected. Ethiopian Orthodox churches have three entrances, one for priests, one for women and one for men. The doors of Kuskuum are polished in brilliant blue, light blue, red, yellow and green.

#### 4.18 Entoto Mariam Church

On the top of Entoto Mountain, at 3,000 metres above sea level, it is worth visiting the church of Entoto Mariam, which Empress Taitu established in 1921, after the demolition of the previous church built in *cikka* in 1885.<sup>18</sup> According to written documents in the Armenian

Community's archives, Minas Kherbekian designed the existing building. The paintings inside are by *Aleka Hiruy*.<sup>19</sup> Nearby are the remains of Menelik's old Palace that was built after 1881 under the direction of Alfred Ilg, a Swiss engineer who assisted Menelik in construction works for a long time.<sup>20</sup> Menelik chose this place as his first relatively permanent capital, attracted by the strategic position and by a prophecy found in a manuscript of the *Kebra Negast*, as his chronicler narrates.<sup>21</sup>



4-18

#### 4.19 Entoto Raguel Church

As you exit Mariam Church, turn right and follow the asphalt road that goes first northwards and then westwards and after 300 metres you will find the church on the left. Menelik established Entoto Raguel around 1884 and its design is attributed to the Indian architect *Haji Kiwas*.<sup>22</sup> Guebre Sellassie, the imperial chronicler, reports that Menelik himself enjoyed cutting the stone with the workers during its construction. His administrator was the same Guebre Sellassie. At that time the temple was an important centre of studies and was endowed with a great collection of manuscripts. The original copy of the *Kebra Negast* is said to have been saved here. Vigneras, who was in Ethiopia in 1897, described the church as different from any others of that time.<sup>23</sup> In fact, it was built using square stones and it had a polygonal shape and a wooden roof. Furthermore, he

was very impressed with the triple roof that gave the building a special appearance.

#### Part B

##### 4.20 *Fitawrari* Wube Abawollo

After this pleasant trip faraway from the chaotic and noisy traffic, go back to Entoto Avenue and turn onto Haile Melekot Street, just after the



4-19

Embassy of Spain. From the latter, turn onto the sixth road (narrow and non-asphalt paths included) on your right and follow it until you see, high in front of you, *Fitawrari* Wube Abawollo's former residence. The story of Wube was told directly to us by his grandson.<sup>24</sup> Wube was raised by his uncle, *Ras Bitwaddad* Tessema, who was the regent after Menelik's death and *Lij Iyasu*'s tutor. It was for this reason that Wube was discriminated against and, at that time, he was only permitted to leave his residence to visit *Ras Desta*. The latter was the ruler of Sidamo and it was there that eventually Wube decided to settle. He and his son fought against the Italians in 1935-36 and during this war Wube died and his son Mengesha was wounded at May Chaw. Despite their participation in the war, the family did not regain the Empress' favour and it was very difficult for Wube Abawollo's grandsons to take back the compound after the war. The house was built

early 1920s. The Italians used it for administrative purposes during the occupation period.

#### 4.25 *Dejazmatch* Asfaw Kebbede

Back to Entoto Avenue and just a few steps northwards from the corner with Aberra Gezew Street enter the compound where, among women grinding dry red peppers in the traditional high mortars, you will see a pyramidal tower roof. This is the only surviving tower of the two that adorned *Dejazmatch* Asfaw Kebbede's former residence, a typical Indian style house of the 1910s (4-25a). A gingerbread woodwork cornice runs all around the roof's eaves and gives this *cikela* house a rich appearance. The house was built during Menelik's time, although *Dejazmatch* Asfaw Kebbede's fame grew when he became administrator of Haile Sellassie's Palace, in charge of the supervision of all servants and services. The whole



4-24



4-25a

*safar* is still called after this influential person. Asfaw Kebbede was also the owner of the great beautiful domed mansion that stands just behind, in Aberra Gezew Street (4-25b). This masonry building dates back to the reign of Zawditu and it stands out for its shape and a façade enriched by the presence of windows, columns and decorations. The first floor is built as a sort of lantern and is covered by a domed roof. In fact, according to local informants, *Ras* Tafari – the future Emperor Haile Sellassie – had this house built for himself, but he wanted to hide the matter and preferred to have Asfaw Kebbede as the formal owner. Haile Sellassie kept Asfaw in great consideration and wanted him to live very close to the palace in order to benefit from his services while, at the same time, he could control him. But this is not the only explanation given. There are rumors<sup>25</sup> that Asfaw had the special task of providing beautiful women to *Ras* Tafari



4-25b

and facilitating his meetings with them in that mansion. Apparently, the idea of constructing it belonged to Empress Menen, who was aware of her husband's habits and advised him to hide there what would have been publicly stigmatised as inappropriate behaviour for the future Emperor of Ethiopia. If true, the story would explain why the building is so elegant and graceful.

#### Part C

##### The Armenian *Safar*

As you go back to Siddist Kilo Square you can make a pleasant walk starting from Tewodros Street beside Yekatit 12 Clinic, continuing on

Welete Yohannes Street, then down to Adwa Avenue and ending in Sahale Sellassie Street. This is the core of the Armenian area. Many elegant residences were built here in the first two decades of the 20th Century and are still visible and inhabited in many cases by descendants of the first owners. We have selected some of the numerous beautiful houses that are worth seeing as examples of Meneliks's time.

#### 4.26 Agop Bagdasarian 1

The first stop is at the big and elegant villa that currently functions as an office for the Ethiopian Association of the Blind. You will find it on your right as you walk down Tewodros Street. It is a red house, made of bricks covered with small tin panels. It became the new residence of Agop Bagdasarian, an Armenian well known in Addis Ababa as *Mousse* Yacob, after he left the house located in front of the Armenian Club (see below). The ceiling of the great hall on the first floor is painted with European landscapes, probably the work of an unknown Russian artist.

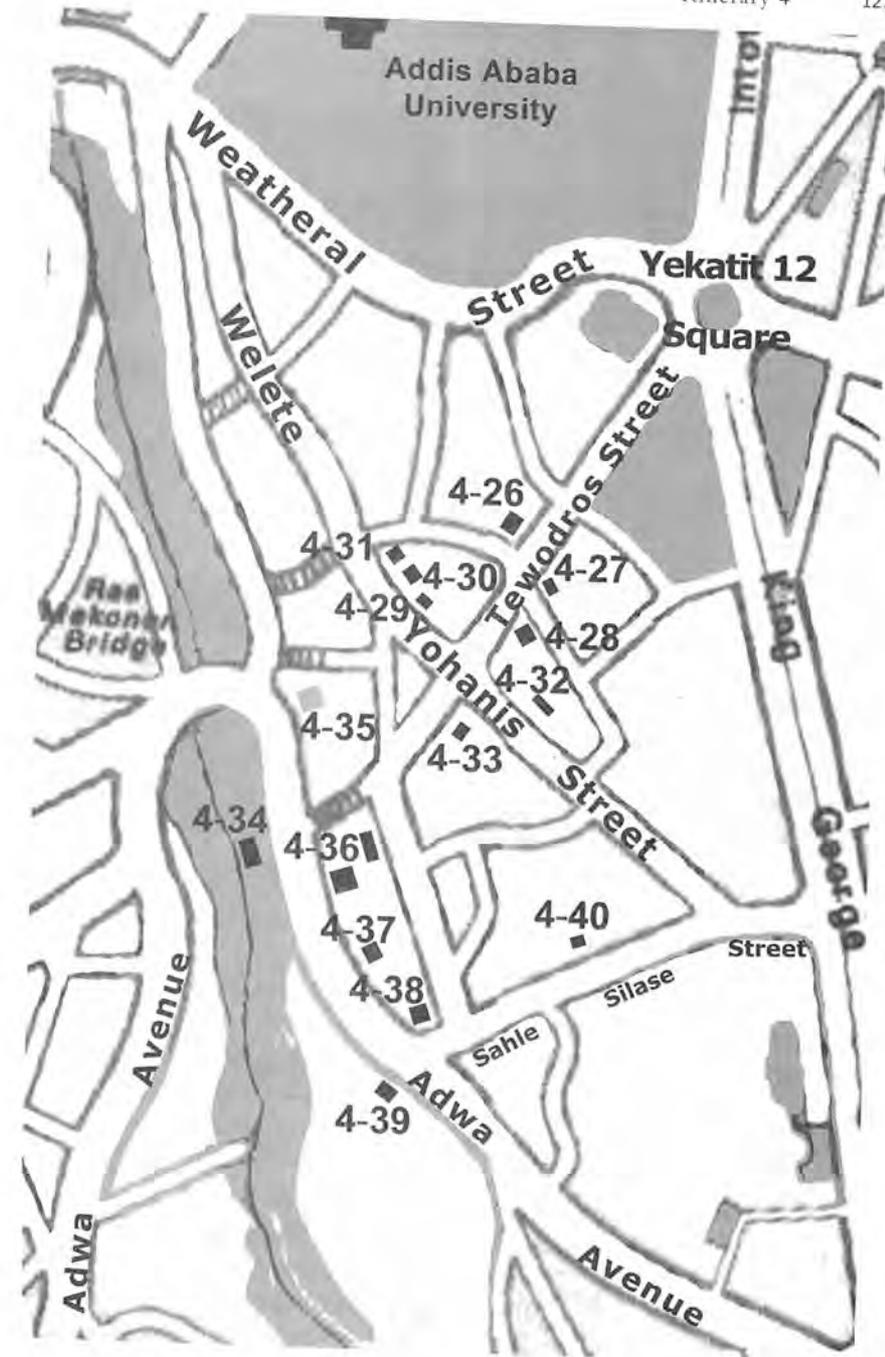
#### 4.27 *Grazmatch* Terfe

Opposite the Ethiopian Association of the Blind in Tewodros Street, you will see the old house that belonged to *Grazmatch* Terfe. It is long in shape, made of *cikka* and wood and it has an external stair that leads up to the first floor. The first owner received the land from Menelik. The land in this neighbourhood, called *Ghedam safar*, was once allotted to members of the Orthodox Church who received it as a salary.

#### 4.28 *Dejazmatch* Letibelu Gebre

Next stop is at a beautiful *tej* house, located immediately downhill of the former Terfe's residence. You will see a large hall sitting in the light falling from the windows set in the two-tier roof. Here, at all times, you will find a large number of men sitting, chatting and enjoying *tej*. In the past it was also a convivial site. In fact, according to local informers, *Dejazmatch* Letibelu Gebre ordered its construction in the 1920s by Indian and Pakistani builders in order to have an *aderash* where he could host his friends and relatives. The adjacent building was his residence. Letibelu was the first minister of Haile Sellassie's *Ghebbi*.

Further downhill, Tewodros Street intersects Welette Yohannes Street. The latter runs along the top of a slope that has Adwa Street at its foot, so that the houses built on the lower side of the road enjoy a good view of the





4-26 (Top left); 4-27 (Top right); 4-28 (Above).

town centre. On the same side two series of stairways link the area with Adwa Avenue, near *Ras* Makonnen Bridge. They are named ‘forty stairs’ and ‘seventy stairs’ and they are usually jammed with a diverse crowd of students, workers, or simply shoppers. Before resuming our walk, we turn for a while onto Welette Yohannes Street to look up to three interesting buildings.

#### 4.29 Agop Bagdasarian 2

As you descend Tewodros Street, turn right onto Welette Yohannes Street and, almost opposite the Armenian Club, you will see the first house that Agop Bagdasarian owned and used as a residence in Addis. It is rectangular in plan, except for the octagonal wing at the corner between the façade and the eastern side. The façade was highlighted by a pediment, which

was demolished when the house was renovated in the 1990s. At that time, stones and bricks substituted the wood and *akka* of the external walls, except at the back and at one side. An interesting detail is represented by the tin panels that cover the ceiling of the living room. According to the owner’s grandson<sup>26</sup>, the house dates back to the 1910s and it was one of the first villas to be built in this area and in Addis. Written evidence exists that states that Menelik granted the land on which the house is built to Agop Bagdasarian on 18 April 1907. Agop was one of the first Armenian goldsmiths to come to Ethiopia and to work at Menelik’s court. Around 1906, he was employed in the coining of Marie Therese thalers at the *Ghebbi* mint.

#### 4.30 *Kegnazmatch* Wolde Yohannes Woldehab

Very close to Agop’s house you will find the path that will lead you uphill to Wolde Yohannes Woldehab’s former residence. The path is almost opposite the Armenian Club and it is the second that you will find on your right from the intersection between Tewodros Street and Welette Yohannes Street. The building that belonged to Wolde Yohannes is small and looks like a low tower, the first floor of which has wooden walls with multi-glazed windows. A stone stairway accesses the ground floor and an external wooden stairway leads up to the first floor. The ground floor has a wide hall with a wooden floor. The house was built during the reign of Zawditu and its first owner was *Kegnazmatch* Wolde Yohannes, a soldier who was later wounded in the Battle of May Chaw during the Ethio-Italian war. He was also an engineer and he himself designed the house and the two similar neighbouring buildings to its right and left, which also belonged to Wolde Yohannes’ family. Quadrangular in plan, they have multi-glazed windows on the façade and stone stairways. Their front side is adorned by a tympan situated between the two domed towers that flank the roof. The four daughters of the *Kegnazmatch* told us that he was killed on 19 February 1937 in the massacre that followed the assassination attempt against Rodolfo Graziani. The fascists took him and hundreds of other men from their houses, brought them to Siddist Kilo and slaughtered them with pickaxes and shovels.

#### 4.31 *Balambaras* Guebre Medhin Gofa

Northwest of Wolde Yohannes’s former residence you will find the small picturesque house that belonged to *Balambaras* Guebre Medhin Gofa. To get there from Wolde Yohannes’ house, go back to Welette Yohannes



4-29 (Top left); 4-30 (Top right); 4-31 (Above).

Street, turn right onto it and then turn onto the next road on your right. This small path will lead you up to a courtyard, where you will find an Italian style house. To its left stands the *Balambaras'* building, which is square in plan and painted in blue. Multi-glazed panels decorate both the façade and the veranda that shelters the entrance and is highlighted with a nice pediment, whereas a gingerbread-like woodwork runs all around the roof's eaves. The house was built in the 1910-1920s to function as a residence of the *Balambaras*, who served as a Minister of Agriculture.<sup>27</sup>

Back to the junction between Welette Yohannes Street and Tewodros Street, cross the latter and walk down the second part of Welette Yohannes Street towards King George Street.

#### 4.32 Hampo Bogossian

Here you will find a building that is definitely the most ancient and richest in history of the area: the house of Hampo Bogossian. Coming from Welette Yohannes Street, you will find it at the end of the first small path on your left after the junction with Tewodros Street, opposite FarmAfrica office. Mr. Bogossian himself, an old and hospitable Armenian gentleman dressed in a black mantle, told us about the history of his house. It was built by his father, Krikorios Bogossian, who arrived in Ethiopia at the end of the 19th Century to escape the Turkish persecutions. Travelling by camel, Krikorios reached Addis Ababa and he settled there, where he started to work for Menelik as a supplier of various merchandises: from Cairo he introduced the first stockings for the Emperor, but also dresses and hats, one of which is shown in the National Museum. He gained Menelik's trust and was conferred a decoration, the Star of Solomon, that appears on his bust in a picture hanging in the living room. Menelik granted him 4,000 square metres of land, where he established his residence. This is actually made of two buildings, one beside the other. The oldest one is elliptical in plan and it has a traditionally made thatched roof topped with eleven pottery finials. Inside, the wooden floor is made of cedar wood, and the walls are covered with painted cotton wallpaper. The external walls and the bright green painted surrounds of the arched doors and windows have the "soft" and plastic consistency of an old adobe plaster. The entrance is carved out of the building's oval, creating a comfortable niche where front doors with original ceramic doorknobs are located. This building is 120 years old. The second and more recent house, around 100 years old, is rectangular in plan and a veranda surrounds it. A pediment once sheltered the entrance, but it was removed. The interior of both buildings is very interesting, having kept the original partition and furniture, including old movable toilets and basin. The residence was not constructed by Armenians, who were not involved in building at that time, but by Indians, cheaper than other builders. The two houses are linked by a stone pavement and are both in use, the first functioning as a bedroom and the second as a living and dining room. According to Mr. Bogossian, it was in the latter that Menelik's coffin was secretly assembled, for his death had to be concealed for State reasons. The coffin was then transported to the palace at night.

#### 4.33 *Agafari* Kelele

As you go back to the junction between Welette Yohannes Street and



4-32a (Top); 4-32b (Above left); 4-32c (Above right).

Tewodros Street, take Tewodros Street downhill and turn onto the first path on your left after the junction. There, you will see *Agafari* Kelele's former residence, another good example of Indian style architecture of the beginning of the 20th Century. It resembles the houses that you have previously seen in this neighbourhood except for the elegance of its carved door. Note also the curvilinear flanks of the pyramidal roofs. Back to Tewodros Street, descend the stairways that lead down to Adwa Avenue

#### 4.34 Andreas Kavadias

As you reach Adwa Avenue, you will see just in front of you a blue house with the projecting veranda surmounted by a trapezoidal pediment. The house, built at Menelik's time, belonged to the Greek Andreas Kavadias.

The Emperor granted him the land around the house. Kavadias was the founder of the first printed newspaper in Addis Ababa, called *Amra*.<sup>28</sup>

#### 4.35 Levon Yasedjian

In this area, just uphill of the bridge, there was a beautiful villa, which features in many old pictures of Addis Ababa and was still standing in the 1960s. It was the residence of the Armenian family of Levon Yasedjian. It was Menelik who gave this tract of land to Levon, who worked for the Emperor as a photographer.<sup>29</sup> Levon was also the owner of the old Cinema Empire, later inherited by the son Palaik, as mentioned in Itinerary 3. The villa had an elegant bow-window façade and the entrance gate was located between two stone columns.

The itinerary continues eastwards of *Ras* Makonnen Bridge (towards Arat Kilo Square), for the westward tract of Adwa Avenue is included in Itinerary 3.

#### 4.36 Armenian Church and School

Thus, continue eastwards in order to visit the Armenian Church of St. Kevork (St. George), on your left. The Archbishop Astanian came from Constantinopolis (the present Istanbul) in person in 1928 to set the first stone of this church, the construction of which was funded by the Armenian Mouradian in memory of his father, George.<sup>30</sup> The founding ceremony was also attended by Empress Menen under a gilt, fringed umbrella, with *Ras* Tafari in a red cloak, and by the Ethiopian *Echegue*.<sup>31</sup> The church was inaugurated in 1935. In the lunette above the main entrance the name of Kevork Muradian is written in Armenian characters. Inside there are paintings of that time, including a copy of Botticelli's *Madonna col bambino*. Between 1923 and 1935, there was only a chapel in the area and it was located beside the Armenian School that stands at the back of the current church building. The Armenian Kevorkoff Community School was opened in 1935 and it was Matig Kevorkoff who had this long edifice built at his own expense and who donated it to the Armenian community. Today, the building hosts an Ethiopian school.

#### 4.37 Teshome Berhe

Still proceeding eastwards on Adwa Avenue you will find on your left Teshome Berhe's former residence, built in stone and wood adorned with multi-glazed windows. The characteristic of this house is the circular roof



4-33 (Top); 4-34 (Above left); 4-35 (Above right) early 1960s.

lantern with windows all around it. Teshome Berhe had his residence built at the time of Haile Sellassie, before the Italian invasion. In 1939, the Englishman Mr. Buck established a school here that he left in 1969. Currently, the villa hosts the Baby Land School.

4.38 *Ras* Mulugeta Yigezu

The house that belonged to *Ras* Mulugeta Yigezu is located at the corner with Sahale Sellassie Street. Quadrangular in plan, it is a solid stone construction with multi-glazed windows in the façade. The then *Dejazmatch* Mulugeta had it built in the 1920s and used it as a residence. Mulugeta was a key figure in Ethiopian history and held ministerial posts and provincial governorships. Veteran of the Adwa war, he was Minister of Finance in the first Cabinet, established by Menelik in 1907,<sup>32</sup> Minister of Foreign



4-36a (Top left); 4-36b (Top right); 4-37 (Above left); 4-38 (Above right).

Affairs between 1916-1917 and Minister of War in the early 1930s, when he was appointed *ras*.

4.39 Dimitri Petros - Olympia

Before going uphill by taking Sahale Sellassie Street, have a look at the house standing just across the street. It is an old house, made of *cikka* and wood, currently hosting a Dorze weaving laboratory. The glazed façade and the pediment above the entrance underline its simple beauty. In the past, however, the façade was highlighted by two pyramidal roofs, as shown by a postcard printed during the Italian occupation. The first owner was the Greek Dimitri Petros, who produced spirits and owned the distillery that was close to the house, near the river. Before the Italian occupation, however, the building hosted the Olympia, a renowned



4-39a (Top) Dimitri Petros' house (Olympia) in ca. 1937 and 4-39b (Above left) in 2004; 4-40 (Above right).

restaurant and night-club. After the war, the American Institute had its premises here.

#### 4.40 *Balambaras Wolde Semait*

As you go uphill on Sahale Sellassie Street, you will find the nice house that belonged to *Balambaras Wolde Semait* on your left. The small building is located almost opposite the 'Orthodox Hiv/Aids Campaign Center' and just after the third road (only the first one is an asphalt road) on the left, starting from the traffic light on Adwa Avenue.

You can now go back to Entoto Avenue, where the itinerary ends.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Haile Gabriel Dagne, 'The Establishment of Churches in Addis Ababa', in: *Proceedings of the International Symposium on the Centenary of Addis Ababa, 24-25 November, 1986*, Addis Ababa, 1987, p. 62-63
- <sup>2</sup> *Guida dell'Africa Orientale Italiana*, Milano, Consociazione Turistica Italiana, 1938, p. 492
- <sup>3</sup> *Guida dell'Africa Orientale Italiana* (1938), p. 492
- <sup>4</sup> <http://www.angelfire.com/ny/ethiocrown/flags.html>
- <sup>5</sup> Angelo Del Boca, *Il Negus. Vita e morte dell'ultimo Re dei Re*, Bari, Laterza, 1995, p. 31
- <sup>6</sup> Abegaze Assefaw Shebeshe, interview, Addis Ababa, 15 November 2003
- <sup>7</sup> *Guida dell'Africa Orientale Italiana* (1938), p. 488
- <sup>8</sup> Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia: 1855-1991*, Oxford, James Currey, 1991, p. 132-133
- <sup>9</sup> Richard Pankhurst, 'The Amsale Gannat Palace', *Addis Tribune*, 20 February 2004
- <sup>10</sup> Abegaze Assefaw Shebeshe, interview, Addis Ababa, 15 November 2003
- <sup>11</sup> Abegaze Assefaw Shebeshe, interview, Addis Ababa, 15 November 2003
- <sup>12</sup> *History of American Compound*, Addis Ababa, US Embassy, 2003
- <sup>13</sup> Engdad Desta Shiferaw, interview, Addis Ababa, 31 October 2003
- <sup>14</sup> Asrat Tegegn, interview, Addis Ababa, 31 October 2003
- <sup>15</sup> [http://www.mfa.gov.et/The\\_Ministry/Background.php](http://www.mfa.gov.et/The_Ministry/Background.php)
- <sup>16</sup> Haile Gabriel Dagne (1987), p. 60-61
- <sup>17</sup> Haile Gabriel Dagne (1987), p. 74
- <sup>18</sup> Haile Gabriel Dagne (1987), p. 61
- <sup>19</sup> *Guida dell'Africa Orientale Italiana* (1938), p. 494
- <sup>20</sup> Richard Pankhurst, 'The Foundation and Growth of Addis Ababa to 1935', *Ethiopian Observer*, VI, 1, 1962, p. 34
- <sup>21</sup> Guèbrè Sellassié, *Chronique du Règne de Ménélik II*, Paris, Maisonneuve, 1930-1931, p. 162-163
- <sup>22</sup> Dejene Habtemariam, 'Architecture in Addis Ababa', in: *Proceedings of the International Symposium on the Centenary of Addis Ababa, 24-25 November, 1986*, Addis Ababa, 1987, p. 202
- <sup>23</sup> Sylvain Vigneras, *Une Mission française en Abyssinie*, Paris, 1897, p. 137
- <sup>24</sup> Beqele Wube, interview, 20 February 2003
- <sup>25</sup> Abegaze Assefaw Shebeshe, interview, Addis Ababa, 15 November 2003
- <sup>26</sup> Avo Bagdasarian, interview, Addis Ababa, 16 February 2003
- <sup>27</sup> Lacach Tessema, interview, Addis Ababa, 29 October 2003

<sup>28</sup> Dukas Ghiorghis, interview, Addis Ababa, 19 February 2003

<sup>29</sup> Dikran Mesrubian, interview, Addis Ababa, 10 January 2004

<sup>30</sup> Giuseppe Martucci, *La comunità armena d'Etiopia*, Roma, 1940, p. 6

<sup>31</sup> Herman Norden, *En Abyssinie*, Paris, Payot, 1930, p. 39

<sup>32</sup> Bahru Zewde (1991), p. 115

## Itinerary 5



The itinerary begins from the *Ghebbi's* northern door and explores the northeast sector of the city. This vast area is crossed by the Kebena River and includes the southern slopes of Entoto Mountain, with an altitude that ranges from 2,400 to 2,500 metres above sea level. This beautiful and healthy area was also one of the city's least inhabited areas in the early 20th Century, when Menelik granted vast tracts of land here to the first foreign countries that established a diplomatic representation in Ethiopia. Thus, all this area was – and is still – marked by the presence of foreign legations, although several key personages of Menelik's court also established their residences here. Many of these buildings are well worth a visit. It is towards one of them, Nasibu's house, that this journey begins.

### 5.1 *Afanigus* Nasibu

To get there, set off by going northwards on the main road that goes towards Entoto and, at Arat Kilo Square, turn right onto Queen Elisabeth Street and follow it. Pass the bridge on the Ginfile River – Ginfile, one of the few Amharic names given to rivers, means dangerous<sup>1</sup> – and continue on Shewareged Gedle Street, which is the prolongation of Queen Elisabeth Street. From the bridge on the Ginfile take the second road on your right and just after 150 metres you will see a magnificent old house. The building is rectangular in plan and two-storey, with stone walls plastered with *ikka* on the ground floor and walls made of wood and *ikka* on the first floor. The main entrance is sheltered by a veranda and is located on the right side of the façade, whereas, on the left side, a wooden staircase, covered with corrugated metal, leads up to the first floor. The presence of verandas, multi-glazed windows and wooden decorations reveal Indian influences on the house building, which took place probably in the years between 19th and 20th Century and certainly not later than 1908. As common in early Addis, the beautiful, panoramic position of the



house – on the top of a hill overlooking the *Ghebbi* – reflects the status of its owner, *Afanegus* Nasibu. According to an Italian traveller who was in Addis around 1908: ‘Everybody says he was a tough man; the chiefs also say he was just. He was a terrible man; terrible in the sense of that being terrible was typical of the people acting in the name of a regime or an idea. [...] After he read a sentence, he used to tell the convict: ‘It is not Nasibo who spoke, it is the Lion of Ethiopia’. He was not a man, he was



5-1

the organ, separate and thinking, but contemporary and infallible, of the State: the *Negus*' mouth<sup>2</sup>. Nasibu died in his house in 1908, intoxicated by the mercury fumes to which he had exposed himself as a treatment for syphilis.<sup>3</sup>

### 5.2 Tedenekiallesh Wolde Ghiorghis

Back to Shewareged Gedle Street, you have to continue a bit further north-eastwards on the same street and turn onto the first asphalt road on the left. The road goes uphill and leads into a quiet and nice area, where two interesting old houses are located. The first, on the left and approximately three hundred metres from the junction with Shewareged Gedle Street, belonged to *Woizero* Tedenekiallesh Wolde Ghiorghis, one of Empress Menen's nieces. The house was built during the reign of

Zawditu and it is a one-storey rectangular in plan large building. It belongs to the two-tiers roof typology and it has a veranda running all around the ground floor. A pediment highlights the main entrance, whereas very nice wooden decorations characterize the balustrade and the roof's eaves. Also note the initials of the owner that decorate the iron gate.

### 5.3 *Dejazmatch* Kebede Tasammas

A little uphill, in a large compound at the corner between the above-mentioned road and the asphalt one on the right, stands the former residence of *Dejazmatch* Kebede Tasammas, after whom the whole *safar* is still called. The house, entirely made of stone, is one-storey and rectangular in plan. The façade has a low attic above the entrance, which is closed by a french window located between two large multi-glazed windows. The decoration that runs below the roof is similar to the one



5-2



5-3

that you will see on the external walls of Tafari Makonnen School later in this itinerary. According to the *Dejazmatch*'s son, the house was built during or immediately after the Italian occupation, although the family owned the area since the time of Empress Zawditu.<sup>4</sup> Kebede was a high ranking official who served as a Governor of Wollega, Shoa and Gojjam and who was also the mayor of Addis after the liberation from the Italian occupation.

### 5.4 Sandford School

As you go back again to Shewareged Gedle Street, turn left (north-eastwards) onto it and after a few hundred metres you will see – to the left side of the road – the old building of the Sandford School. In fact, the English Community School was moved here in 1948, but the

building's history is longer. It functioned as the first Ethiopian Ministry of Education until 1935, when the Italians used it as a hotel for their soldiers and the area became an army camp. Between 1941 and 1948, the famous patriot Abebe Aregay and his followers occupied the building. It is a one-storey elevated stone construction, built on a stone platform that suits the slope. The façade and one side still have a veranda, originally running all around the building until other constructions were added. A beautiful



5-4

entrance enclosed by multi-glazed windows and doors enriches the façade. Their blue-painted wooden frames are decorated with European-influenced carvings, such as small human heads and bunches of fruit. Their style contrasts with the upper part of the façade, where fine Indo-Islamic woodworks decorate the eaves of the pediment overhanging the entrance. The Star of David in the centre of the tympan – a symbol of the Ethiopian Imperial State through the Salomonic origin of its founder, Menelik I – further increases the fascinating syncretism of the façade.

### 5.5 Menelik II Hospital

A little further north-eastwards, near the junction between Shewaregeg Gedle Street and Russia Street, there is the Menelik II Hospital, the first Ethiopian hospital in Addis. It was established in 1909 on the same lanc

where the former Russian mission hospital was located.<sup>5</sup> The Emperor Menelik attended the foundation ceremony together with his French doctor Vitalien,<sup>6</sup> one of the foreign doctors who worked in the hospital during the 1910s. The complex is located on the eastern and northern slopes of the hill, beside the confluence of Kebena and Abo rivers. Most of the buildings inside the compound date back to Menelik's time. The simple typology of these one-storey, square or rectangular in plan constructions contrasts with the marked decorative dynamism consisting of recessing or projecting parts; verandas opening in different positions; corners used as entrances or as verandas enclosed by multi-glazed windows; and finally, different interactions between slope and buildings' structure. Thus, there are buildings that can be accessed from the downhill side and others with entrances located lateral to the up-down axis. However, they all have external stairways made of stone, as well as the quoined surrounds of



5-5a



5-5b

doors and windows. Small paths link the buildings, which are separated by trees, flower beds, roads with benches and tables and empty spaces, such as the one where stands the small temple-like monument with Menelik's bust.

### 5.6 Imperial Guard Headquarters

As you leave Menelik II Hospital, go north-westwards along the street leading to the nearby Kaleb Square. From here, take the large road on your left – Russia Street – that runs to the left of the vast empty field of Jan Hoy Medha (see below). A few hundred metres from Kaleb Square, to the left of Russia Street, you will find the gate of the large compound a riding school is situated. The area was part of the imperial stable and, according to local informants, it is still possible to find here some descendants

of those Lipizzan horses that were brought to Ethiopia from Europe in obedience to Haile Sellassie's wishes. On the small hill at the end of the compound there is an imposing construction that stands out for its three storeys. Before the Italian invasion, it was the headquarters of Haile Sellassie's Imperial Guard. The building, quadrangular in plan and made of stone, is characterized by the different design of the front and rear sides. The front features a veranda and a projecting three-storey tower-like



5-6

structure, pentagonal in plan and decorated with quoined corners. The top floor of the building was probably added afterwards, as it shows the shape of the original pediment. A similar pediment with a round window is also present on the rear side, which is characterized by a wooden veranda linking two projecting parts of different shape. Presumably, the latter were added during the enlargement of the central part of the building.

### 5.7 Jan Hoy Meda

From the small Kaleb Square, near Menelik Hospital, General Mulugeta Street leads towards the large Jan Hoy Meda race ground. Called after one of Menelik's titles (Jan-Hoy means His Majesty), this huge open field was created in 1903 and granted by Menelik to the Imperial Club.<sup>7</sup> Initially used as a polo-ground, racecourse for horses, football, and tennis, Ja

Hoy Meda was also a very popular place for state ceremonies and social gatherings. It was here, for instance, that *Lij* Iyasu was proclaimed as Heir Apparent in 1909 and that the *Abuna* Mattevos declared him an apostate in 1916. Horse races were organised regularly in the 1920s and the royal nobility took active part in them. Empress Zawditu and Prince Tafari Makonnen had their own horses and jockeys, and the competition to win the yearly cup was fierce between the Ethiopian nobility and the foreign legations. Jan Hoy kept its multiple functions also during the reign of Haile Sellassie, when it was even used as an airstrip. The beautiful tent-like shelter of the early years, was replaced by the present masonry building, probably before the coming of the Italians.

### 5.8 Tafari Makonnen School

At the intersection between Omedla Street and General Mulugeta



5-7a ca. 1909.



5-7b ca. 1929.

Street, proceed for a few hundred metres on the small road that extends from the latter and then makes a 90° turn to the left. Just after the turn, on the right, a small asphalt road goes straight to the entrance of the magnificent compound of the old Tafari Makonnen School, currently Entoto Comprehensive Secondary School. As we read in a royal chronicle of the time, it was in 1921 or 1922 that 'His Highness the Crown Prince, Ras Teferi – in line with Menilek II's vision, and because his sincere wish was to guide Ethiopia's people from ignorance to knowledge, from illiteracy to civilization – disbursed from his private treasury about 150,000 *birr* to build a big school of cement and chiselled stone in Addis Ababa, and as a memorial to himself, he called it Teferi Mekonnin School'. Completed in 1925, this imposing construction is entirely made of stone and is covered with corrugated

iron.<sup>8</sup> The elegant façade consists of a central two-storey small body with a nice Indian style lantern above the roof. The body is between two symmetrical one-storey wings, each of which has a series of eight rectangular windows followed by three quoined arched windows at the extremities. Noteworthy is also the park in which the complex is located.

### 5.9 Guenete Yesus Church

As you exit the gate of the former Tafari Makonnen School, turn left onto the asphalt road that goes northwards and leads to the church of Guenete Yesus, set in the foothills of Entoto. The church was built in 1923-1924 in the former *Ras Kassa's ghebbi*. The church is a two-storey building, octagonal in plan, entirely made of stone. Each of the four entrances is overhung by a small veranda, which, in turn, has another



5-8



5-9

semi-circular veranda above it, all entirely made of stone. The stones below the roof are nicely decorated and a mosaic covers the cupola.

### 5.10 *Ras Kassa* – Maryam Church

In addition to the building, it is the beautiful and original *Ras Kassa's aderash* that makes the trip worthwhile. It is located beside Yesus Church, just in front of the main entrance of the other church (Maryam) that stands in the compound. The old *aderash* is a one-storey building with a very interesting and unusual Latin cross plan. Entirely made of stone, its external walls are 60 cm thick and beautifully articulated beams hold up the roof. In front of it, the present Maryam Church was once *Ras Kassa's* dwelling, but subsequent interventions have wiped out any charm that might still exist in this one-storey, quadrangular in plan building. Local

informants pointed out that *Ras Kassa* brought the *tabot* of another Maryam Church located in the neighbourhood here and transformed its residence into a church. Then, he moved his *ghebbi* to the site of the present Mikael Church, approximately 400 hundred metres northwest of Yesus Church.

### 5.11 *Ras Kassa* – Mikael Church

A small non-asphalt road leads to this panoramic place, where, right on the top of the hill stood *Ras Kassa's* second residence. Probably, it was built in the 1920s. Unfortunately, in 2001-2002 the church administration gave order to demolish it, in order to make room for the new Mikael Church. We have been told that the Church has full jurisdiction over the land it owns. However, it is a real pity to see this old and important institution representing Ethiopian historical heritage being destroyed. A new church



5-10

is quite a legitimate wish, but there is no reason why it has to be built in replacement of the old one, especially if this has a historical value. *Ras Kassa's* dwelling was a one-storey, octagonal in plan building. The house was constructed on a stone base and it had *vikka* walls and a two-tier roof with windows between the tiers. An elegant double stairway gave access to the front door, which was sheltered by french-windows and by a veranda supported by wooden pillars. The building was turned into the former Mikael Church probably after the death of the *Ras*. What is still there, hopefully, is the building that functioned as an *aderash* and that is located to the right of the place where the new church will stand. Despite later interventions, the *aderash's* structure is original and belongs to the two-tier roof typology. At the back, it is worth noting the impressive work done to reinforce the southern wall of the house. *Ras Kassa Hailu* was the son



5-11a (Top) *Ras Kassa's* residence (Mikael Church) in 1995; 5-11b (Above left) The *aderash* in 2003; 5-11c (Above right) Counterforts of the retaining wall.

of Hailu Wolde-Kiros, from Lasta and Tisemme Darge, the daughter of Menelik's uncle, *Ras Darge*.<sup>9</sup> *Ras Kassa* was one of the most important representatives of the 20th Century Ethiopian aristocracy. Cousin of Emperor Haile Sellassie, he descended directly from the first of the Shoan dynasty, King Sahle Sellassie.<sup>10</sup> He was the chief commander of the northern front in the second Tembien Battle (February 1936) and in the Battle of May Chaw (March 1936), which was the last Ethiopian effort to fight the fascist invasion.<sup>11</sup> In May 1936 he went into exile in England together with Emperor Haile Sellassie and with him he went back to Ethiopia in January 1941. Between 1941 and 1957 he was the President of the Imperial Crown Council. He received the title of *Lul* and became the Premier Prince of the Empire, preceding even the Crown Prince

in rank.<sup>12</sup> Every Friday afternoon, between three and six o'clock, some time was allocated in the Emperor's schedule for *Ras Kassa*. He died in 1956.<sup>13</sup>

#### 5.12 French Legation

As you leave Yesus Church go back southwards and take the first asphalt road on the left, a few hundred metres after the church. Follow this road south-eastwards until you reach Omedla Street. At the junction, turn right (south-westwards) onto Omedla Street and, on your right, you will find the huge compound of the French Embassy, the first foreign legation established in Addis. France and Ethiopia established diplomatic relations in 1897, when the first French Ambassador (then called Minister of France), Léonce Lagarde, arrived in Addis. The huge forest area where the present French Embassy is located was donated in the first decade of



5-12 ca. 1929.

the 20th Century by Menelik, who granted 50 hectares of land and... 50 slaves!<sup>14</sup>

#### 5.13 *Dejazmatch* Guebre Sellassie Barya

A short diversion is now necessary to visit one of biggest historic houses in Addis, the one owned by *Dejazmatch* Guebre Sellassie Barya. The easiest way to get there is to reach the bridge on Kebena River that is located in Omedla Street, just south (downhill) of the French Embassy's main gate: from the bridge, go back towards the French Embassy and take the second road that you will find on your right, immediately after a big Coca-Cola poster. Follow the road for a few hundred metres until you find on your right the access to a public park. This was Guebre Sellassie's *ghebbi*, in the centre of which, among beautiful old trees, stands his former residence,

probably built in the 1920s. It is an imposing two-storey building, rectangular in plan and approximately 16 metres long and 10 metres wide. A veranda runs all around the building's *cikka* walls, both on the ground and first floors. The latter can be accessed by an external staircase that is located to the left side of the façade and that is integrated in the veranda's structure. The balustrade is decorated with finely carved small columns that form an elegant Indian style pattern. The first owner of the house was a



5-13

well-known member of the Ethiopian aristocracy. He married *Ras* Seyoum Mangasha's daughter, Welette Israel. Menelik gave Guebre Sellassie the Tigrayan districts of Adwa and Shire, and after the death of the Emperor he was among the opponents to the succession of Taitu to the imperial throne.<sup>15</sup> Emperor *Lij* Iyasu suspected Guebre Sellassie of plotting with the Italians in order to overthrow him and declared the *Dejazmatch* a rebel. Guebre Sellassie won the first battle against the forces sent against him by Iyasu, but was later defeated in Mekelle by Seyoum Mangasha and forced to go into exile in the Danakil desert until the end of Iyasu's reign.<sup>16</sup>

#### 5.14 *Ras* Seyoum Mangasha

Next stop is the *ghebbi* that belonged to *Ras* Seyoum, another key public

figure of the 20th Century military and civil Ethiopian history. To get there, go back to the junction with Omedla Street and turn right onto it. From this junction, go north-eastwards (towards Entoto) and turn onto the fifth asphalt road on the left. You will find *Ras* Seyoum's house after 300 hundred metres from the junction, after the sporting ground. It is a beautiful two-storey stone building, rectangular in plan and with large multi-glazed windows at the two corners of the façade. According to



5-14

the niece of Welette Israel Seyoum, daughter of the *Ras*, the house was built before the Italian invasion and one informant dated it to the reign of *Zawditu*.<sup>17</sup> *Ras* Seyoum Mangasha was the grandson of Emperor Yohannes IV and, by hereditary right, he was the ruler of Tigray. However, *Ras* Tafari Makonnen punished him for having refused to capture *Lij* Iyasu and thus, in 1921, he became ruler of western Tigray only, since the eastern part of the province, including Mekelle, was given to *Ras* Gugsa Araya.<sup>18</sup> He fought the Italians with the rank of commander of the central front in the first and second Battle of Tembien in January and February 1936 respectively, and in the final Battle of May Chaw in March of the same year. In 1941, Emperor Haile Sellassie restored him as a ruler of the whole Tigray province, although because of *Ras* Seyoum's collaboration with the Italians, he ordered him to reside permanently in Addis Ababa.<sup>19</sup>

Ras Seyoum died in 1960, when he was assassinated by the two putschist brothers Menghistu and Ghermame Neway in the Green Salon massacre at *Lul Gannat* Palace on the 15th of December.<sup>20</sup>

#### 5.15 Italian Legation

Back to the junction with Omedla Street, turn left and follow this road, leading downhill. After one kilometre from the above-mentioned junction, you will find the church of Abo on your right. Then keep on following the same road, pass the bridge on a branch of the Abo River and turn left onto the first large intersecting asphalt road. After passing another bridge on Abo River, the first asphalt road on your left leads directly to the Italian Embassy. Initially established in the Arada district, it was later moved to the present location in the first decade of the 20th Century. Pictures from that time show a barren hillside, with



5-15 ca. 1909.



5-16

no sign at all of the thick forest that now covers not only the Italian Embassy compound, but all the areas where the oldest legations are located. Already in the 1920s, Jean D'Esme was very impressed at how formerly uncultivated and empty lands were turned into the beautiful legations' parks, full of eucalyptus trees and flowers.<sup>21</sup> On the vast tract of land donated to Italy by Menelik, the construction of the first masonry building was completed in 1911, based on a design by the Italian ambassador Giuseppe Colli di Felizzano.<sup>22</sup> Citerni was there in 1910 and described the buildings as a 'one-storey small palace. A double stairway leads up to the façade's veranda, built with six strong squared pillars; the layout is simple, but elegant. The small openings above the windows, at the attic level, betray that a fort-like substantial character is hidden under a small villa's coquettish appearance'.<sup>23</sup>

#### 5.16 *Nagadras* Guebre Hiwot Baikadegn

As you go back, you will see an elegant house on your left, a few hundred metres from the gate of the Italian Embassy. The building is two-storey and quadrangular in plan. The external walls stand on a stone base and are made of wood and *cikka*. A nice wooden balustrade decorates the veranda running all around the two floors, while two finials adorn the roof. The building dates back to the first two decades of the 20th Century and the first owner was *Nagadras* Guebre Hiwot Baikadegn.

#### 5.17 German Legation

As you leave on your left the road leading to the Italian Embassy, follow the main road (Tashafi Afewerk Street) that goes southwards and then turns westwards and skirts the compound of the Embassy of Germany on the right. The legation was established in 1905<sup>24</sup> and the following year



5-17 1909



5-19 ca. 1936.

the Embassy building was constructed. The building, a one-storey stone construction of sober design, was demolished in 1931.<sup>25</sup>

#### 5.18 Russian Legation

The Russian Legation was established in the compound located on the present Maryam Aba Techan Street (the name taken by Queen Elisabeth Street east of the Kebena River), a few hundred metres from the German Embassy and very close to the British Legation. In 1900, 'the chief building of the Russian Legation was a long structure with white-washed walls, raised on a platform and surrounded by a large, untidy compound, with the camp of the Cossack guard in one corner'.<sup>26</sup>

## 5.19 British Legation

Evelyn Waugh described the British Legation in 1930 as a tiny garden-town made of nice thatched-roof bungalows where the officials lived.<sup>27</sup> The French, Italian, German, Russian and British were the first five legations established in Addis, on large tracts of land donated by Menelik on the eastern side of the Kebena River. At that time the legations area was frequently cut off from the rest of the city during the rainy season, when the crossing of Kebena was very dangerous. A British traveller who was there in 1900 wrote that 'three quarters of an hour at least are necessary for a pilgrimage from the British Agency to the palace, and as much again to the market. On either of these journeys you must cross three or four deep ravines with stony, precipitous bank and a torrent bed full of slippery boulders'.<sup>28</sup> The problem was solved when, according to Merab, the Russians built a bridge around mid-1910s, after one of their officials was drowned in the river during the rainy season of 1902.<sup>29</sup> The bridge – the end of the itinerary – is near the German Embassy, on Tashafi Afework Street, and it was the first main bridge built in Addis Ababa.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Edouard Berlan, *Addis Abeba - La plus haute ville d'Afrique*, Grenoble, Imprimerie Allier, 1963, p. 158, note 22
- <sup>2</sup> Giuseppe Piazza, *Alla Corte di Menelik*, Ancona, Puccini, 1912, p. 174-175 (Translation by the authors)
- <sup>3</sup> Chris Prouty, *Empress Taitu and Menelik II, Ethiopia 1883-1910*, Trenton, The Red Sea Press, 1986, p. 295
- <sup>4</sup> Asfaw Kebbede, interview, Addis Ababa, 15 November 2003
- <sup>5</sup> Martin E. Johnson, *The Evolution of the Morphology of Addis Ababa*, Los Angeles, University of California, 1974, Ph.D. thesis, p. 196
- <sup>6</sup> [http://www.ambafrance-ethiopie.org/English/en\\_relation/en\\_historique04\\_1897.htm](http://www.ambafrance-ethiopie.org/English/en_relation/en_historique04_1897.htm)
- <sup>7</sup> Charles F. Rey, *Unconquered Abyssinia*, London, Seely & Service, 1923, p. 147
- <sup>8</sup> Elyas Gabra-Egziabeher, *Prowess, piety and politics: the Chronicle of Abetu Iyasu and Empress Zewditu of Ethiopia (1909 - 1930)*, Köln, Köppe, 1994, p. 422
- <sup>9</sup> Elyas Gabra-Egziabeher (1994), p. 480, note 678
- <sup>10</sup> Angelo Del Boca, *Il Negus. Vita e morte dell'ultimo Re dei Re*, Bari, Laterza, 1995, p. 330
- <sup>11</sup> Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia: 1855-1991*, Oxford, James Currey, 1991, p. 154
- <sup>12</sup> <http://www.ethiopiancrown.org/crown.htm>
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>14</sup> Edouard Berlan (1963), p. 69
- <sup>15</sup> Harold G. Marcus, *The Life and Times of Menelik II, Ethiopia 1844-1913*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1975, p. 247
- <sup>16</sup> Chris Prouty (1986), p. 341
- <sup>17</sup> Hullu Fantay, interview, Addis Ababa, 22 February 2003
- <sup>18</sup> Angelo Del Boca (1995), p.53
- <sup>19</sup> Angelo Del Boca (1995), p. 206
- <sup>20</sup> Angelo Del Boca (1995), p. 256
- <sup>21</sup> Jean D'Esme, *A Travers l'Empire de Ménélik*, Paris, Plon, 1928, p. 60
- <sup>22</sup> Arnaldo Cipolla, *Pagine africane di un esploratore*, Milano, Alpes, 1927, p. 303
- <sup>23</sup> Carlo Citerni, *Ai confini meridionali dell'Etiopia*, Milano, Hoepli, 1913, p. 43 (Translation by the authors)
- <sup>24</sup> *Guida dell'Africa Orientale Italiana*, Milano, Consociazione Turistica Italiana, 1938, p. 476-477
- <sup>25</sup> Peter Junge and Silke Seybold, *Bilder aus Äthiopien - Malerei und Fotografie 1900-1935*, Bremen, Überseemuseum, 2002, p. 26

<sup>26</sup> P.H.G. Powell-Cotton, *A Sporting Trip Through Abyssinia*, London, Rowland Ward, 1902, p. 85

<sup>27</sup> Evelyn Waugh, *Remote People*, London, Duckworth, 1931

<sup>28</sup> Herbert Vivian, *Abyssinia. Through the Lionland to the Court of the Lion of Judah*, London, Pearson, 1901

<sup>29</sup> Paul Merab, *Impressions d'Éthiopie*, Paris, Ed. Leroux, 1921-1929, p. 133-134

## Itinerary 6



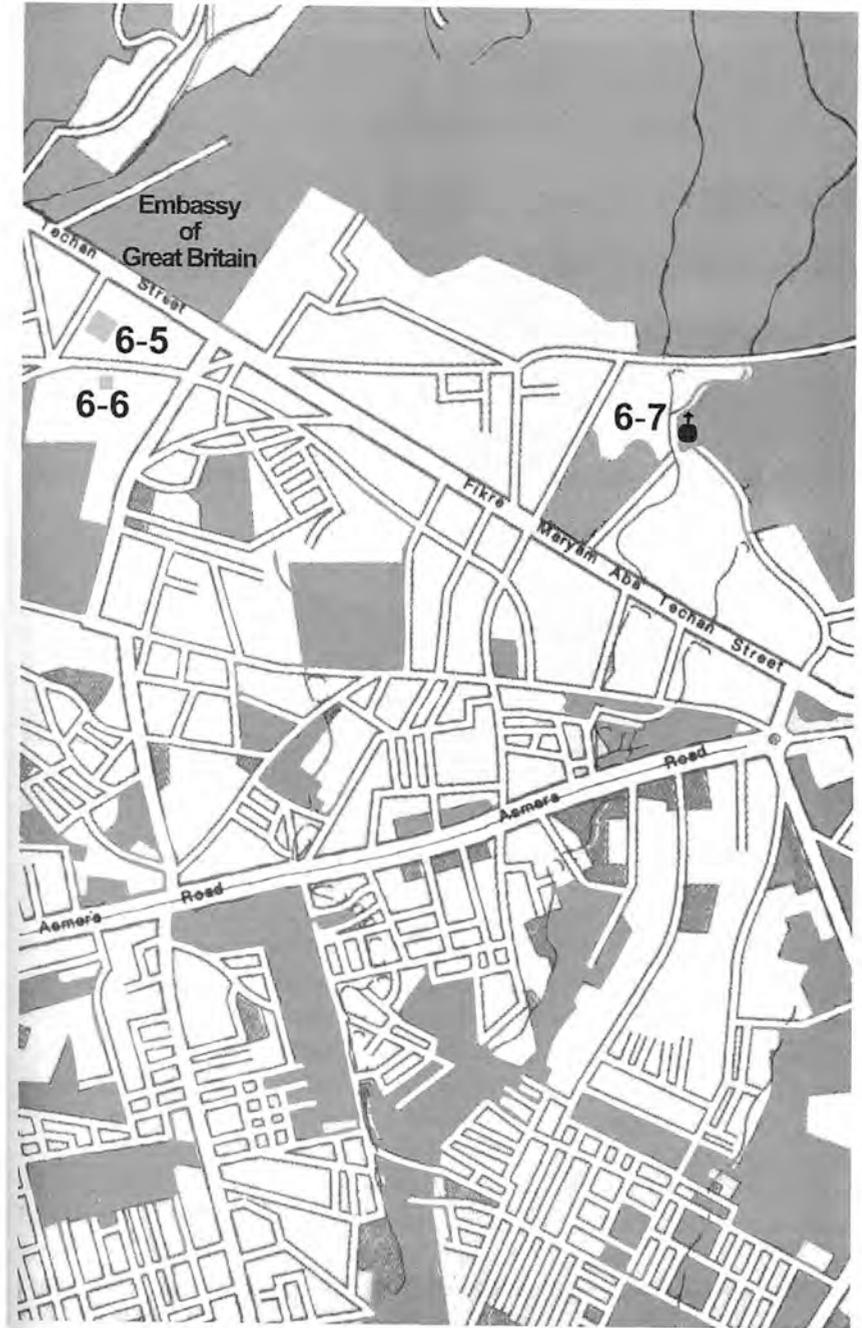
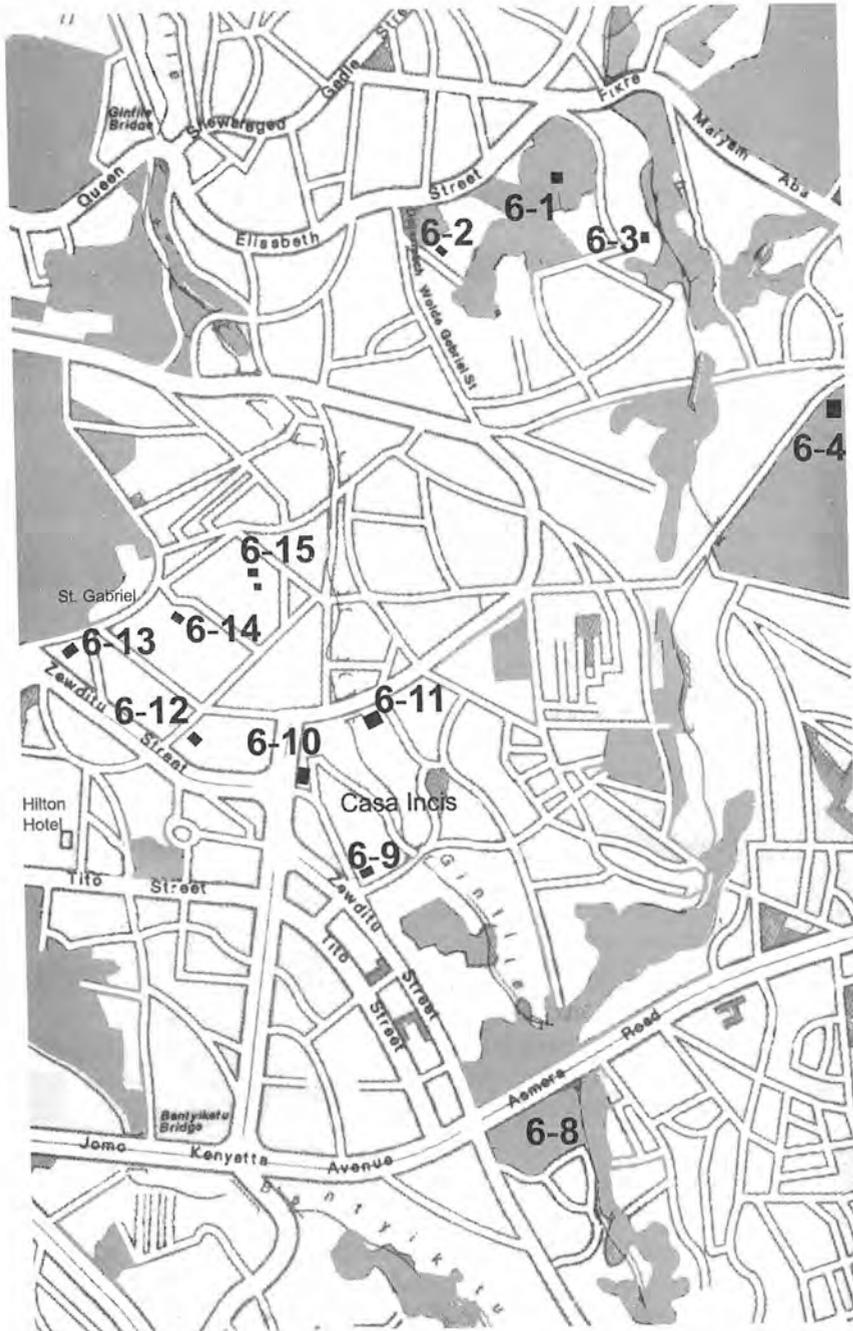
The itinerary covers the city sector to the east of the Imperial *Ghebbi*. All the area was once divided into two by the road that from the *Ghebbi*'s eastern gate led to Ankober and Harar.

The road is still crucial and corresponds to the tract of the present Asmara Road that begins from the junction with Fikre Maryam Aba Techan Street, in Yeka district. It was on this road, in a place beyond Shola at the outskirts of Addis, that there was the so called 'farewell tree', up to the foot of which the Europeans used to escort the caravans directed to the sea.<sup>1</sup>

On the contrary, the first tract – the one linking the *Ghebbi* with the present Asmara Road – has already lost its importance in the early 20th Century, although part of it still exists. However, the easiest way to begin the itinerary is the same as of Itinerary 5, that is, by going from the *Ghebbi* to Arat Kilo and then by turning right onto Queen Elisabeth Road. The large area between this street and the Kebena River hides a group of very interesting historic buildings, including the residence of Haile Sellassie' half brother, Yilma Makonnen.

### 6.1 *Dejazmatch* Yilma Makonnen

To get there from Queen Elisabeth Road, turn onto the last asphalt road on the right before the bridge on Kebena. The small street goes up a few hundred metres and leads to the front of the black and white painted metal gate of the vast park where, on the top of the hill, stands the imposing villa that belonged to *Dejazmatch* Yilma Makonnen. It is a two-storey building, quadrangular in plan, and made of the same grey stone used, among others, for the Bank of Abyssinia and the Menelik II School. Verandas are opened onto each floor and the one on the first floor is adorned with pointed arches. Its dimensions and position make it





6-1 (Top); 6-2 (Above left); 6-3 (Above right).

one of the most important private dwellings of old Addis. In a successful meeting of different architectures, the charm of this European style villa is increased by the Indian-influenced bell-shaped dome that stands in the centre of the roof. According to the old guardian, the house dates back to the reign of Menelik and had not seen any structural changes since then.<sup>2</sup> Since Yilma Makonnen died in 1907, his residence should have been built before that year. *Dejazmatch* Yilma was born in 1875, son of the famous *Ras* Makonnen, the hero of Adwa, and a woman the *Ras* had an affair with before he married Yeshimebet Ali Abba Jiffar, mother of Emperor Haile Sellassie. It is said that the relationship between Yilma and his father were not very close until the son saved his father's life during the Battle of Adwa, in 1896.<sup>3</sup> In 1906, Yilma, already a *dejazmatch*, received from Menelik the governorship of Harar that he kept until October 1907,

when he died of pneumonia.<sup>4</sup> After his death, the daughter Yeshash-Work Yilma lived in the house.

### 6.2 *Dejazmatch* Mangasha Yilma

Before the road heading to *Dejazmatch* Yilma's house and immediately before the new church west of it, a road leads to an empty tract of land, on the east (left) side of which a nice old building is located. It belonged to one of Yilma's son, *Dejazmatch* Mangasha Yilma, who died in 1936. The building is one-storey and rectangular in plan, made of *cikka* and wood. It has a veranda on the ground floor and a nice Indian style pediment decorating the roof.

### 6.3 Mashasha Haile

Before leaving the area, it is worth noting the architecture of another building, although more recent than the previous two. It is located on the small non-asphalt road located between the Kebena and the road going to Yilma's house. Follow the sign indicating the Little Flower School and you will find the building, since the private Indian school currently occupies it. Located on the Kebena River's eastern bank, this house stands out for its particular design. Its central body, circular in plan, is sided by two wings rectangular in plan, part of them recently added. The original building has a stone base, whereas the external walls are made of *cikka*. Although informants pointed out that it was built after the Italian invasion, it is included here because its charm is that of the early Addis architecture. Its first owner was Mashasha Haile, Ethiopian diplomat and Minister of Buildings during the reign of Haile Sellassie.

### 6.4 *Ras* Abate Bwayalaw

Next stop is the former residence of one of the most important military leaders of Menelik's court, *Ras* Abate Bwayalaw. To get there, go back to Queen Elisabeth Street and cross the bridge on the Kebena. Follow the continuation of Queen Elisabeth Street, i.e. Fikre Maryam Aba Techan Street, until you find the entrance of the British Embassy on the left. Turn right onto the road opposite the Embassy's gate, cross the intersecting road and you will find the house on the left. The compound has recently become a military area and, therefore, the visit has to be authorized by the personnel living there. According to Merab, who writes in the 1920s, *Ras* Abate's residence, probably designed by himself, was the most sumptuous residence in Addis, after the *Negus*.<sup>5</sup> It is a one-storey building, rectangular

in plan on the front side, more articulated at the back. The projecting roof runs all around the ground floor to shelter the rectangular windows, whereas a trapezoidal pediment highlights the main door. Access is through a large stone stairway and a veranda supported by four square pillars. The external walls are made of *cikka* and are erected on a stone base. The roof is covered with corrugated metal sheets. At the back of the house, there is an interesting small building, circular in plan and covered by



6-4

an octagonal roof decorated with a severely damaged umbrella-like finial. Octagonal is also the stone pavement that runs all around the building and leads to the veranda supported by wooden posts. Most probably, the building functioned as an *aderash*. Initially, Abate's land was located where is now the Etegue Hotel, but after the Battle of Adwa he received instead a vast area beyond the Kebena River, where he had his residence built.<sup>6</sup> Abate Bwayalaw was first *dejazmatch*, then *likamakwas*, and finally *ras* in 1910. He fought the Italians during the siege of Mekelle in 1895 and at Adwa, from where he received the honour of bringing 60 Italian guns to Enderta.<sup>7</sup> In 1909, Empress Taitu appointed him as a ruler of Wag (Wag-Shumi) and gave him 'jurisdiction' over Tigray.<sup>8</sup> Despite his victory over the rebel *Dejazmatch* Abreha in 1909, he lost the Empress' favour and, for revenge, he contributed to her downfall. In April 1910, after the death

of Menelik, he made a triumphant entry into the capital, from which the empress had banned him.<sup>9</sup> His plan was to call for Iyasu's abdication, but on 14 November 1911 *Ras* Mikael, father of Iyasu, arrived in Addis Ababa with an army of 8,000 men and imprisoned Abate at Magdala.<sup>10</sup> Released in 1916, he was made Governor of Wello by Empress Zawditu.

#### 6.5 *Ras* Adafrisau

In the large area between *Ras* Abate's former residence and the British Embassy – where now is the Yeka Misrak Chora Primary Public School – stood a beautiful and imposing three-storey building, demolished years ago. The house belonged to *Ras* Adafrisau, but the Italians used it for military purposes during their occupation. Its peculiarity was its harmonic combination of quadrangular and circular structures, as shown by one of the few images available. Adafrisau fought against the Italians at May Chaw in 1935 with the title of *dejazmatch* and the rank of sub-commander. In May 1936, he was among those dignitaries who left Ethiopia together with the Emperor and went to Djibuti to board the British cruiser HMS *Enterprise*.<sup>11</sup>

#### 6.6 *Kegnazmach* Wolde Mikael

Less important than the previous one, *Kegnazmach* Wolde Mikael's former residence is well worth a glimpse: unfortunately, from its picture only. The old building, which has been recently destroyed, was located a few hundred metres north-eastwards of *Ras* Abate's residence. It was a one-storey, rectangular in plan building, the design of which was poorer than *Ras* Abate's, but similar. Like the latter, it was built on a stone base and also its external walls were made of stone. It had a stone stairway leading to the main door, highlighted by a simple pediment supported by wooden pillars. It probably dated back to the 1910s.

#### 6.7 Yeka Mikael Church

After this short diversion to see *Ras* Abate's old residence, go back to the British Embassy and when you are in front of it turn right onto Fikre Maryam Aba Techan Street. Proceed eastwards for a little more than one kilometre and then turn onto the small road that you will find on the left immediately after a small park (Yeka Park). The road leads to Yeka Mikael Church, one of the ten most important churches of Addis and one of the first to be founded. The original building, supposedly monolithic, was destroyed by Amhed Gragn in the 16th Century, but a thatched



6-5 (Top) ca. 1936-1939; 6-6 (Above left) 1994; 6-7 (Above right).

roof church existed in this place at the end of the 19th Century.<sup>12</sup> Lord Cranworth visited the church in 1910 and described it as 'circular in shape with a thatched roof. Around it is a verandah of about 12 feet in width supported by cedar posts'.<sup>13</sup> This church was turned into the present building in 1926-1927 and Empress Zawditu granted more than half of the funds required.<sup>14</sup> The church is octagonal in plan and it is entirely made of grey stone. Today as in the past, a beautiful veranda, supported by wooden posts, runs around the building.

#### 6.8 Urael Church

Once back to the junction with Fikre Maryam Aba Techan Street, turn left onto it and continue a few hundred metres eastwards. After the second bridge, take the large and very short road connecting Fikre Maryam Street

with Asmara Road. At the roundabout, turn right onto Asmara Road and go back towards the city centre. After approximately two kilometres, you will find Urael Church on your left. In fact, Debre Tsige Urael Church was established in Entoto in 1882-1883, but it was later transferred to the present site. This happened at the time of the Battle of Adwa, when Ras Darge ordered the construction of a big thatched roof church.<sup>15</sup> Evidence exists that states that the present building was constructed by order of Zawditu between 1919 or 1920 and 19 January 1927.<sup>16</sup> The church, erected on a stone platform, is accessed through a stone stairway leading up to a veranda, supported by cedar posts and running all around the building. This is octagonal in plan, made of stone, and covered by a two-tier roof. Each side of the construction has a window between the tiers as well as rectangular windows enriched by decorated wooden frames, surrounded by concentric frames of carved stone. The upper part of the building is



6-8



6-9

further decorated by quoined corners and metal cornices running around the roof's eaves. Zawditu was particularly fond of this church, to the extent that it is said that she used to live in a house close to it. All this area was called *Zawditu Safar* (or sometimes *Gimmira Safar* after the place of origin of many of her servants) and it was linked to the *Ghebbi* by one of the first paths traced in Addis.<sup>17</sup>

North of Urael is *Kazanchis Safar*, one of the few areas of Addis in which the Italian colonization left an architectural mark. The area was designated for the settlement of Italian state employees, under the management of the Istituto Nazionale per le Case degli Impiegati dello Stato (INCIS). Fortunately, some historic buildings survived the Italian intervention and among them is the former residence of *Grazmatch* Sahle Mariam.

### 6.9 *Grazmatch* Sahle Mariam

To get there, turn right as you exit the main gate of Urael Church, cross Asmara Road and go straight uphill on Zawditu Street. Follow the latter and turn right onto the first asphalt road that you will find after Asmara Road. Just after the junction, turn onto the first road on your left and, at the end of this short alley, you will see the small and nice old house. The building, which dates back to the early 20th Century, is rectangular in plan and has a first floor added to the central body. Around this “tower” runs a veranda, the pillars and balustrade of which are made of wood. Conversely, the building is entirely made of stones covered with *cikka* plaster. The first owner worked in the 1930s for the Italians as a translator.

### 6.10 *Fitawrari* Atnaf Sagad

Much richer than Sahle’s house is the nearby former residence of *Fitawrari* Atnaf Sagad. This is located approximately 200 metres north-west of Sahle’s house, on the right side of Zawditu Street. Atnaf’s residence currently functions as the Yelebe Fana Primary School. It is a beautiful two-storey building, rectangular in plan and with a veranda running all around the ground floor and a closed veranda on the first floor. Doors and windows are arched, including the small windows of the beautiful tower-like structure that projects from the façade, characterizing it. This semi-hexagonal tower is decorated with quoined corners and is covered by a pyramidal dome. The walls are made of stone, whereas wood was used for the veranda. It seems probable that Atnaf Sagad received the land in the area during the reign of Zawditu and had his residence built in those years. Local informants explained that the Indian style of the house was due to the fact that it was designed by Woli Mohammed, the Indian architect who, among other buildings, designed the nearby Gabriel Church.<sup>18</sup> Atnaf Sagad had a vast tract of land, later reduced due to the increasing settlement of the clergy of Gabriel and Urael Churches.<sup>19</sup>

### 6.11 *Kegnazmatch* Mulugeta

Next stop is at the former residence of *Kegnazmatch* Mulugeta, still in Kazanchis area. Located between Atnaf Sagad’s residence and the Norwegian Hospital, it is currently the Yekatit 6 Kindergarten and Elementary School. As you exit the gate of former Atnaf Sagad’s house, turn right and go straight until you reach a crossroad. Then turn right, past the bridge and you will see the entrance of the Yekatit 6 School on your right. The big building, two-storey and rectangular in plan, maintains its

historical charm, despite the fact that it was turned into the Luigi Razza Hospital during the Italian occupation and into the Yekatit 6 School in the 1970s. Stone was used for the walls of the ground floor and for the front side of the first floor, whereas the other external walls were made of *cikka* and wood. Wooden pillars support the veranda that runs around both floors. The house was probably built in the first two decades of the 20th Century, whereas parts of the complex were added later.



6-10

### 6.12 *Grazmatch* Tashe Ashebir

The itinerary continues towards the *Ghebbi*, so go back to Zawditu Street, follow it north-westwards and, after Zawditu Street turns left in front of Atnaf Sagad’s house, turn onto the first road on your right. The Hotel Tkul is located at the junction, from which Tashe’s former residence is around 50 metres further, on the right. According to the current owner, the house was built around 1900 as a residence for a technician working for Menelik, *Grazmatch* Tashe Ashebir. It is a very nice two-storey building, with a Latin cross plan. The external walls were made of *cikka*, whereas wood was used for the blue painted pillars that support the veranda which open onto the façade, on both the ground and first floors. The Indian architect Woli Mohammad would have designed the house.<sup>20</sup> During the Italian occupation, the house functioned as a prison and police station.

### 6.13 Kafay Wale

Back to Zawditu Street, follow it until it leads you to the front of the *Ghebbi*'s southern gate. At this junction, turn eastwards (right) and after a few hundred metres you will find the gate of the Ethiopian Andinet Elementary School on your right. The old house inside the compound is the former residence of *Woizero* Kafay Wale. Located in a panoramic position, the building is two-storey and rectangular in plan. Relatively small dimensions and nice proportions characterize it. The external walls are made of *akka*, whereas wood was used for the balcony and the pillars supporting the veranda. The latter is present at both floors and includes the wooden staircase leading up to the first floor. The Indian style of the building is highlighted by the metal decoration at the top of the roof. According to local informants, the house was built during the reign of Menelik. At that time, an important member of the royal family used it as



6-11



6-12

a residence, and this explains why the building is so close to the *Ghebbi*. In fact, Kafay Wale was the daughter of *Ras* Wale Betul and, therefore, she was Empress Taitu's niece. In addition, she was *Ras* Gugsu's sister and the second wife of *Ras* Mangasha Yohannes, with whom she had *Ras* Seyoum Mangasha.

### 6.14 Wolde Meskal Tarku

As you exit the gate of the Ethiopian Andinet Elementary School, turn right and go eastwards until the street turns left. Just before the bend, take the first non-asphalt road on your right and follow it downhill. After a very short distance you will see on your right the former residence of Wolde Meskal Tarku. It is a large one-storey building, standing on a stone platform that levels the slope. A stone double stairway leads up to the front



6-13

door, which is not centered in the façade and it is sheltered by a veranda enclosed by multi-glazed windows and panels. The door is overhung by an elegant pediment with a mirror in the centre of the tympan. Originally, according to local informants, the house had two beautiful roof finials, made of wood and with eagle-like wings. The building dates back to the pre-Italian invasion period and probably to the late 1920s or early 1930s, when Wolde Meskal served as a *tsabafi taezaz*, i.e. Minister Scribe, in Haile Sellassie's administration. After Wolde Meskal's heirs granted the house to Addis Ababa University, the building functions as a study centre dedicated to the first owner.

### 6.15 Woli Mohammed

During the reign of Menelik, the area immediately east of the *Ghebbi* – all

around Wolde's former residence and further eastwards – bore the name of Agach *Safar* and Faras Barat *Safar*: the first was for the palace's grooms' dwellings, the second for the *Ghebbi*'s horses and mules.<sup>21</sup> Close to them is the Woli Mohammed *Safar*, named after the above-mentioned famous Indian architect. He was involved in construction works for the Emperor and he probably worked in the *Ghebbi*. As a reward, Menelik gave him land in this area, where he lived and had the first mosque of Addis built, based on his design. The mosque was replaced by a more recent building, but Woli's house is still standing. To get there, go back to the junction between the asphalt road surrounding the *Ghebbi* and the road you took before to reach Wolde Meskal Tarku's former residence. Between the two there is a little non-asphalt road: follow it downhill and turn right onto the second road from the junction and then onto the first on your right. After a while, on your left, you will see the Indian architect's former residence,



6-14



6-15

a one-storey building, rectangular in plan and with external walls made of tuff stone. Despite the construction having undertaken several changes, it maintains part of the original Indo-Islamic charm, as shown by the woodwork decorating the veranda in the façade. Noteworthy are also the unusual lozenge-shaped openings in the stone platform of the building nearby, which probably functioned as a servants' house. In front of the house, it is still possible to identify the area – approximately 7 metres wide and 10 metres long – occupied by a big water reservoir, currently no more in use and filled with earth. Woli Mohammed distributed part of his land to others and encouraged the creation of wells and reservoirs, to the extent that this was the only *safar* that successfully solved its water problems.<sup>22</sup> To reach the mosque, take the small path going uphill beside Woli's house, on your right as you face the house's façade. According to Woli's descendants,

the first mosque stood just below the present one, which dates back to the 1960s. Initially, Woli built a very simple hut, made of *cikka* and wood. Very soon, however, it became inadequate for the growing population of the area and Woli had a larger mosque built, complementary to his own residence. Like the latter, the new mosque was rectangular in plan, made of the same materials, and covered with corrugated metal sheets. This second mosque had a small minaret, also made of *cikka* and wood.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Edouard Berlan, *Addis Abeba - La plus haute ville d'Afrique*, Grenoble, Imprimerie Allier, 1963, p.70 note 33

<sup>2</sup> Shankute, interview, Addis Ababa, 21 February 2003

<sup>3</sup> Angelo Del Boca, *Il Negus. Vita e morte dell'ultimo Re dei Re*, Bari, Laterza, 1995, p. 25

<sup>4</sup> Angelo Del Boca (1995), p. 31

<sup>5</sup> Paul Merab, *Impressions d'Ethiopie*, Paris, Ed. Leroux, 1921-1929, p. 228

<sup>6</sup> Alemayehu Tesfaye, *The History of Abatachin Safar in Addis Ababa up to 1941*, Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University, 1989 (senior paper), p. 5

<sup>7</sup> Guèbrè Sellassié, *Chronique du Règne de Ménélik II*, Paris, Maisonneuve, 1930-1931, p. 451

<sup>8</sup> Guèbrè Sellassié (1930-1931), p. 622

<sup>9</sup> Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia: 1855-1991*, Oxford, James Currey, 1991, p. 120

<sup>10</sup> Harold G. Marcus, *The Life and Times of Menelik II, Ethiopia 1844-1913*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1975, p. 256-257

<sup>11</sup> Angelo Del Boca, *Gli Italiani in Africa Orientale - La conquista dell'Impero*, Bari, Laterza, 1979, p. 699

<sup>12</sup> Haile Gabriel Dagne, 'The Establishment of Churches in Addis Ababa', in: *Proceedings of the International Symposium on the Centenary of Addis Ababa, 24-25 November, 1986*, Addis Ababa, 1987, p. 65

<sup>13</sup> Lord Edward Gleichen, *With the Mission to Menelik, 1897*, London, Gregg International, 1898, p. 165

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Haile Gabriel Dagne (1987), p. 63-64

<sup>16</sup> Haile Sillasse G. Egziabher, *A Historical Development of Case Incis (Cazanchis) Safar up to 1974*, Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University, 1984, senior paper, p. 6

<sup>17</sup> Haile Sillasse G/Egziabher (1984), p. 14

<sup>18</sup> Haile Sillasse G/Egziabher (1984), p. 9

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Haile Sillasse G/Egziabher (1984), p. 6

<sup>21</sup> Haile Sillasse G/Egziabher (1984), p. 10

<sup>22</sup> Haile Sillasse G/Egziabher (1984), p. 11

## Itinerary 7



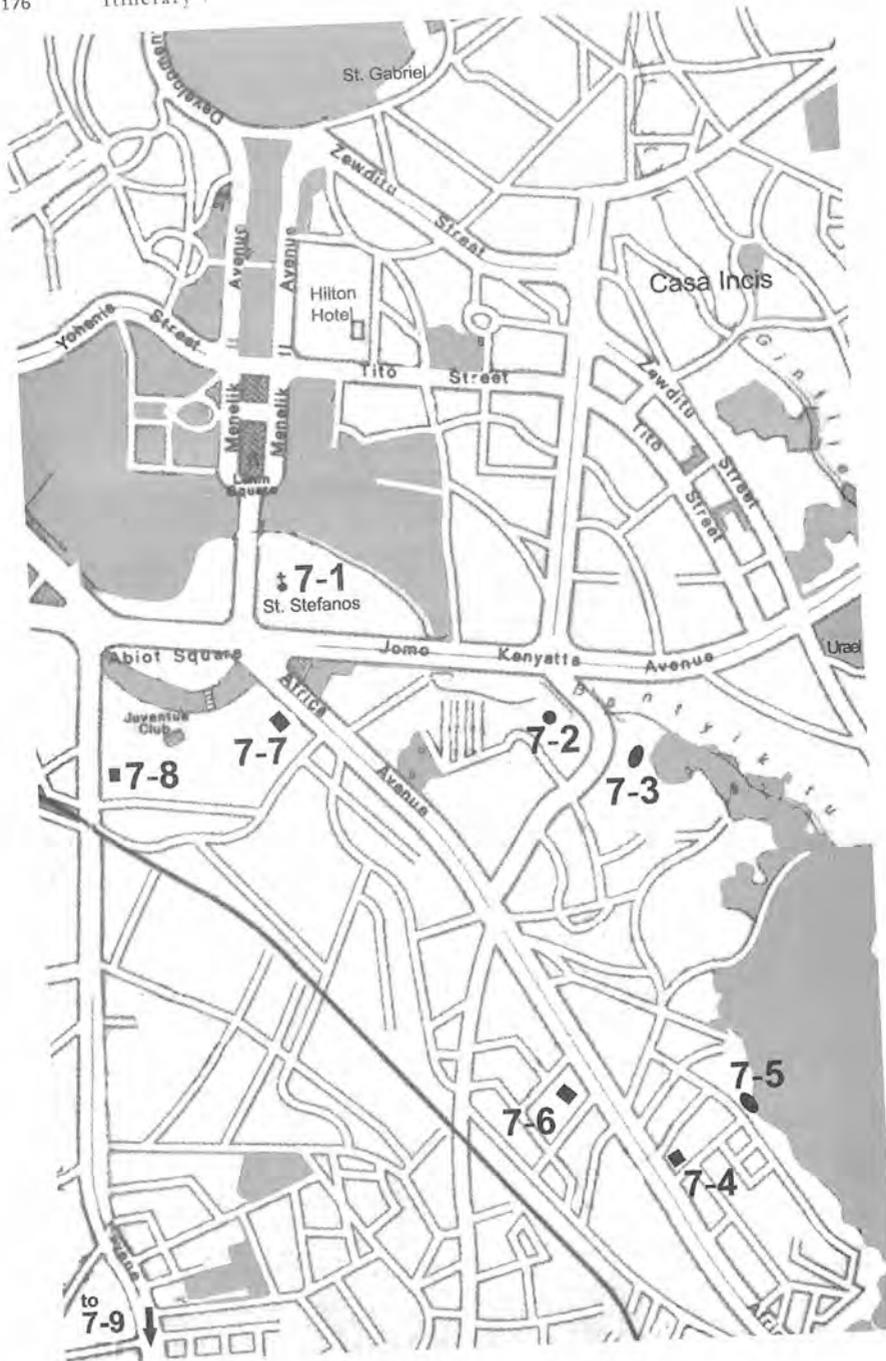
The last itinerary guides you through the city's southern sector. In very early Addis history, this area was crossed by the path linking the *Ghebbi* with the Zuquala, and beyond. Maps of the period 1898-1912 locate this path between the road to Filoha and the current Zawditu Street. Despite major changes, the road exists nowadays and corresponds to Menelik II Avenue, originating from the *Ghebbi*'s southern gate. When the city was established, the Galan Oromo clan controlled all the land south-east and south of the *Ghebbi*, including the present Bole area.<sup>1</sup> In the latter is located the first group of historic houses, with which the itinerary begins.

### 7.1 Stefanos Church

To get there from the *Ghebbi*, follow Menelik II Avenue southwards. Just before it ends into Abiot Square, you will find Stefanos Church on your right. The church was established here around 1916,<sup>2</sup> one year after the church's *tabot* was brought from Walquite to commemorate the Battle of Segele, won on St. Stephan's day. The initial simple building was restored in the 1940s and replaced by the present one around 1960.<sup>3</sup> Ras Birru Wolde Gabriel is buried here, in a tomb built when he was still alive.

### 7.2 Ghiorghis Armanis

Cross Abiot Square and continue south-eastwards on Bole Road (Africa Avenue). As you reach the first traffic light, turn left and then turn onto the fourth non-asphalt road on your left (the first two are non-asphalt roads, the third is an asphalt road). After a very short distance, turn left onto the short and non-asphalt road that goes gently uphill. After a while, you will see the small, but enchanting house that belonged to Ghiorghis Armanis. This two-storey building is made very unusual by the contrast between the hexagonal plan of the ground floor and the circular plan of the smaller upper floor. This pleasant effect is further strengthened



7-2

building dates back to the first decades of the 20th Century and a Greek merchant used it as a residence.

### 7.3 Yeshimmabeth

As you go back to the road that from Bole Road goes towards the bridge on the Bantyketu River, turn eastwards (left) and then turn right onto the last road before the bridge. On the top of the small hill in front of you is located the former residence of *Woizero* Yeshimmabeth, one of the most interesting and fascinating historic houses of Addis. The charm of this big two-storey and oval in plan building lies in the elegant essentiality of the design, which is still possible to appreciate despite its poor condition. The building is made of stone covered by *cikka* plaster and it is roofed with corrugated metal sheets. A pediment highlights the entrance to the first

floor. All around the house, the projecting roof is supported by wooden pillars and creates a veranda that shelters the staircase to the upper floor. It is worth noting the beautiful position of this house, which probably dates back to the end of the 19th Century. *Woizero* Yeshimmabeth was the sister of *Fitawrari* Bekeke Ayele.



7-3

#### 7.4 *Ras* Kebede Mangasha

Back to the junction with Bole Road, turn southwards (left) towards the Airport. As you see the Shell petrol station on your left, turn left onto the small road immediately after it. Turn right at the first junction, then left just after it and you have reached the beautiful former residence of *Ras* Kebede Mangasha, currently functioning as a Kebele 28 (Higher 18). This big one-storey stone building is rectangular in plan and belongs to the Indian style two-tier roof typology. Fine-looking wooden fretwork panels adorn the façade, whereas wooden pillars support the veranda at the opposite side. Decorative elements include quoins at the corners and at the sides of the main windows and the doorway, and Indian-influenced roof metal finials. According to *Ras* Kebede's descendants, the building dates back to the first decades of the 20th Century, when Kebede

already played a key role in the imperial administration. In 1909, when he was a *dejazmatch*, Menelik gave him jurisdiction over the Agaw-Meder, Borana, and Chanquilla peoples in western Ethiopia, previously ruled by Kebede's father.<sup>4</sup> Later on, after he received the title of *ras*, he became Governor of Wollo Province. *Ras* Kebede was the son of *Ras* Mangasha Attikam, whose nearby house is the next stop on this itinerary.

#### 7.5 *Ras* Mangasha Attikam

*Ras* Mangasha's former residence is located on the same road where his son's house stands, just south of this. The building, one-storey and oval in plan, is considered as one of the oldest constructions in Addis<sup>5</sup>. The round stone wall, plastered with *ikka*, is surrounded by a simple veranda supported by wooden pillars and covered by the projecting metal sheets of the roof. The first owner was a key dignitary of Menelik's court and one



7-4



7-5

of his most important advisers. He was already an important *dejazmatch* in 1878, when he took part in the reconciliation process between Yohannes IV and Menelik.<sup>6</sup> Mangasha Attikem was made *ras* in 1894, two years after he had received the title of *bitwaddad* (the preferred) from Menelik, thus probably becoming the first *bitwaddad* in Ethiopian history.<sup>7</sup> He fought the Italians in 1895 and he took part in the Adwa Battle in 1896. De Lauribar, who met him in those years, pointed out how this short and thin nobleman had an immense influence and power all over Ethiopia.<sup>8</sup> In 1901, Menelik gave him the governorship of Damot, Agaw-Meder, Achefer and other small regions near the Tana Lake.<sup>9</sup> The French explorer Duchesne-Fournet met this 'homme aux yeux très vifs, aux grosses lèvres, aux cheveux et à la barbe très frisés et grissonants' in 1902,<sup>10</sup> whereas Merab emphasized the extraordinary career of this 'fils d'une simple paysan'<sup>11</sup>. However, the *Ras*



7-6

lost Menelik's favour and all the key provinces in 1909 and, in October of the following year, he died.<sup>12</sup>

#### 7.6 *Dejazmatch* Ayleu Birru

To get there, go back to the above-mentioned traffic light on Bole Road (see 7.2), turn southwards (left) onto it and, from that crossroad, take the second road on your right. Then turn onto the first road on your left and you will see *Dejazmatch* Ayleu Birru's former residence. This beautiful and scenographical complex is constituted of a set of twin buildings bridged by a covered passage. The latter, entirely made of wood and supported by wooden pillars, is covered by a corrugated metal roof with a nice pediment in the middle. The passage is located at the height of the buildings' first floors and connects their verandas. Several beautiful metal finials decorate



7-7a (Top); 7-7b (Above left); 7-7c (Above right).

the roof. *Dejazmatch* Ayleu Birru was the son of *Ras* Birru Wolde Gabriel and, as such, he was a relative of Empress Taitu. This relationship explains the revolt that he led in 1910 against Taitu's deposition.<sup>13</sup> In the 1920s he was Governor of the Simien Province and it was there that an American traveller met this 'short, heavy-set man, of fairly light complexion. About forty-five years of age, vigorous and nervously active, he gave the impression of restless strength of both mind and body'.<sup>14</sup> When the Italians invaded Ethiopia he deserted to them in May 1936 and, as a reward, they gave him the title of *ras* and the governorship of the province that they called Amhara.<sup>15</sup>

#### 7.7 *Ras* Birru Wolde Gabriel

Back to Bole Road, turn northwards (left) and go towards the end of

the road. Just before reaching Abiot Square, a big sign on the left will indicate to you the entrance to the Addis Ababa Museum. The magnificent building that now functions as a museum was the residence of *Ras Birru Wolde Gabriel*, the father of the above-mentioned *Ras Ayleu Birru*. The core of this building dates back probably to the 1920s. The dimensions of the complex and its decorations make it one of the most fascinating old buildings of Addis. Being the Addis Ababa Museum, you have the opportunity of visiting it together with people that can explain its history to you. The building is located on a small hill that dominates what was, until the early 20th Century, a vast marshy area. The old path that from the *Ghebbi* led to the *Zuquala* and beyond was located just west of the hill, where is now the road to *Debre Zeit*. *Ras Birru* was the son of *Dejazmatch Wolde Gabriel* (see Itinerary 2), who was the first to whom *Menelik* granted the land in the area, where later *Ras Birru* had his residence built.<sup>16</sup>



7-8



7-9

*Birru* became *lika makwas* when he was very young and in 1911 he was already *dejazmatch*.<sup>17</sup> He enjoyed great favour at *Menelik's* court, where he had the privilege of sitting at the right of the Emperor. *Merab*, who met him in that period, described him as follows: 'Jeune homme d'une trentaine d'années il porte empreint sur sa figure martiale les traits du commandement et d'une absolutisme autoritaire'.<sup>18</sup>

#### 7.8 Mentwa Desta

The former residence of *Woizero Mentwa Desta* is part of this *safar* and it was built in the same period. To get there from *Bole Road*, turn left onto *Abiot Square* and then left again onto the big road (*Ras Birru Avenue*) that goes south towards *Debre Zeit*. You will see this old building on the left side of the street, before the rail tracks. It is a two-storey, rectangular in

plan building, mostly made of *akka* and wood. Two stairways lead up to the first floor, around which runs a veranda. The first owner of the house was *Woizero Mentwa Desta*, who participated actively in the establishment of *Ghandi Memorial Hospital*. After she died, her nephew, *Fitawrari Zewge Gebre Christos*, inherited the house.<sup>19</sup>

#### 7.9 Dejazmatch Beyene Merhed

The last building of the itinerary symbolizes the urgent restoration that the city's architectural heritage needs. As in the case of many other – if not most – historic buildings, time and misuse have profoundly affected *Dejazmatch Beyene Merhed's* former residence, without deleting its charming features yet. To get there, take *Ras Birru Avenue* southwards and turn left, approximately one kilometre after the rail tracks, onto the small road located around 20 metres after the *Mobil petrol station* on the left and before the *Garad Building* on the right. Go uphill for a few hundred metres keeping left, until you see the old house on your right. It is a one-storey, square in plan building of the two-tier roof type. The building's upper part has two metal finials at the top and the lower part has a nice wooden decoration running around the roof's eaves. According to a local informant, the house was built during the reign of *Menelik*, when *Dejazmatch Beyene* administered a large area of what was then part of the *Tabanya Yaji Safar* (see Itinerary 1).<sup>20</sup>

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Endalew Djirata, *A History of Tabanja Yazh Safar from its foundation to 1974*, Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University, 1987 (senior paper), p. 6
- <sup>2</sup> Martin E. Johnson, *The Evolution of the Morphology of Addis Ababa*, Los Angeles, University of California, 1974, Ph.D. thesis, p. 183
- <sup>3</sup> Haile Gabriel Dagne, 'The Establishment of Churches in Addis Ababa', in: *Proceedings of the International Symposium on the Centenary of Addis Ababa, 24-25 November, 1986*, Addis Ababa, 1987, p. 70-71
- <sup>4</sup> Guèbrè Sellassié, *Chronique du Règne de Ménélik II*, Paris, Maisonneuve, 1930-1931, p. 538
- <sup>5</sup> Amare Dawit and Fassil Giorgis, 'Early Architectural Development in Addis Ababa', in: *Proceedings of the International Symposium on the Centenary of Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa Council, 1987*, p. 194
- <sup>6</sup> Guèbrè Sellassié (1930-1931), p. 144
- <sup>7</sup> Guèbrè Sellassié (1930-1931), see note p. 326
- <sup>8</sup> Paul de Lauribar, *Douze ans en Abyssinie*, Paris, Flammarion, 1898, p. 595
- <sup>9</sup> Guèbrè Sellassié (1930-1931), p. 487
- <sup>10</sup> Jean Duchesne-Fournet, *Mission en Ethiopie (1901-1903)*, Paris, Masson, 1909, I, p. 96
- <sup>11</sup> Paul Merab, *Impressions d'Ethiopie*, Paris, Ed. Leroux, 1921-1929, p. 72
- <sup>12</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup> Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia: 1855-1991*, Oxford, James Currey, 1991, p. 120
- <sup>14</sup> James E. Baum, *Savage Abyssinia*, London, Cassel, 1928, p. 227
- <sup>15</sup> Bahru Zewde (1991), p. 147
- <sup>16</sup> Endalew Djirata (1987), p. 17
- <sup>17</sup> Paul Merab (1921-1929), p. 92
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>19</sup> Hailu Zewge, interview, Addis Ababa, 23 March 1995.
- <sup>20</sup> Ayalkebbeta Asrat, interview, Addis Ababa, 27 February 2003

## Glossary

<i>abuna</i>	metropolitan of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church
<i>addababay</i>	square
<i>aderash</i>	reception hall
<i>afanegus</i>	supreme judge, literally 'king's mouth'
<i>agafari</i>	officer dealing with guests at court
<i>aleka</i>	chief of the priests
<i>alga worrasb</i>	heir to the throne
<i>astar</i>	soldier
<i>ato</i>	title for man, equivalent of Mister
<i>azaj</i>	overseer of functions at court
<i>balambaras</i>	ruler of a fort
<i>bejirond</i>	treasurer
<i>berbere</i>	red pepper
<i>bet</i>	house
<i>birr</i>	silver, Ethiopian currency
<i>bitwaddad</i>	'beloved', used as a title
<i>ikka</i>	mortar made by mixing clay, straw and dung
<i>dejazmatch</i>	commander of the gate
<i>echegue</i>	chief administrator of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church
<i>elfiñ</i>	royal residence
<i>etegue</i>	empress
<i>fitawrari</i>	commander of the vanguard
<i>gannet</i>	paradise
<i>ghebbi</i>	enclosure, compound
<i>gesho</i>	aromatic plant used for beer making
<i>grazmatch</i>	commander of the left wing
<i>baji</i>	title for a Muslim after a pilgrimage to Mecca

<i>bakim</i>	medical doctor
<i>injera</i>	round and spongy fermented bread
<i>Jan Hoy</i>	His Majesty
<i>kantiba</i>	mayor
<i>katama</i>	camp, town
<i>kebele</i>	the lowest administrative unit in urban or rural districts
<i>kegnazmatch</i>	commander of the right wing
<i>lul</i>	prince
<i>ligaba</i>	commander of the Imperial guard
<i>likamakwas</i>	official who dresses like the king in battle
<i>Lij</i>	title for sons of noble birth, literally 'child'
<i>meridazmatch</i>	title used in Shewa region
<i>melake-gennet</i>	ecclesiastic title
<i>neftegna</i>	soldier, literally 'rifle carrier'
<i>nagadras</i>	head of traders
<i>negus</i>	king
<i>ras</i>	prince, literally 'head'
<i>sagannet</i>	belvedere
<i>safar</i>	settlement, quarter
<i>satan</i>	devil
<i>shamma</i>	cotton length used as a shawl
<i>shum</i>	chief
<i>tabot</i>	replica of the Ark of the Covenant
<i>tsabafi laezaz</i>	head of royal scribes, title of the Minister of Pen
<i>tej</i>	hydromel
<i>tukul</i>	round hut with thatched roof
<i>welette</i>	daughter
<i>wereda</i>	administrative unit including several <i>kebeles</i>
<i>woizero</i>	title for woman, equivalent of Mistress
<i>zabaña</i>	guard

## Essential Chronology

- 1844 Birth of Menelik, son of King Haile Melekot.
- 1865 Menelik proclaims himself King of Shewa.
- 1968-69 A Roman Catholic mission is established at Finfinni, not far from the hot springs of Filoha.
- 1881 Menelik moves his capital from Ankober to Entoto.
- 1884-85 Construction of Raguel and Mariam Churches at Entoto.
- 1886 ca. Taitu and Menelik have a temporary house built by the hot springs of Filoha.
- 1889 Menelik chooses a hill northeast of Filoha hot springs for the establishment of his *ghebbi*, where his new palace begins to be built. The area is named Addis Ababa.
- 1891 ca. The capital is moved from Entoto to Addis Ababa.
- 1891 ca. The octagonal church of Haile Sellassie is built on Menelik's order.
- 1892 A fire destroys part of the *ghebbi* with no damage to the royal palace.
- 1892 Birth of *Ras* Tafari Makonnen, son of *Ras* Makonnen.
- 1895 Introduction of eucalyptus into Ethiopia.
- 1896 Italians are defeated by the Ethiopian army at Adwa.
- 1897 Establishment of the French Legation.
- 1898 The process of unification of the Ethiopian Empire is completed by Menelik.
- 1902 Establishment of the Italian Legation.
- 1903 Establishment of the British Legation.
- 1905 Establishment of the German Legation.
- 1905 Establishment of the Bank of Abyssinia.
- 1907 The Taitu Hotel is built immediately south of the market area. The Armenian Minas Kherbekian is the architect who

- designed it.
- 1907 Establishment of the first brick factory in Addis Ababa.
- 1908 Establishment of the Menelik II School.
- 1908 Inauguration of the Arada Post Office.
- 1909 Establishment of the USA Legation.
- 1910 The Menelik II Hospital is built in the northeast part of the city.
- 1911 The building of Ghiorghis Church is completed.
- 1913 Death of Emperor Menelik. The throne is assumed by the Emperor's grandson *Lij* Iyasu.
- 1917 After *Lij* Iyasu is deposed, Menelik's daughter, Zawditu, is made Empress of Ethiopia.
- 1917 The residence of *Bitwaddad* Haile Ghiorghis Woldemikael is confiscated and turned into Municipality.
- 1917 The rail tracks of the Franco-Ethiopian railway reach Addis Ababa.
- 1923 Ethiopia enters into the League of Nations.
- 1928 Inauguration of Beata Mariam Church, also known as Menelik Mausoleum.
- 1924 Establishment of Beth Saida Hospital.
- 1925 The Tafari Makonnen School is established in the centre of the city.
- 1929 Inauguration of the railway station.
- 1930 At the death of Empress Zawditu, Ras Tafari Makonnen is crowned Emperor Haile Sellassie.
- 1930 Establishment of the *Etegue* Menen School for girls.
- 1931 Construction of the Ethiopian Parliament building.
- 1931 Abolition of slavery.
- 1932 Construction of the Italian Hospital, later Ras Desta Hospital.
- 1936 The Italian colonial army enters Addis Ababa on the 5th of May.

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