

# THE ANCIENT TOWN OF ADWA

## Part V

By G. E. Gorfu

There was nominal development carried out over the last fifteen years in Adwa, where a small scale water-dam was built to the west of Mount Soloda and a medium scale textile factory opened in Almeda, to the south east of town. Apart from these two projects, there is not much that can be seen in terms of development. To date, even the twelve mile road from Axum to Adwa remains dust, dirt, and gravel. Such then is the real picture of Adwa.

Having seen the current sad and dismal condition in its medical, educational, and all other aspects of Adwa, let us see if there is any potential to develop tourism. Last February ‘an international forum of a hundred scholars had gathered to publicize research on tourism in Adwa’. <sup>(1)</sup> It would be interesting to know what findings the forum released, or suggested.

The two possible potentials of tourism in Adwa are **its mountains and its history**. As for its mountains, a previous article supported with photographs showed mountaineering and the many associated activities as the most suitable, and should be readily developed. To avoid redundancy here, we refer the reader to those earlier articles in this series. <sup>(2, 3)</sup>

Let us now look at Adwa and find out how one might develop tourism by capitalizing on its history. We have used Google hits for a cursory statistical comparison of ten cities in Ethiopia with Adwa. (Adwa is spelled three different ways: from the Italians who used to spell it Adowa to Adua, which we still see being used sometimes) Here are the results:-

Addis Ababa	.....	.....	.....	.....	1.360 Million
Adwa – 269,000; Adua – 693,000; Adowa – 168,000; ....				<u>Total =</u>	... <u>1.121 Million</u>
Awassa	.....	.....	.....	.....	126 Thousand
Axum	.....	.....	.....	.....	510 Thousand
Bahir Dar	.....	.....	.....	.....	405 Thousand
Dessie	.....	.....	.....	.....	499 Thousand
Dire Dawa	.....	.....	.....	.....	428 Thousand
Gondar	.....	.....	.....	.....	428 Thousand
Harar	.....	.....	.....	.....	419 Thousand
Jima	.....	.....	.....	.....	117 Thousand
Mekelle	.....	.....	.....	.....	84 Thousand

What the above figures clearly tell us is the simple fact that next to our capital city, Addis Ababa, Adwa is the one town whose name is most documented on Google. Other cities and towns, with Axum at 510,000 just do not even come close. The question then is how should one capitalize on this fact and advance the development of tourism in Adwa?

The reason Adwa is listed so many times in Google is not an accident. It is due to one simple historical fact – Emperor Menelik II and the battle of Adwa against the Italians. That is all. As far as the wide world outside is concerned Adwa means Menelik and Menelik means Adwa. These two are viscerally connected and can never be separated. We need to grasp this undeniable truth. And it is based on this historical fact that Adwa’s

tourism can and should be developed. One should come up with a bold and imaginative plan on a grand scale for this task to be successful. And here is our suggestion:-

We need to start by building a statue of Menelik in the middle of town, an exact replica or of equal size and impressiveness as the one in Addis Ababa, and follow that by an equally impressive and beautiful, Grand Mausoleum, made of white granite, the best of Adwa marbles, built on the most majestic mount Soloda, two thirds of the way uphill.



There should be no roads for vehicles to go up the mountain. Visitors to Menelik's Grand Mausoleum will need to walk on foot uphill, as on a pilgrimage. Some rock stairways and footholds may be improvised to make the hike somewhat bearable. For the weak and the elderly, a cable lift system, and for VIP and those who can afford it, a helicopter landing pad, is all that should be allowed on the site. That is how the mountain and its ecological diversity can be preserved in its present pristine state for as long as possible.



**Menelik's Proposed Mausoleum on Mount Soloda**

In the middle of the Grand Mausoleum should stand a larger than life bronze bust of Emperor Menelik II, looking outwards, brooding over the town of Adwa, and facing south towards to the rest of Ethiopia. One should then collect every historical artifact of the era and of the battle of Adwa, including Menelik's crown, his spear and shield, his clothes and shoes, and all personal effects for display in a museum that would be built next to the Grand mausoleum. Finally, with a great deal of pomp and ceremony, and in the presence of many invited world dignitaries, the remains of Emperor Menelik II should be brought to rest in the Grand Mausoleum.

For a hundred years Emperor Menelik's body has been left in a coffin at Ba'ta Mariam Church crypt in Addis Ababa, collecting dust. How can we expect to advance Ethiopia's cause if we fail to honor our past heroes properly? Furthermore, Menelik is not Ethiopia's hero only. He is the hero of Africa, and of all black people the world over. Left in a coffin and in a crypt, of what benefit is Menelik's body to Ethiopia? The great national treasure that it is, it deserves to be treated better. A large and beautiful Grand Mausoleum of white marble is the least that Ethiopia can, and should, build to honor Emperor Menelik with. \*

The Ethiopian government should hand pick a capable person to execute this project and allocate some ten million US dollars, as seed-money, (a small fraction of what was spent in the construction of our Embassy in Washington). The rest will come from some private donors and investors who will capitalize on their investment once tourism takes off. Many private hotels and restaurants, banks, telephone exchange companies, and other large and medium entities in the service sector of Ethiopia should also be encouraged to invest. If properly executed, the 10 Million seed-money and these investments will be multiplied a thousand times over and bring in great dividends within a very short time.

The construction work alone would create instant full-time employment for a couple of thousand artisans, craftsmen, and laborers. When completed, the site would also give full lifetime employment to at least a couple hundred people that would keep it operational and maintain the mausoleum, the museum, and the greenery in the surrounding area.

The real benefit however, would first come from domestic tourism, as Ethiopians would flock to see and learn their own history, and from the business activities that would come to Adwa and all the surrounding towns and villages. But that is only the beginning. An even greater benefit would be the second boon when many international tourists would come to visit Adwa, bringing in millions of dollars in hard currency and foreign exchange for Ethiopia every year for all future generations.

**G. E. Gorfu**

### **Notes**

1. <http://allafrica.com/stories/200702170139.html>

2. Mountains of Adwa at: - [http://www.aigaforum.com/THE\\_ANCIENT\\_TOWN\\_OF\\_ADWA\\_II.pdf](http://www.aigaforum.com/THE_ANCIENT_TOWN_OF_ADWA_II.pdf)

3. Tourism and Mountaineering at: - [http://www.aigaforum.com/Ethiopia\\_and\\_Tourism\\_IV.pdf](http://www.aigaforum.com/Ethiopia_and_Tourism_IV.pdf)

\* A similar Grand Mausoleum should also be planned for Emperor Tewodros at Mount Mekdella to improve the economic condition of Gondar and the surrounding areas.