ERITREAN AMERICAN HARMONY MAGAZINE

VOL. 3, # 2,
MAR. - MAY,
2024



An Exlusive Interview with the former President of Mauritius, H.E. Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim

NATIONAL PUBLIC
DIPLOMACY GROUP

National Public Diplomacy Working Principles

TRANSPARENCY

leads to clear communication, trust, & mutual understanding



PARTICIPATION

helps to utilize: our human, political, economic, social, & intellectual capital



INCLUSION

Members, non-members, youth, men & women, etc.



OWNERSHIP

of our narratives & collective memory



NCEA'S National Public Diplomacy Group Quarterly Online Magazine

Denden Media

WWW.DENDENMEDIA.COM

YOUR SOURCE FOR ERi-TV & RADIO













CONTENTS

BIODIVERSITY

A TRIBUTE TO M Y PARENTS..

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

HISTORY: REMEMERANCE .. PART TWO

DELINA'S CORNER

ARTS & CULTURE

DEXTER'S STORY



Kaleab Biemnet Abraha,
Veterinary Officer,
Ministry of Agriculture,
Asmara, Eritrea

Theodore Papenfuss,
University of California,
Berkeley, California

ARE MUMMIES IN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN TOMBS ORIGINALLY FROM ADULIS?

The Hamadryas Baboon (Papio hamadryas) is the largest species of monkey found in Eritrea. An adult male can weigh up to 17 kilograms. Baboons are common in many parts of Eritrea. Travelers between Asmara and Massawa often see groups of 50 or more on each side of the highway and even in the middle.

This biodiversity article discusses the possible ancient use of Eritrean baboons as mummies in Egyptian tombs more than 3000 years ago. The next issue on biodiversity will discuss the ecology of living baboons in Eritrea.

Hamadryas Baboon, also called the Sacred Baboon, was revered by ancient Egyptians as a representative of the god of the moon and wisdom and as an advisor to the sun god Ra. There were no native baboons in Egypt, so the Egyptians had to import them from parts of Africa south of Egypt. There are ancient reports from Egypt as far back as the 18th Dynasty, over 3000 years ago, about exotic products like gold, incense, animal skins, and live baboons brought to the ancient Egyptian capital, Thebes, now the modern city of Luxor. The origin of the imported products, including Sacred Baboons, was called Punt. Hieroglyphic texts describe boat trips and the products, but these texts do not tell the location of Punt.





MUMMIFIED BABOON FROM ANCIENT EGYPTIAN THEBES



Scene of Amduat showing apes of the 'First Hour'

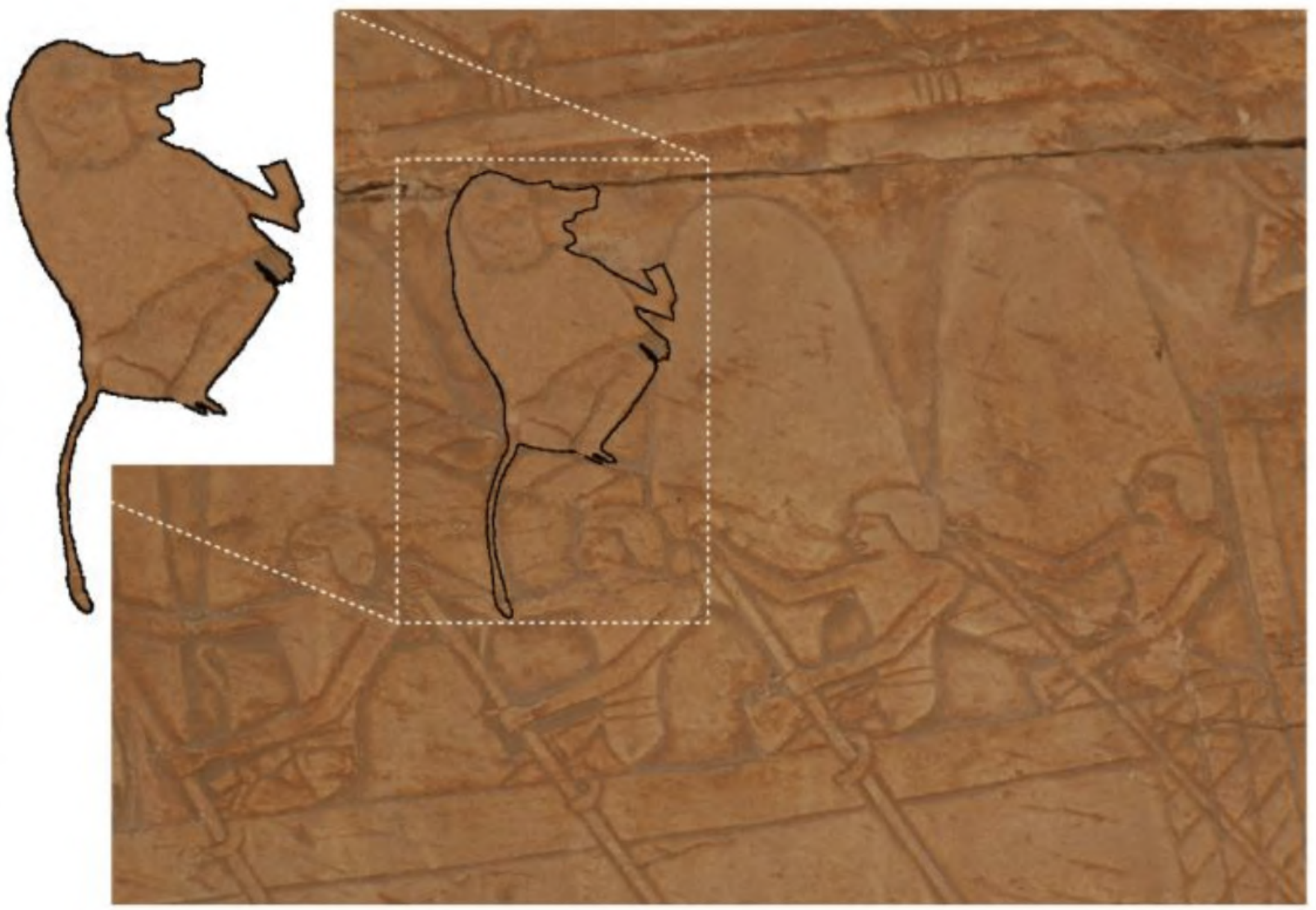
KING TUT'S BURIAL CHAMBER WITH IMAGE ON WALL OF 12 SACRED BABOONS

The 18th Dynasty mortuary of Queen Hatshepsut has images of two baboons on a wall in the temple. On another wall are pictures of baboons on the sail of an Egyptian boat returning from Punt. Tourists can see the mortuary and the photos in ancient Thebes.

Hamadryas Baboon, also called the Sacred Baboon, was revered by ancient Egyptians as a representative of the god of the moon and wisdom and as an advisor to the sun god Ra.



MORTUARY OF QUEEN HATSHEPSUT WITH IMAGE OF TWO BABOONS



BABOON IMAGE ON SAIL OF BOAT RETURNING FROM PUNT

Commerce between Egypt and Punt gradually declined after Ramesses III's reign (1164-1196 BC). Memories of Punt slowly faded until the city transformed into legend and folklore.

In the First Century BC, Egypt became a province of Rome. The trade center Adulis was the main port of commerce between Egypt and the Mediterranean regions and the Horn of Africa. Adulis remained a trade center until it was abandoned around the 9th Century AD.

Some historians have suggested that Adulis and Punt may have been the same trading center between the coast of Eritrea south of Massawa and Egypt but separated by a thousand years of history. Archeologists found two fragments of glass vessels in the lowest layers at Adulis, similar to glass samples from the 18th Dynasty of Egypt. Since no ancient Egyptian accounts of Punt's location exist, even with many accounts and images of trade items available, discussions for or against Adulis and Punt being in the exact location are not resolved.

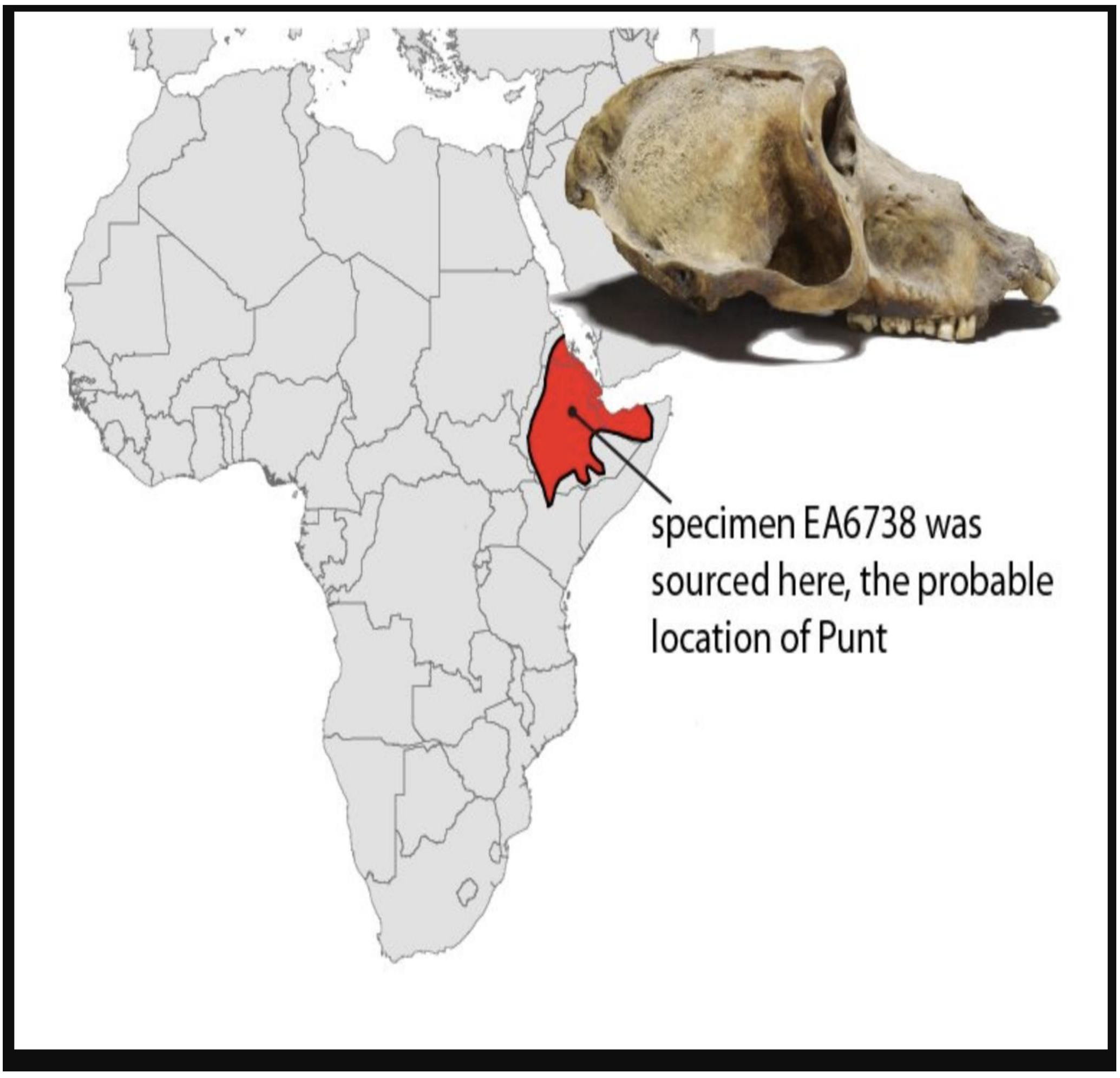
Recently, two scientific articles reported the results of studies of Sacred Baboon mummies from ancient Egyptian tombs. In 2020, a research study was published that used isotopic analysis of oxygen and strontium ratios of 155 baboons from 77 locations across various African regions. There is geographic variation in the oxygen-to-strontium ratio stored in tooth enamel. These results can be plotted on maps as geographic fingerprints of African locations.

The mummy used in the study was bought in Egypt and given to the British Museum in 1837. It was found in the Temple of Khonsu in Thebes. The temple was built over three thousand years ago during the Twentieth Dynasty between 1186 and 1155 BC.

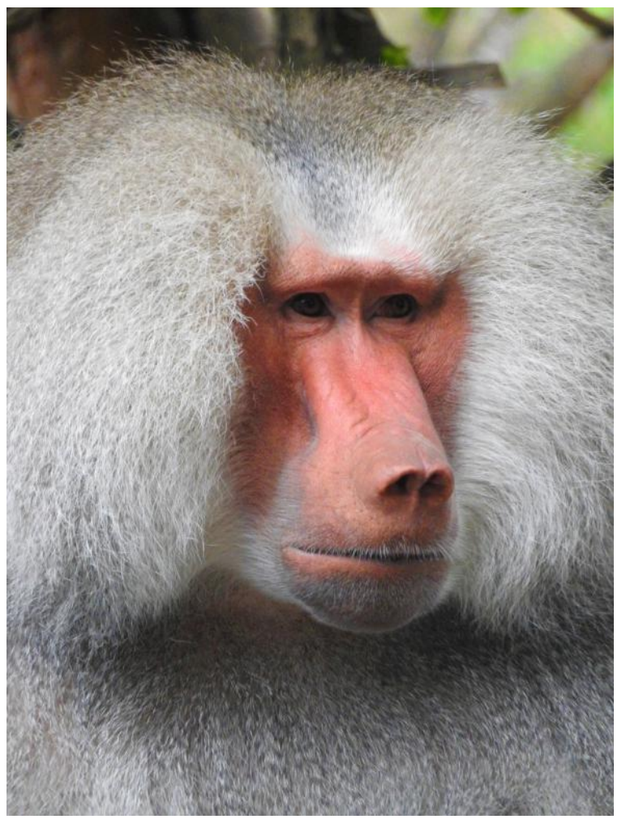
When the oxygen to strontium ratio from the mummy was compared to the strontium ratios of modern baboons from 77 locations in Africa, the baboon brought from Punt to Thebes over three thousand years ago matched the strontium ratios of modern baboons from the Horn of Africa, including Eritrea. This finding does not confirm Adulis as the source of the baboon mummy, but it shows that Punt was within a limited geographic region that includes Adulis.

In 2023, a study reported a DNA study. One baboon mummy from an Egyptian tomb was compared to 14 museum specimens from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan. The results place the DNA of the mummy with the DNA of baboons that live in eastern Sudan and Eritrea. This is additional evidence that Punt and Adulis may be geographically the same. We hope that more research using advanced DNA technology will finally solve the ancient Land of Punt mystery.

Some historians have suggested that Adulis and Punt may have been the same trading center between the coast of Eritrea south of Massawa and Egypt but separated by a thousand years of history.



MAP SHOWING PROBABLE LOCATION OF PUNT





TRIBUTE TO MY PARENTS AND THEIR GENERATION: RESILIENCE AND ADVERSITY

Mebrak Ghebreweldi

In honoring the legacy of my beloved parents and their whole generation, I am compelled to recount a narrative of profound resilience and unwavering dedication to family and country.
In their passing, I pay tribute to my parents' generation, unsung heroes who cared, loved, and displayed true resilience in adversity. They played a crucial role in Eritrea's independence, contributing to the fabric of connected, honest, strong, healthy, disciplined, and self-reliant Eritrean families. My parents' generation raised united Eritrean family units, the source of the country's success and pride.

My mother, Adey Hana Habtu Mana, born in Shmangus Lailay in 1930, passed away on the 22nd of November, 2023. A natural leader, she was an active problem solver, community coordinator, and a supporter of young and old mothers. Her resilience and hard work were unparalleled.

My father often reminded us, "Who you are today is because of your mother; she held everything together." While my father was in Bahri or Asmara, she continued caring for her nine children, sending them to school, managing daily chores, emphasizing the importance of education, and helping the younger ones with essential reading and writing through evening lessons.

My mother's tenacity in pushing her children for education and her 'can-do attitude' made her unique. Her self-belief, coupled with my father's kindness and critical thinking, instilled in me the belief that the sky was the limit. Like every mother of her generation, she stood by the freedom fighters, providing shelter and support until independence and defending the ideology of freedom and self-reliance until her last breath.

My parents were pillars in their community and church throughout their village life, actively involved from conception to completion. They planted and nurtured trees throughout the churchyard, symbolizing their commitment to the Wengelawit Church of Hayelo Dmbezan.

My father, Aboy Ghebreweldi Zmehret Hidrimichael, was born in 1924 in Hayelo and peacefully passed away on the 20th of November 2021. A devoted father, he raised nine children, tending to the ancestral lands and shifting between Adi and Bahri. He skilfully managed the herds, migrating from inland to the shores of the Red Sea around Sabur, Filfil, and Solomuna. He was not just a farmer but a man of warmth, cherishing conversations over coffee and exploring local and global affairs with an insatiable curiosity. A devout Christian, he found solace in reading the Bible, especially the letters of St. Paul. He was gifted in handcrafting and spoke Tigrinya, Arabic, Tigre, and Italian.

TRIBUTE ...



Politically, my father unwaveringly supported the EPLF leadership, affirming his trust in the Eritrean people's struggle for freedom and economic liberation.

Politically, my father unwaveringly supported the EPLF leadership, affirming his trust in the Eritrean people's struggle for freedom and economic liberation. During the early 1980s, he was a village and area member of the EPLF Shimagle Adi. He often stated, "Ultimately, Eritrea will prevail; it is written in the Bible." According to him, the Bible foretold that Eritrea was blessed and destined for abundance and peace. While I cannot pinpoint the exact verse, I cherished every moment of listening to his narratives.

Despite their occasional differences, my parents always found common ground, often over freshly roasted coffee. Their ability to navigate debates and share a moment of peace spoke volumes about their enduring bond. Their historical success lies in shouldering the total weight of the struggle for independence, actively participating, and nurturing freedom fighters as perpetual sources of resistance, consistency, commitment, and continuity.

My mother's resilience during a period of great adversity, when her daughter was fighting the Ethiopian army and her husband and two other children were imprisoned, exemplified her deep determination and strong spirit. During this time, one of my cousins met my mother on her way to the city and asked her how she was doing. He said, "Your mother just looked at me and said this hard time will pass." For my parents' generation, hope in the darkest time was their light at the end of the tunnel.

TRIBUTE ...

In 1982, when my mother courageously sent her youngest son to join EPLF at 13, it highlighted the sacrifices made during the 6th invasion. Facing an Ethiopian force of 120,000, armed with the latest military equipment, my parents, like many others, sent their children to Sahel for military training to continue the struggle for independence.

My parents' recent passing prompts me to reflect on their life journey. They lived together for 78 years, weathering the challenges of Italian colonization, witnessing the 1940-52 British administration, suffering immensely under the Ethiopian occupation of 1961-91, and paying dearly under the brutal Ethiopian rule by force and torture for 30 years.

They welcomed their freedom fighters back home with independence in 1991 but once more endured conflict with the Weyane War of 1998-2000, a war that claimed their youngest son. Their dedication to raising a family and guarding their families and communities in unity while supporting the Eritrean struggle for freedom and economic and political liberation until their last breath was unwavering. My parent's generation enjoyed and celebrated their diversity beyond religious, geographic, bilingual, and ethnic differences. Women like my mother were the cornerstone and anchor of families, communities, and the nation.

In loving memory of Aboy Ghebreweldi and Adey Hana, and to all your generation,





"My mother and women like her were the foundations and pillars of our families, communities, and the nation."

HORDATA

Tewelde's
FAMILY MARKET



An Exlusive Interview with the former President of Mauritius, H.E. Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim





By way of an introduction, we highly recommend our followers to read your autobiography, “My Journey,” since your accomplishments, rewards, medals, etc., are so long and extensive that a brief introduction here would not do it justice. However, we will say here that you are a distinguished scientist, a researcher, and an author on different subjects, including medicinal plants, an entrepreneur, an academician, a mother, a wife, and the first female President of the Republic of Mauritius.

In the back of your excellent book, you mentioned that you became “an ‘accidental’ President without any political affiliations.” Would you describe your country, Mauritius (land, people, culture) and its political system? Also, could you talk about the fact that Mauritius doesn’t have a standing army?

H.E.Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim:

The Republic of Mauritius (since 1992) can be seen as an example of successful immigration with a diverse population living side by side in peace and harmony. We are immigrants from Asia (India and China), Africa, and Europe. Having been under French and British colonial rules, we speak both languages officially. We have established strong ties with the countries of our forebears, and we remain a parliamentary democracy, with the Prime Minister holding executive power and the President holding executive authority.

Mauritius became independent in 1968 from the British occupation in 1810. Since independence, it was decided not to invest in an army. Mauritius does not have a standing army, as the National Police Force, Special Mobile Force, and National Coast Guard carry out all military and security activities. The Special Mobile Force is designed primarily to ensure internal security. The police and paramilitary forces are considered well-trained and disciplined, contributing to a stable society. Mauritius receives training and assistance from a number of foreign countries, notably India, The United Kingdom, France, and the United States also provide training and assistance. To come back to your question. I call myself an accidental president because I was never destined for a political career, and neither I nor my family ever had any political inclinations. My name was proposed for the presidency, and as I ticked a few boxes (woman, hailing from a minority, credible, politically untouched…etc.), I took the big risk of saying... Why Not! And they won... So here I am!



In October 2023, you came to Philadelphia to receive an award. During that time, you met Eritrean Americans who reside in Philadelphia, and they came to hear you after they found out you were in town. They met you for the first time and were enthralled by you. Previously, you had visited Eritrea. What was your impression of the country and the people? Was what you saw different from what you had heard before your visit?

H.E.Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim:

I was very privileged to have been invited officially to attend the national day celebrations in Asmara. It was a trip that I shall never forget. First, because Eritrea is not well known to the broader public (much to their loss), it was a journey of discovery for me. I saw a beautiful country steeped in rich history, culturally very diverse, and respectful of the various groups living side by side and its traditions. Unfortunately, it has had bad press; by this, I mean that what one sees locally is diametrically opposite to what is reported in mainstream media. I will encourage people to visit the place and see for themselves the progress that it has made over the past few decades! Also, it was a joy to meet an endearing population that was warm, generous, and imbued with a deep sense of patriotism!





















Mauritius and Eritrea have free education (including tertiary), free health care, etc. How do you respond to people who argue that universal healthcare is not feasible and that education should be privatized?

H.E.Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim:
In Mauritius, immediately after independence, there was huge unemployment and widespread poverty, with an annual per capita income of around 200 USD!.. We are now just under 10.000 USD. The government then took three commitments and delivered on them: Free healthcare, a Social safety net, and a promise to rein in a galloping population. In 1976 came free education. I can safely say that we built the economy on the back of these pillars. If a country cannot afford to keep its citizens (especially those who are vulnerable) healthy, fed, and educated, then there is a big problem. It is a fact that education is a huge social enabler, and over the past few years, we have witnessed the social progression of many of our countrymen. Such investments, not expenses, have been sustained since independence, and we have managed to grow the economy. Naysayers are just apologists to a more unequal society!

What can Eritrea learn from Mauritius and vice versa and also collaborate in

H.E. Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim:
Both of our countries occupy key geostrategic locations. From the Indian Ocean, we can act as a bridge between Africa and Asia.

Eritrea occupies a unique position on the Red Sea and has two important seaports!.. We have developed an important financial sector from where we can share our expertise. We used to have an important sugar cane industry, and this expertise can also be leveraged. We can learn from Eritrean success in its integrated farming, which I found particularly interesting.

Your forebearers came from India in the 1860s from Ghazipur, India, to Mauritius. Is this part of India where most descendants of Mauritius from India came from? For example, Yemenis who migrated to Eritrea many generations ago came from the Hadhramaut area and other places.

H.E. Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim: In Mauritius, Indian migrants started arriving immediately after slavery was abolished. The British brought in indentured labourers to work on the sugar cane estates. The initial wave came from Southern India because of the French presence in Pondicherry and the surrounding regions. These people could understand and speak French and thus played a key role in linguistic assistance when the next wave of immigrants came from other parts of India, such as Maharashtra, Andra Pradesh (now Telengana), Tamil Nadu, etc.

In your book, you mentioned that the “oceans occupy three-quarters of the planet” and that “‘sea-locked” nations represent small physical land masses and populations.” Would you elaborate on this since people are more aware of the word “land-locked” than “sea-locked?”

H.E.Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim:
I often refer to Mauritius as an Ocean state!.. We have 2200 sqkm of landmass and 2.2M sqkm of Exclusive Economic Zone!.. I have always said that our economy should be around the following: Blue (Ocean economy), Green (our biodiversity, renewable energies), and White (our service sector, including Tourism and Financial Services!).

You mentioned encountering many challenges for being the “first” in your accomplishments. Did you experience similar issues as an entrepreneur?

H.E. Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim:Being ‘First’ may be glamourous but comes with its own set of challenges!.. Challenges in as much as reaching there is THE issue. It implies that one is no longer walking on the beaten track. Many personal investments and tremendous efforts have gone into that journey of becoming First. I was pleased to have been able to break a few glass ceilings. I became the First Woman Professor at the University of Mauritius, the First Woman Dean and Pro Vice-Chancellor at the same University, and eventually the First Female President of my country. How did I do it? I had an appetite for Risk-taking, and that is something that is not taught anywhere! I just did it because I had been instilled that confidence by a father telling his daughter at a tender age… “You are capable of doing anything”. My best cheerleader! To get more empowered women, we need more such cheerleaders!

Innovation is very crucial for any country’s development. Africa has a large informal economy with its informal innovations. Since you’ve written and worked on innovation, can one measure informal innovation? How can African governments transform the informal economy (including innovation) into a formal economy (innovation)?

H.E. Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim:
Innovation or “constructive destruction” is the lifeblood of any growing economy. Africa has a large informal economy with an outsized female presence. If structured and harnessed, it can change the livelihoods of so many homes and sectors. In some sectors, the continent is precisely at the cusp of important changes through innovative practices. Look at Mobile money, which has been adding many points to Kenya’s economy. The continent has all the resources it needs: human resources, minerals, etc. We just need to get the governance right to create the right ecosystem to retain as many young people on the continent as possible.

Your book noted, “In spite of its 5,000 medicinal plant species, Africa has missed out on the growth of this industry because the trade in African medicinal plants within Africa and to the rest of the World has remained low.” How can Africa change this?

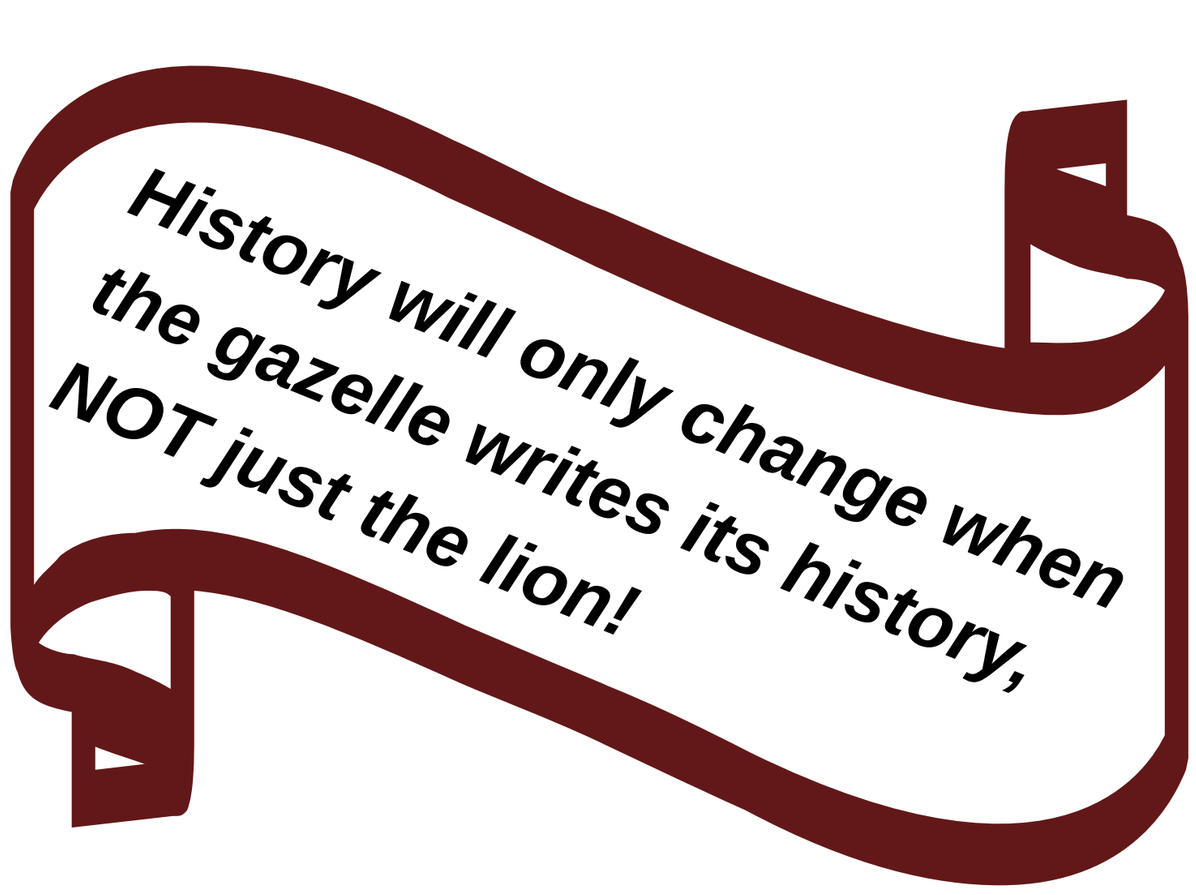
H.E. Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim:
The African continent already depends on Traditional Medicine for its primary healthcare. WHO reports that a country like Ethiopia depends on TM for 90% of its population. Suppose this knowledge was structured properly (documented, codified as the Chinese and Indians have done). In that case, it can become a source of socially accepted and acceptable medicine and a pillar in the economy through Agriculture and transformation/manufacturing on the continent. We need to start by respecting our heritage and valuing it exactly like the Chinese have done. They have given equal weight to allopathic as Traditional Chinese medicine. This was rewarded with a Nobel Prize in 2015!.. Unfortunately, we are losing a swath of information on the continent as our transmission has been oral, and whenever an elderly person passes on, we have lost a library.

You have written an excellent preface to Prof. Landry's book, "Africa's Fourth Industrial Revolution." STEM's role is crucial for development. What role should the humanities (such as literature, poetry, art, drama, film, etc.) and the youth play in 4IR?

H.E. Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim:
STEM, yes, but STEAM (A for the Arts) is increasingly becoming mainstream! This is because one can no longer ignore our people's creativity in advancing our societies. This is where our Heritage comes to the fore. We must be proud to BE African, EAT African, and WEAR African. This pride must stem from within and NOT only when we see African fashion on the catwalk in New York! Let us teach our children our history and the rich legacy our forebears have left behind. History will only change when the gazelle writes its history, not just the lion!

What should the media's role in Africa be in 4IE in the era of "fake news"?

H.E.Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim:
We are, unfortunately, living in the dystopian world of Fake news!.. You have said 'Media in Africa'. I am tempted to ask where African Media is. It is time to start investing in this space. We have an internal market of 1.4BN, heading 2BN by 2050. Why do we always get our news from Western or Middle Eastern sources? I am not against it, but we need balance, and this is one of the ways we can counteract fake news when we build our regulatory instances! It also helps develop our talents, create jobs, etc.



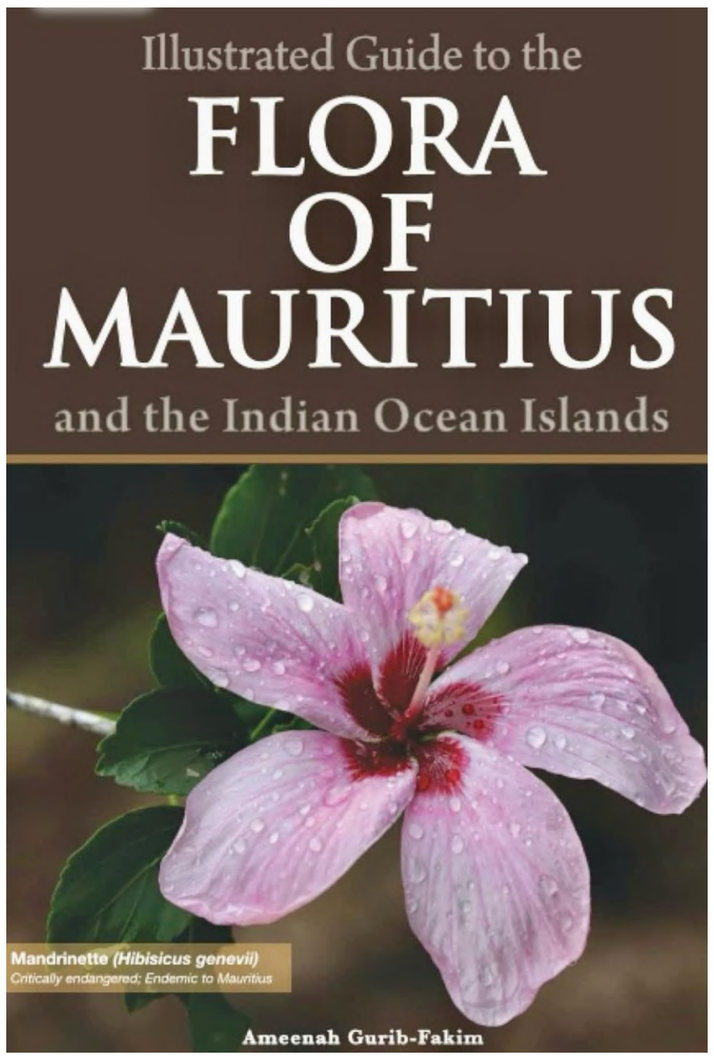
How can one reconcile indigenous knowledge with Western knowledge?

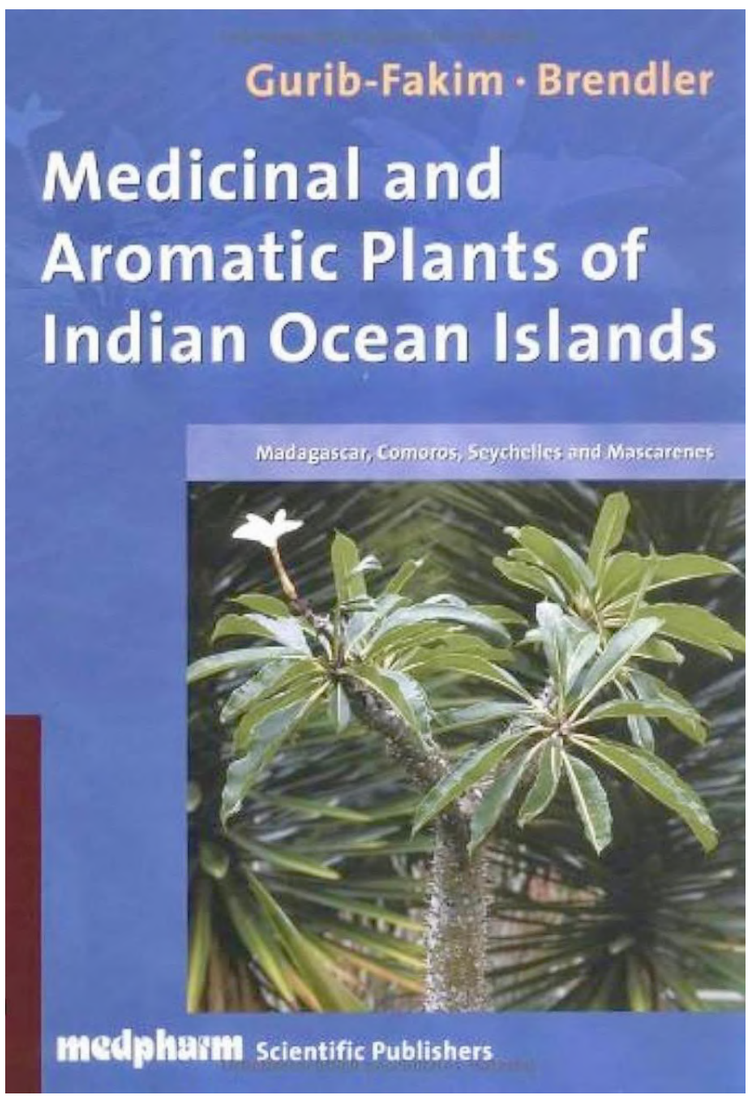
H.E. Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim:
When blended with Indigenous knowledge, Western knowledge helps create the 3rd way for addressing our pressing problems, such as Food insecurity, Climate crisis, etc. These traditional ways have guided us through millennia and have been ignored and side-lined for many reasons, but it is time to make them mainstream. The next question is who will do it. It is down to the US to revive them, as it will help us salvage our livelihoods on this planet.

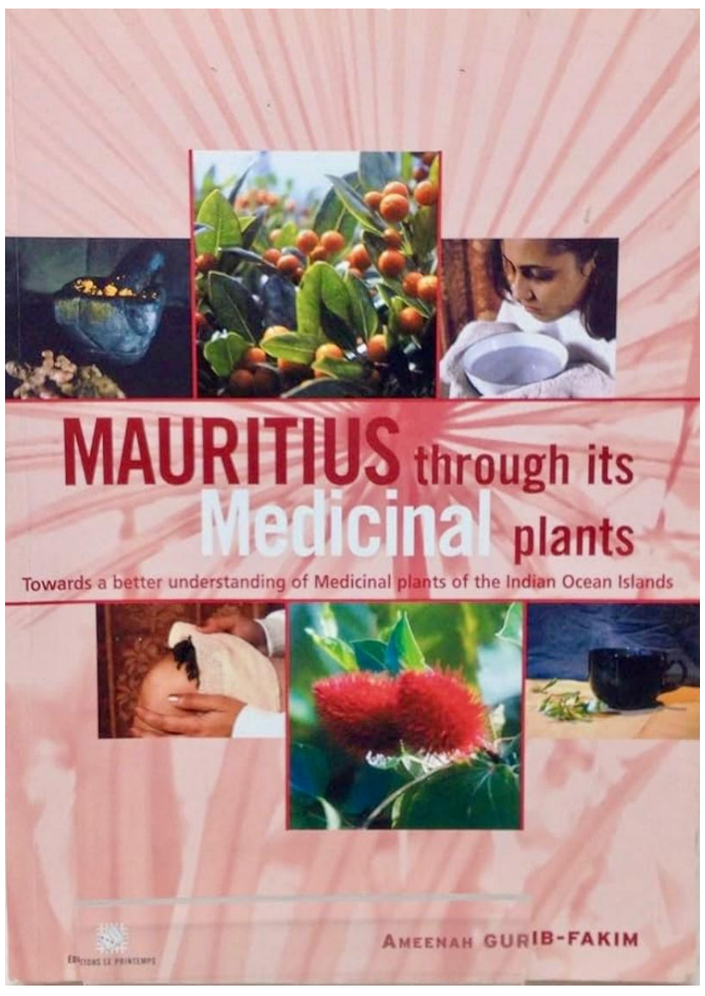
Your Excellency, thank you so much for your time. Much Appreciated!







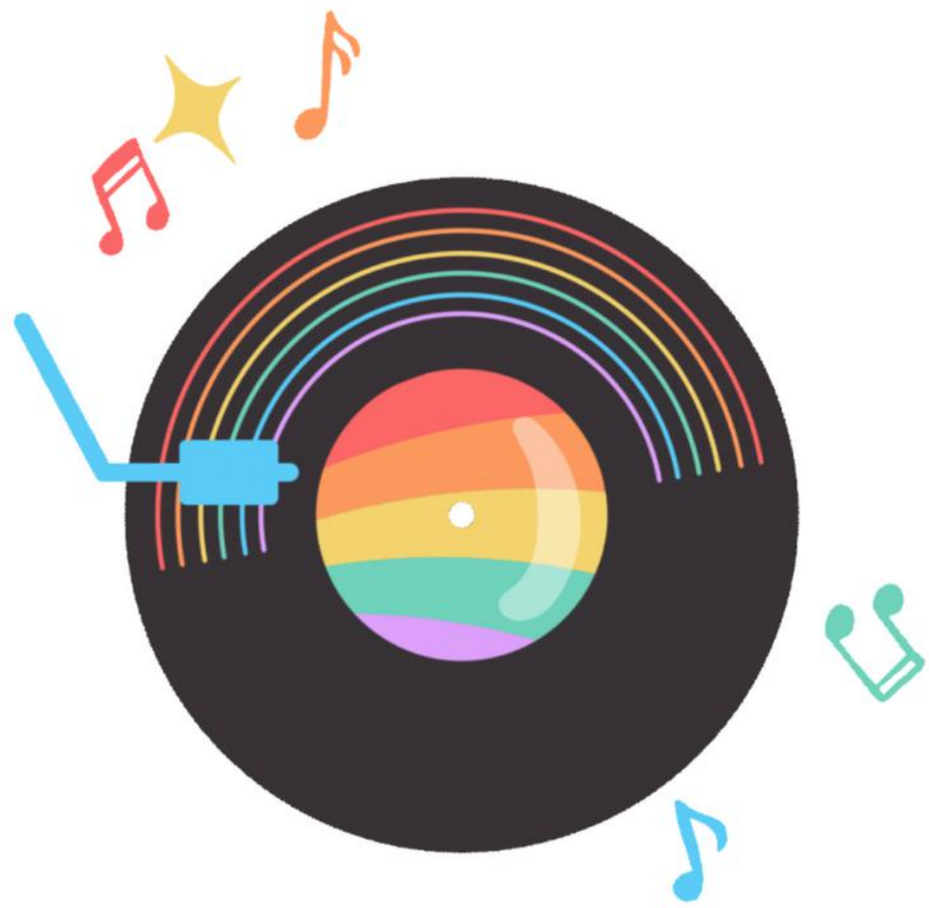










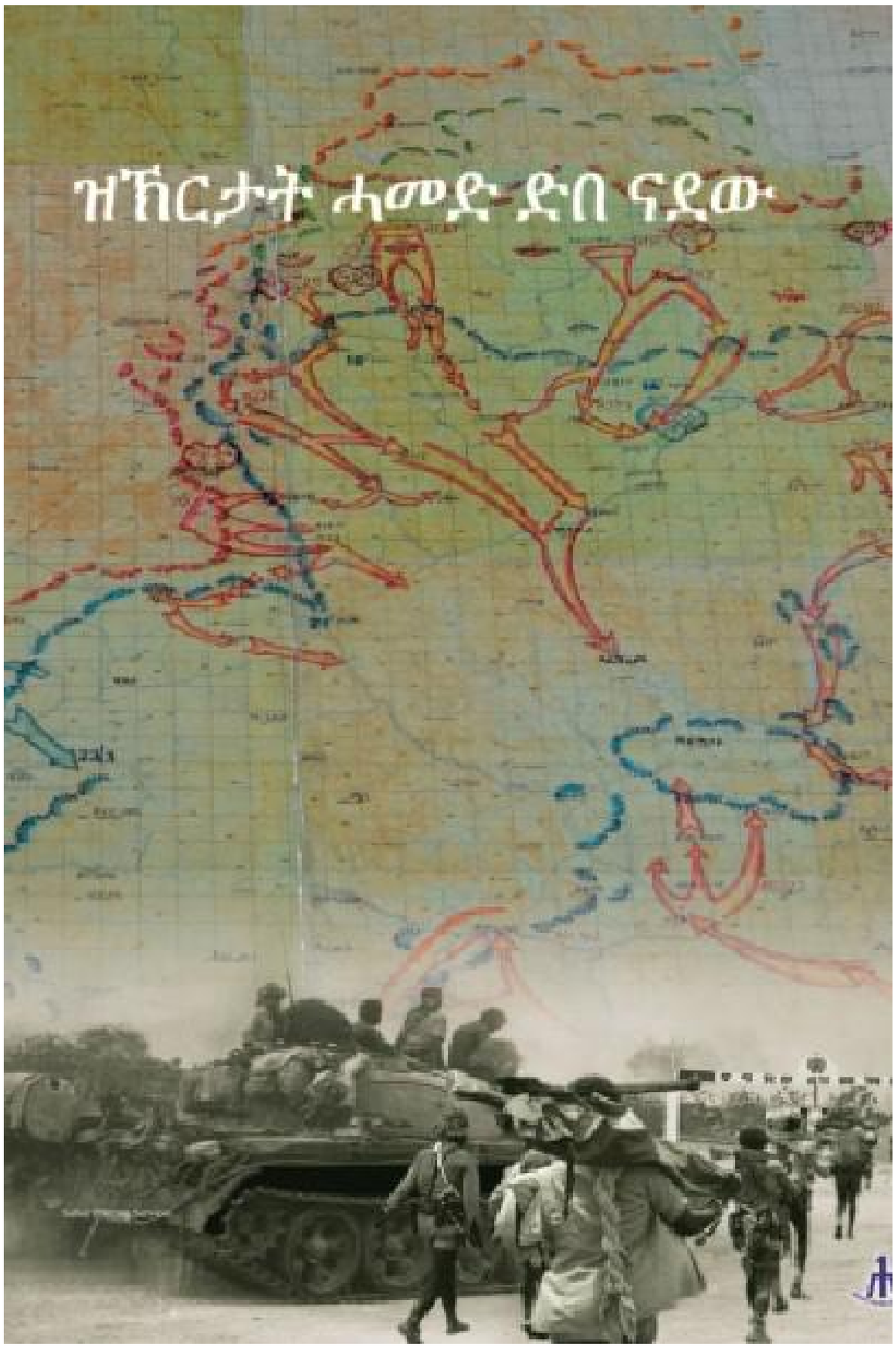


Kaya, the late great Mauritian musician.



REMEMBRANCE: THE DEMISE OF THE NADEW IZ (COMMAND)

Part II



Written by: Solomon Berhe

Translated by: Yafet Zereou

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OPERATION

1.1 STRENGTH AND ORGANISATION OF THE TWO FORCES.

As mentioned earlier, the destruction of the Nadew Command had been in the pipeline for some time. As such, prior to conducting this operation a detailed and thorough planning was conducted. To throw the Ethiopians off the scent, the EPLF conducted military manoeuvres in the Eritrean highlands and at the front itself, which were only intended to serve as decoys.

To carry out this extensive operation, both the fighting and support units of the EPLF were prepared. EPLF infantry divisions 16th, 52nd, 61st, 70th, 85th and 74th mechanised division, various support units, intelligence units, Engineering corps, Logistics corps, medical corps etc., were all put in place before the start. Estimates at the time show that the combined number of the EPLF forces poised to take part in the operation, to be about 10,400 personnel.

The decades-long Eritrean armed struggle had taken its toll on the Ethiopian army, which had seen its number of soldiers steadily decline over the years. The Ethiopian army before the destruction of the Nadew Command, was reputed to have had 94,000 soldiers in Eritrea, organised as follows;

- Mekete Command, based in the Eritrean Highlands was 30,000 strong.
- Mentir Command, positioned on the Halhal front was 21,000 strong.
- Bergid Command, based in Barka was said to be 14,500 strong.
- The SRAE divisions, were more than 7,000 strong.
- The strength of the Nadew Command had been reduced to 16,500 after it had sustained loses in the minor attack of 1987, where over 4,700 Ethiopian soldiers were either killed, wounded, or decommissioned due to other reasons. By the time, the EPLF's started its offensive, bolstered by two battalions of the 15th Ethiopian Army division, the strength of the Nadew Command had gone up to 18,000.
- The Ethiopian Army units based at the Nakfa Front were the 14th, 19th, 21st, 29th Infantry divisions, 29th Mechanised Brigade (named Zeray Deres), the 157th Artillery Battalion, and support and other ancillary units.

The Nadew Command's arsenal of weapons constituted of 54 tanks, 16 artillery pieces of 130mm calibre, 36 artillery pieces of 122mm calibre, 12 units of BM (Ballistic Missile) 21 rocket launchers, 55 heavy machine guns, numerous mortars and light machine guns with over 18,000 small arms.

The Nadew Command's arsenal of weapons constituted of 54 tanks, 16 artillery pieces of 130mm calibre, 36 artillery pieces of 122mm calibre, 12 units of BM (Ballistic Missile) 21 rocket launchers, 55 heavy machine guns, numerous mortars and light machine guns with over 18,000 small arms.

1.2 ORDER OF BATTLE

The Nadew Command controlled a front-line made up of a continuous line of trenches that was 165 km long and an area behind the front line with a depth of 70 km. The total area under the control of the Ethiopian Nadew Command was about 12,000 square kilometres. The military plan drawn up by the EPLF intended to completely encircle and destroy the enemy's forces that was occupying such a long and wide area with six lines of attack. Based on these lines of attacks, EPLF forces were sub-divided into six groups.

1.2.1 OBJECTIVE OF THE FIRST LINE OF ATTACK

To engage with and destroy the enemy's 14th Infantry division and 29th Mechanised division, which had controlled the area; on the left (eastern) flank of the front, an area which stretched from Meshtay (መሽታይ) around Qamechewaye (ቃምጨዋይ), along Mamide (ማዕሚደ) through to Meater (መዕጥር) and then to push through to Afabet.

EPLF units assigned to this line of attack were:

- two brigades from the 85th Division
- two battalions from the 87th Brigade of the 61st Division
- the 23rd Mechanised Brigade
- Parts of the 63rd Mechanised Brigade.

1.2.2 OBJECTIVE OF THE SECOND LINE OF ATTACK

The plan was for EPLF forces to leave under cover of darkness the positions that they had held in the deep gorges between Eithalbebe (ኢትሓልበብ) and Keref (ክርፍ), and by slipping between the entrenched positions of the enemy to head to the River Gude (ጉደ). From the River Gude (ጉደ), the EPLF units were to turn right and climb up the Mountains of Rorete (ሮሬት) and from there, a part of the force was to head north and launch a surprise attack from the rear on the enemy's positions located at elevation height 1419 and 1417.

The other section of the force was to head south to Haras-Harmaz (ሓራስሓርማዝ) and attack enemy positions on the mountain of Hartete (ሓርጠጥ).

The final objective was to destroy the Ethiopian Army's 19th Army division together with its supporting tanks, artillery, machine guns, and mortar units that were holding onto positions located on the Mountain of Rorete (ሮሬት) and the River Heday (ሕዳይ) area.

The Nadew Command controlled a front-line made up of a continuous line of trenches that was 165 km long and an area behind the front line with a depth of 70 km

EPLF units assigned to this line of attack were;

- 81st Brigade of the 61st Division
- One battalion of the 87th Brigade of the 61st Division
- One company of the Infantry heavy weapons
- One battalion of the 24th Brigade of the 52nd Division
- One company of the 26th Brigade of the 16th Division.
- In addition to these, the 34th and 63rd EPLF Mechanised Brigades were to proceed along the river Heday.

1.2.3 OBJECTIVE OF THE THIRD LINE OF ATTACK

To destroy the enemy's 19th and 21st Army division that was holding the strategic high positions that stretched from Amba (ኣምባ) to Arhatset Abi (ኣርሃጸትዓቢ) and the River Telkese (ጠልቀሰ).

The plan was to launch a diversionary frontal attack with a small force supported by mortars and heavy machine guns, while the bulk of the force was to slip through any available unguarded gaps in enemy lines and launch an attack from the rear.

EPLF units that took part were;

- 26th Brigade of the 16th Division on the left flank.
- 11th Brigade of the 61st Division on the right flank
- Units from the 34th Mechanised Brigade that were operating along the Farnelo (ፋርናኤሎ) and Kibertsadaen (ቀብርጻዕዳ) line.

1.2.4 OBJECTIVE OF THE FOURTH LINE OF ATTACK

To set off from the area of Sheg (ሸግ) and slip between Andeb (ኣንደብ) and Hasaeed (ሓሳይድ), to then attack Hasaeed (ሓሳይድ) from the south and take control of it. In addition, to block any Ethiopian forces that may come from Habero (ሃበሮ), by heading to the strategic locations to the west of Afabet and attacking and controlling the area around the river Gebgeb (ገብገብ), Globe (ግሎብ) and Sheknab (ሸክናብ).

The EPLF units assigned to this operation were;

- The entire 10th brigade of the 70th division.
- One battalion from the 71st Brigade
- One infantry unit from the heavy weapons division
- Units from the 34th Mechanised Brigade.

1.2.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE FIFTH LINE OF ATTACK

To control the high ground located in the mountain chains of Mshalit (መስሓሊት), located 30 km from Keren, and the Afabet-Keren Road. The primary purpose was to seal off the route of retreat for the Nadew Command and to close it down, while at the same time to prevent any Ethiopian reinforcements coming from Keren to assist the Nadew Command. In addition, a mop up operation was to be conducted to round up and capture retreating Ethiopian soldiers and their military hardware. According to the plan, the EPLF forces were to reach the Afabet-Keren Road, after setting off behind enemy lines from around the Mai Medef (ማይመደፍ) area.

The EPLF units after passing through Dersene (ደርስነይ) would then cross the Keren-Asmara Road at Shendwa (ሽንደዋ). From there by way of Merara (ምራራ), Eraero (ዒራዒሮ), Emba (እምባ), Afluk (ኣፍሉኞ) and Anese (እንስ) they would reach their target — the Afabet-Keren Road.

The EPLF units that took part in this operation were;

- The entire 52nd Division
- One battalion of the infantry heavy division.

1.2.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE SIXTH LINE OF ATTACK

To start off from the forests of Semenawyi Bahri and head to the east of the city of Afabet and attack the Ethiopian forces based in the areas of Azahera (ኣዛሀራ), Gadem (ጋድም) and Halib (ሓሊብ). After which to link with EPLF forces coming from the right flank in the direction of Felket (ፈልክት) and to capture the city of Afabet.

The EPLF strategists had planned to use this force on the second day of engagements after the enemy had, if all had gone to plan, retreated from its positions in the south and southeast on the first day of battle.

The EPLF units that took part in this attack were;

- 22nd Brigade of the 85th Division together with five squads of the Infantry heavy weapons
- Two battalions from the 13th brigade of the 61st Division
- One company from the Infantry heavy weapons

1.3 DAYS OF BATTLE (17-19 MARCH 1988)

EPLF forces in accordance with the order of battle described above, in the early hours of 17 March 1988, launched a five-pronged attack on Ethiopian army positions. The Ethiopian forces tried to put up a stiff resistance, but by the end of the first day of battle they were forced by EPLF forces to retreat from their primary and secondary lines of defence.

Away from the fighting on the front-line, EPLF units assigned to control the Keren-Afabet Road successfully managed to achieve their objective — in accordance to the schedule of battle they had been given. The EPLF 52nd Division which had been tasked to launch an attack behind enemy lines, managed to take up positions at the summit of Mshalit (መስሓሊት) and by the end of the first day, was successful in blocking the path of Ethiopian reinforcements sent from the city of Keren.

On the second day of battle on 18th March 1988, EPLF forces despite suffering from exhaustion, thirst, and hunger, managed to maintain the momentum of the swift attack of the previous day. EPLF forces captured enormous quantities of arms and ammunition, which they used to reinforce their own arsenal with.

The Ethiopian army, unable to withstand the relentless onslaught by the EPLF forces began to buckle, losing its formation as it started to crumble. The disjointed and chaotic retreat of large parts of the Ethiopian army led to the EPLF controlling huge expanses of territory that the Ethiopian army hastily left behind.

The areas that witnessed the fiercest fighting during the destruction of the Nadew Command were, Moga Qetari (ሞጋዕቀጣሪ) and Qamchewa (ቃምጨዋ). The Ethiopian commanders in these areas realised that their precious heavy weapons were exposed and were in imminent danger. Aware that attempting to regroup their soldiers that had been dislodged from the strategic high grounds and dispersed all over the battlefield was not feasible, they decided to withdraw their weaponry to a safe location. Following this decision, an Ethiopian army column consisting of tanks and other vehicles numbering between 70 to 80, set off for Afabet in broad daylight to seek refuge there. The Ethiopian column reached the steep mountain pass of Asharum (ዓሸራም) at about 15:30 hrs. The Ethiopians had been completely unaware of the mortal danger they were in on Asharum (ዓሸራም), as they inadvertently came within the range and sight of the EPLF tanks positioned at the River Heday (ሕዳይ). While down by the banks of the River Heday, a tank from the EPLF's 34th Brigade took careful aim and fired a round, scoring a direct hit on a Ethiopian BM21 rocket launcher which was approaching the summit of Asharum (ዓሸራም), destroying it completely. With its second round, the EPLF tank scored another direct hit on an Ethiopian tank which was mid-way up the steep incline. With the front and middle blocked on the narrow mountain road, most of the heavy weaponry of the 29th Mechanised Brigade known as Zeray Deres and which had been the pride of the Ethiopian Army, was now completely stranded — trapped atop the mountain.

Fearing that the stranded weapons would fall into the hands of the EPLF, Major General Wubetu Tesgaye of the SRAE, who was commanding the battle, ordered the Ethiopian air force to destroy the Ethiopian convoy trapped on the mountain pass.

An Ethiopian Air Force pilot who had been ordered to destroy his own country's expensive weaponry, was intercepted expressing his disbelief at such a sight, by saying, "oh, the destruction that ensues, when a government falls!"

The utter destruction visited upon the Ethiopian mechanised column at Asharum (ዓሸራም), came to be the most enduring symbol of the EPLF's major offensive — The Battle of Afabet.

By 18 March 1988, the EPLF had destroyed two thirds of the Ethiopian forces and had managed to capture all the strategic points on the Nakfa front and push the Ethiopian Army back some forty kilometres. EPLF forces on the left and right flanks had managed to control the surrounding areas of Afabet, while the 52nd EPLF division, which had been behind enemy lines, managed to block the Keren-Afabet Road and spent the day successfully repulsing the attacks of the Ethiopian reinforcements coming from Keren.

By the end of the second day, the Ethiopian army's Nadew Command which was scattered in all directions and the environs of Afabet, was placed by the EPLF in a very tight noose from which it could not escape.

On the third day, on 19 March 1988, EPLF forces launched their final offensive at 05:30 hrs. The Ethiopian Army which had been severely weakened by the previous two days of fighting, tried to mount a last gasp rear-guard defence, but was overwhelmed by the EPLF forces. The Ethiopians were left with no other option but to destroy their precious equipment and make a swift and chaotic retreat.

EPLF forces entered the city of Afabet from the east and south-east at 09:00hrs on 19th March 1988. The EPLF forces coming from the north and north-west, after successfully completing the objectives they had been given by the EPLF military planners, entered Afabet at 10:00hrs.

On the morning of the liberation of Afabet at the village of Shabaye (ሻባይ), there was a fierce encounter between Ethiopian forces and the 3rd Battalion of the 87th Brigade of the 61st Division of the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Army (EPLA). It was at this battle that three Soviet military advisors and other high ranking Ethiopian officers were captured.

After the liberation of Afabet, segments of the Ethiopian Army tried to reach Keren in their tanks and other vehicles but only managed to drive right into the ambush that the 52nd Division of the EPLA had set up. As a result, the Ethiopians abandoned their weapons and other equipment and fled — ending up being scattered aimlessly in the areas of Gezgeza (ግዝግዛ), Qelhamet (ቀልሃመት) and Hikano (ሂካኖ).

).After the final EPLF victory at Gezgeza (ግዝግዛ) in the afternoon of 19th March 1988, the operation to destroy Nadew Command came to a successful conclusion.

The Nadew Command had been the Ethiopian army's elite force in which the Ethiopian military commanders had full confidence. Nonetheless, despite this confidence, just as one of the EPLF commanders had predicted prior to the start of the offensive — on 19th March 1988, Nadew Command, the pride, and joy of the Ethiopian army, was laid to rest.

EPLF forces, after a bitter ten-year struggle along the Nakfa front, created a new front in the area of Mshalit (መስሓሊት) — the Keren front. The victory at Afabet allowed the EPLF to transition into a strategic offensive force and gain the upper hand in its fight against Ethiopian occupation of Eritrea.

Next:

THE IMPACT AND EXCEPTIONALISM OF THE OPERATION TO DESTROY THE NADEW COMMAND


OptiCel™
DAILY NUTRITION COMPLEX
HEART HEALTH
Maintain healthy blood flow and promote healthy blood pressure
DIETARY SUPPLEMENT
60 CAPLETS


OptiCel™
DAILY NUTRITION COMPLEX
JOINT HEALTH
Maintain healthy joints and promote easy movement
DIETARY SUPPLEMENT
60 CAPLETS

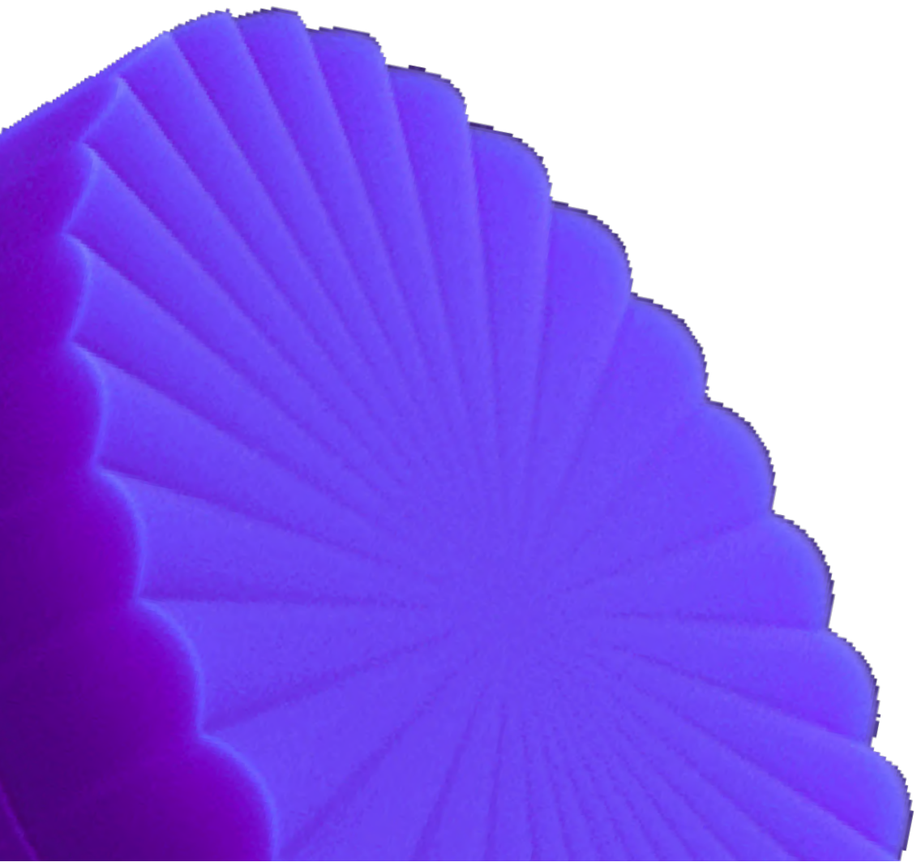

OptiCel™
DAILY NUTRITION COMPLEX
GLUCOSE BALANCE
DIETARY SUPPLEMENT
60 CAPLETS

IF YOU OWN AN ERITREAN BUSINESS, YOU CAN DISPLAY YOUR ADVERTISEMENT HERE.










DESTA DALLAS
BEST
ETHIOPIAN RESTAURANT IN TOWN
DESTA RESTAURANT
Get in touch!
CALL US: (214) 575-9004
12101 Greenville Ave, #105
Dallas, Texas 75243
www.destadallastx.com
Follow us
Desta Restaurat Dallas
Desta Dallas Ethiopia

Should I Give the Insurance Company a Statement?

Insurance companies will have their adjusters attempt to get an oral or written statement from you immediately after an accident. Never give a verbal or written statement to an insurance company regarding your case without first consulting your lawyer. Any communications with an insurer should either be through your lawyer or only with your lawyer's explicit permission.

Can I Get a Rental Car or Cash in Lieu of a Rental Car?

Yes. You should be able to get a rental car if your insurance policy provides for one. If not, 3rd party Insurers (the insurers for the party at fault) may help you get a rental car to use for a limited period. 3rd party Insurers may also reimburse you for your rental car expenses upon presentation of valid receipts or write you a check for loss of use of your car.

Can I Have a Body Shop of My Choice Repair my Car?

Yes. You may use the body shop of your choice to repair your car. Some insurers will even directly write you a check covering the cost of your car repairs if there is a mutual acceptance of an estimate.



Appointment Date: _____

Time: _____

Additional Information

HABTEMARIAM LAW FIRM PLLC.
— AUTO ACCIDENT ATTORNEYS —

Texas • Washington • Virginia
206-624-1820

www.HabtemariamLaw.com

HABTEMARIAM LAW FIRM PLLC.
— AUTO ACCIDENT ATTORNEYS —



Texas • Washington • Virginia
206-624-1820

www.HabtemariamLaw.com

WINNERS
TRUCKING LLC
Samuel M Tesfamichael

Office: 972-349-9565
Cell: 619-481-7344
Fax: 972-692-8564

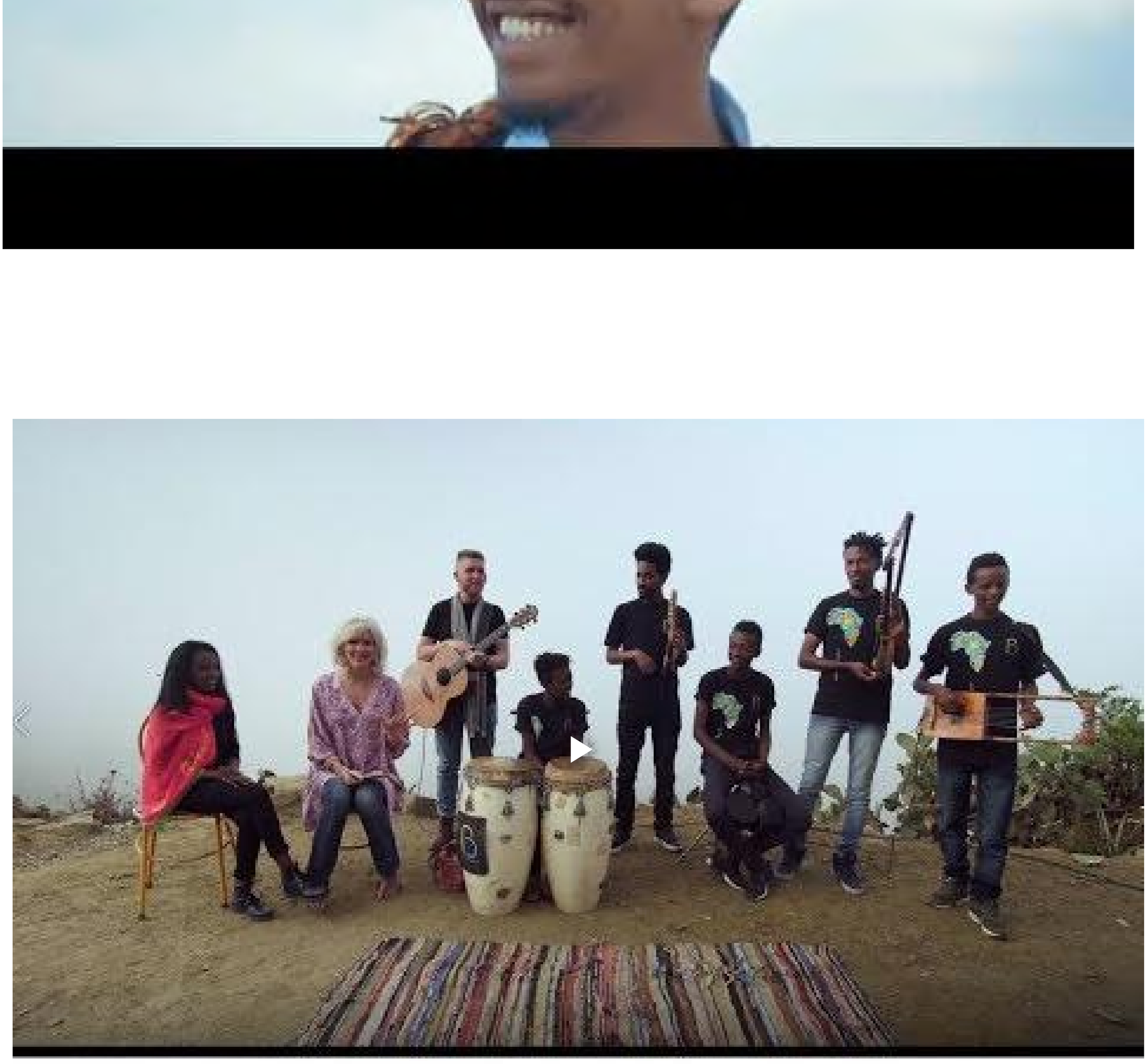
12225 Greenville Ave Ste. 734
Dallas, TX 75243

management@winnerstrucking.com

ERITREAN DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

EST. 1976







DELINA'S CORNER



Rahel Asghedom's Books for Children: A Review

Children are like sponges, continuously absorbing a great deal from their environment. You can also compare children to a blank canvas. However way you put it, the point is how impressionable they are. The Tigrinya proverb that goes, "ቈልዓ ብንእሱ፣ ቈርበት ብርሕሱ" (an expression that means a child needs to be molded while still very young) sums it up rather well. As parents, we can "color" these "blank canvases" however we want. We can color them vermilion just as quickly as we can color them grey, or worse, let the world color them as it wishes. The things we see, learn and read as children tend to stay with us forever. If you don't believe me, take the word of French author Marcel Proust and his novel "In Search of Lost Time," a literary work centered on childhood memories.

I still remember the first book I read by myself; I remember the color of the book: it was green and had a picture of a fat, orange cat on the cover entitled "The Diary of the Killer Cat." I can vividly recall the joy I felt when I finished it. I felt like I was capable of reading every book in the world. Most importantly, I remember thinking to myself, "Hey! Reading is fun!"

I was lucky as a child. My mother used to read to me every night before bed. I remember her reading Alemseged Tesfai's "Gitano" and the Tigrinya translation of "Aesop's Fables" to me. I couldn't wait to get to bed, and every night, I would fight the oncoming sleep so I could hear one more story or listen to her read one more page. Those bedtime stories with my mom are some of my most cherished childhood memories.

IWhen I was eleven, my father gave me a notebook to write book summaries in whatever language I read them. On the first page of that notebook, he wrote me a list of quotes titled "Daddy's Lifetime Advice." The first quote says: "Remember, you have three responsibilities as a student: Read, Read, Read." My parents gave me a memorable childhood that way, and I would not be the person I am today if it weren't for them.

Some of you may think I've digressed. Why do I bring up my own story when today is about Rahel and Etan's books? Because, like Etan, I am a product of diligent and dedicated parents, and, like Rahel, I am the product of the books I read as a child.

Children are like sponges, continuously absorbing a great deal from their environment. You can also compare children to a blank canvas. However way you put it, the point is how impressionable they are. The Tigrinya proverb that goes, "ቈልዓ ብንእሱ፣ ቈርበት ብርሕሱ" (an expression that means a child needs to be molded while still very young) sums it up rather well. As parents, we can "color" these "blank canvases" however we want. We can color them vermilion just as quickly as we can color them grey, or worse, let the world color them as it wishes. The things we see, learn and read as children tend to stay with us forever. If you don't believe me, take the word of French author Marcel Proust and his novel "In Search of Lost Time," a literary work centered on childhood memories.

I still remember the first book I read by myself; I remember the color of the book: it was green and had a picture of a fat, orange cat on the cover entitled “The Diary of the Killer Cat.” I can vividly recall the joy I felt when I finished it. I felt like I was capable of reading every book in the world. Most importantly, I remember thinking to myself, “Hey! Reading is fun!”

I was lucky as a child. My mother used to read to me every night before bed. I remember her reading Alemseged Tesfai’s “Gitano” and the Tigrinya translation of “Aesop’s Fables” to me. I couldn’t wait to get to bed, and every night, I would fight the oncoming sleep so I could hear one more story or listen to her read one more page. Those bedtime stories with my mom are some of my most cherished childhood memories.

When I was eleven, my father gave me a notebook to write book summaries in whatever language I read them. On the first page of that notebook, he wrote me a list of quotes titled “Daddy’s Lifetime Advice.” The first quote says: “Remember, you have three responsibilities as a student: Read, Read, Read.” My parents gave me a memorable childhood that way, and I would not be the person I am today if it weren’t for them.

Some of you may think I’ve digressed. Why do I bring up my own story when today is about Rahel and Etan’s books? Because, like Etan, I am a product of diligent and dedicated parents, and, like Rahel, I am the product of the books I read as a child.

At first glance, children’s books may seem unimportant and have minimal impact. Silly, even. Some people may look at them skeptically and say, “How much value can they hold?” I believe children’s books hold more power than we realize. They can teach lessons on kindness, compassion, empathy, understanding, acceptance, and more. Lessons that kids need to learn to become good people.

“Don’t schoolbooks already do that?” one could ask. Not as well as the children’s books that they choose to read. These books subtly show them that learning is fun, discovering is exciting, and books are the best company. They allow the child to delve into a new world, far from their own, where they can swim with fish, fly with birds, run with cheetahs, and jump with kangaroos. Books help stretch their imagination, ultimately helping them become innovative critical thinkers. In short, these kinds of books- and the lessons that come with them- can lay the foundation for their personalities.

When I first met Rahel and chatted with her, she told me about her kids, Etan and Sephron. She told me how she and her husband Dawit had a policy at home: their children had to read at least one page or paragraph a night before they could sleep. This was a non-negotiable rule.

Every night for years, she encouraged and monitored them to read a paragraph or a page. Sometimes, she even motivated them by leaving a Nakfa or two at the end of a book! Can you imagine what kind of commitment that takes? I was blown away. I was even more amazed to hear that her twelve-year-old son Etan had already finished reading the Harry Potter series, Percy Jackson and the Olympians series- to name just a few. As if that’s not impressive enough, he even translated two children’s books from English to Tigrinya- Arnold Lobel’s “Mouse Soup” (መረቕ ኣንጭዋ) and Esther Averill’s “The Fire Cat” (እቲ ኣጥፋኢ ሓዊ ድሙ)! Nowadays, she tells me that she has to beg him to stop reading and go to sleep! I can only imagine what kind of an adult he will be, but I can say with some confidence that whatever he grows up to become, be it a doctor, scientist, singer, or poet- he will be a good one because he discovered the magic of reading from an early age. It’s also important to note that Etan’s not-so-simple act of translating books can inspire and help other kids realize they can do the same.

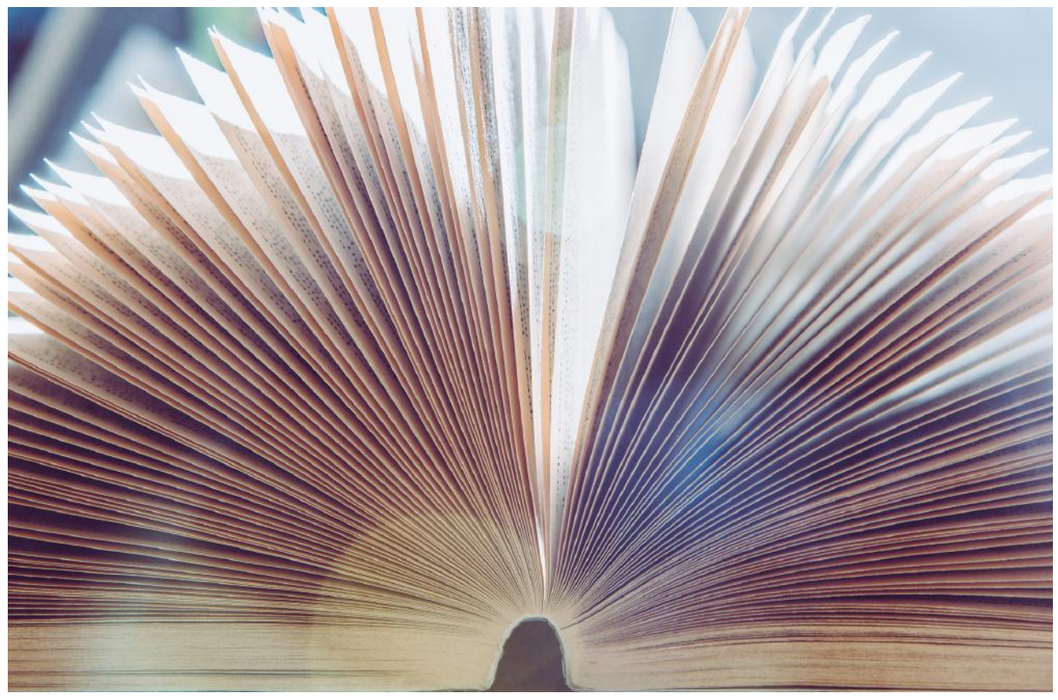
By this point, it is clear that Rahel is leading by example regarding the importance of reading in a child's life. It's been tried and tested! Her children are proof that this is not a case of "ቀሺ ዝበሎ ግበር፣ ቀሺ ዝገበሮ ኣይትግበር" (this is parallel to the English saying "Do as I say, not as I do"). Her whole intention is to help other children follow in her son's footsteps and other parents to follow in hers. She has now provided the Eritrean public with two series of books: Let's Read Them Stories (or ሃየ ነንብበሉም) and Let's Learn (or ሃየ ንመሃር). It's certainly a change from her previous books, but these may be the most impactful. Most writers focus on writing for adults, but their audience will inevitably be people who have already developed the habit of- and a liking for reading. This time, Rahel shrewdly observed that you start at the root to introduce a broader culture of leisure reading in society.

I found the books to be colorful, attractive, and warm. I appreciated that she wrote them in English and Tigrinya, which is a great way to help children pick up new words as they read. I also valued how she used Eritrean characters with typical names and pictures with which Eritrean children can identify. You don't come across many English children's books of the sort.

One of the series is called "Let's Read Them Stories," which addresses the parents directly rather than the children themselves. It is not common in our culture for parents to read to their children, which was neither possible nor feasible a generation ago. We've come a long way since then and can now afford opportunities that were unthinkable a mere half-century ago. This parent-centric approach to reading to children allows a stronger bond between parent and child and develops friendship and mentorship as opposed to the traditional authority-subordinate relationship.

I firmly believe that a single drop of water can create a substantial ripple. These books, whose release we are celebrating today, are the first of many more "drops of water" to come. And I suspect that they will go on to create a ripple big enough to reach other children in Eritrea so that they, too, can discover the magic of books.

Rahel and Etan, I commend you on a job well done.





ARTS & CULTURE

CONCERTS

SONA BERHANE

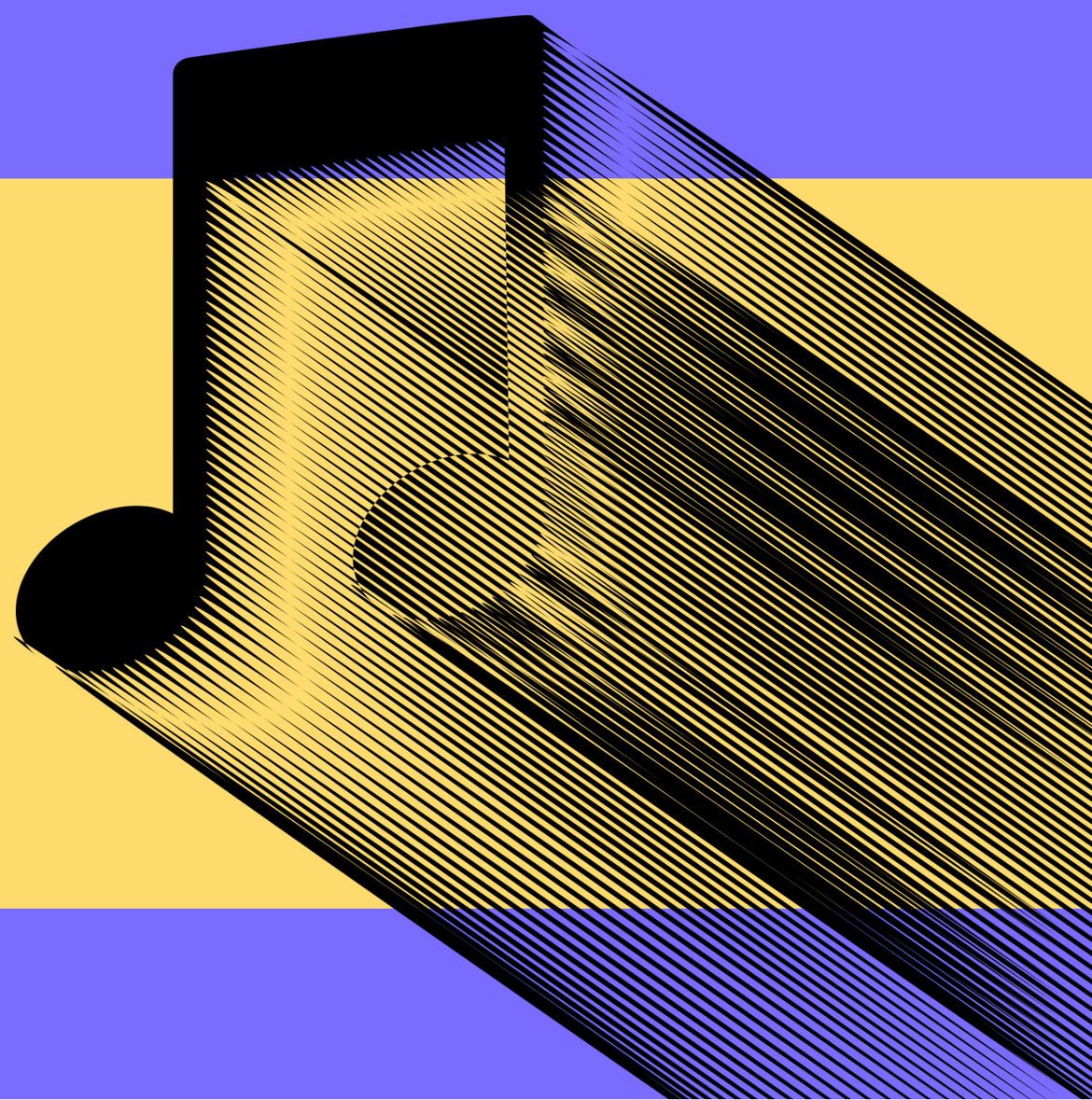


I, II, & III

Reporting & Analysis

By Sona Berhane

2023 ENDS ON A MUSICAL NOTE



I

ASMARA CHOIR PERFORMED ITS MAIDEN CONCERT

Asmara Choir held its very first concert on the stage of Cinema Roma this past summer. Formed in early 2018, Asmara Choir is a mixed choir comprised of 33 young girls and boys who have been training under the tutelage of musician, conductor, and music instructor Barnabas Mebrahtu. The concert featured several big names in Eritrean music. The instrument accompaniment was provided by the Rakuba Jazz Band, formed in the same year by Mohammed Saleh Husien Ahmed.

Opening with the national anthem performance, the concert commenced with *Eritriya Ya Jarat al-Bahr*, a popular Arabic song from the 70's. Although much of the song was sung *ripieno*, it is here that we were introduced to a number of the choir's soloists.

Next was *Waldien* by Hajait Mndal, and it preluded with the choir's blossoming hum, which lent the song a particularly melancholic quality. Those familiar with Hajait's earlier work will find her voice virtually unchanged–her uniquely mournful wail, captivating and in tune, echoed by the choir's restrained replies to her phrases.

Af Halib, Zeineb Beshir's memorable love song, was performed after the first half, which soloists rendered. For those of us who grew up on the warmly raspy texture of her voice, listening to Zeineb perform evoked a sense of nostalgia.

The entire concert was punctuated by Mohammed Nur Idris's delightful intermissions, wherein he struck up banter with each artist, asking them to explain the history of their song to the audience and even sharing his reflections and memories.

The following number was Mohammed Duruf's *Geyebnyek We'amsha Fyaknat Bena*. There's nothing like the enchantingly swaying melodies of Bidawyet songs. In the execution of this song, one could hear and appreciate the advantage of a mixed choir in the way the resonating bass of the male singers anchored the voices. In contrast, the higher pitch of the female singers lifted the notes, expanding the range and timber of their sound. The combined voices created an auditory wholesomeness that was very satisfying.

This pleasant counterbalance of their vocals was again showcased to a briefer extent in Mahmoud Ahmed's *Eritriya Nibaro* as they took turns answering the singer in the chorus. If the ensemble were an entirely male or female choir, it would have produced musical tones that sounded too strident or fell completely flat on the ears. When joined, both ends of the tonal spectrum enhanced and enriched each other.

Photograph by Eden Russom



Performing *Etubeley* with Ahmed Ahmedin

Throughout the evening, the choir's performance grew more confident and spirited with each subsequent song. I enjoyed their sound in Ahmed Ahmedin's *Etubeley*, the back-to-back renditions of Adem Faid's *Aragin,* and the wonderfully fast-paced *Shibo Shibo* by Mohammed Zemil. Each of these songs was bracketed by the choir's harmonious antiphonies compactly placed in the openings and endings of most of the songs.

Zemach's performance of *Hijum* recalled the days of the armed struggle when every victory was celebrated and every battle commemorated. The choir's choreography as well was so passionate that the audience was roused into accompanying with applause and ululations.

Muziqa, the lyrically written ballad to the art form, allowed the choristers to showcase their sound as an ensemble and as individual soloists. Here, too, we heard the vocals at the beginning bring depth to the solo performances.

Each of these songs was bracketed by the choir's harmonious antiphonies compactly placed in the openings and endings of most of the songs.

The last number, written and composed by Barnabas Mebrahtu and titled *Let Love Win*, was an original song that contained a pleasantly surprising juxtaposition in its first part. Listening to the smoothly and artfully incorporated modes of the traditional *Awlo* chants in the overture, I couldn't help but think of the creative severe potential that lies this way – for the choir as well as for our rich traditional chants and dirges that, in their true form, have so far been underutilized in any formal or modern musical event. The recent establishment of Keren Choir inspires hope for similar collaborations between the diverse eloquence of our ethnic music and the methodical arrangement of a choral.

Historically, choral music was exclusively practiced as worship music and flourished under the patronage of religious institutions. Cultivating secular choral music is usually in the hands of small organizations and or private sponsors. That is what makes Asmara Choir's debut concert and the large audience it attracted significant.

The last number, written and composed by Barnabas Mebrahtu and titled *Let Love Win,* was an original song that contained a pleasantly surprising juxtaposition in its first part.

Photograph by Eden Russom



The ensemble contained several promising soloists, although it was evident that Asmara Choir's performance sounded superior in chorus. This is a significant achievement, considering that the fundamental aim of establishing a formal choir from a young age is to foster vocal chemistry among choristers and to train them to utter music notes as ONE.

Especially noteworthy was the concert's repertoire, which, as detailed in the concert program, consisted entirely of Eritrean songs–each song more iconic than the last. All of the performances were arranged in such a way as to reflect, either in tone or movement, the ethnicity of the song, or the meaning of its words. Rakuba Jazz Band's tight, well-coordinated performance was terrific from beginning to end. It is a musical paradox that the more skillfully the instrumental section of a choral concert executes its part, the less noticeable it turns out to be in the overall tonal mass of the concert.

That delightful Friday evening, the typically buzzing café inside Cinema Roma was overrun with the radiant notes of Asmara Choir's spirited performance as their voices floated across the lounge.

Rakuba Jazz Band's tight, well-coordinated performance was terrific from beginning to end.

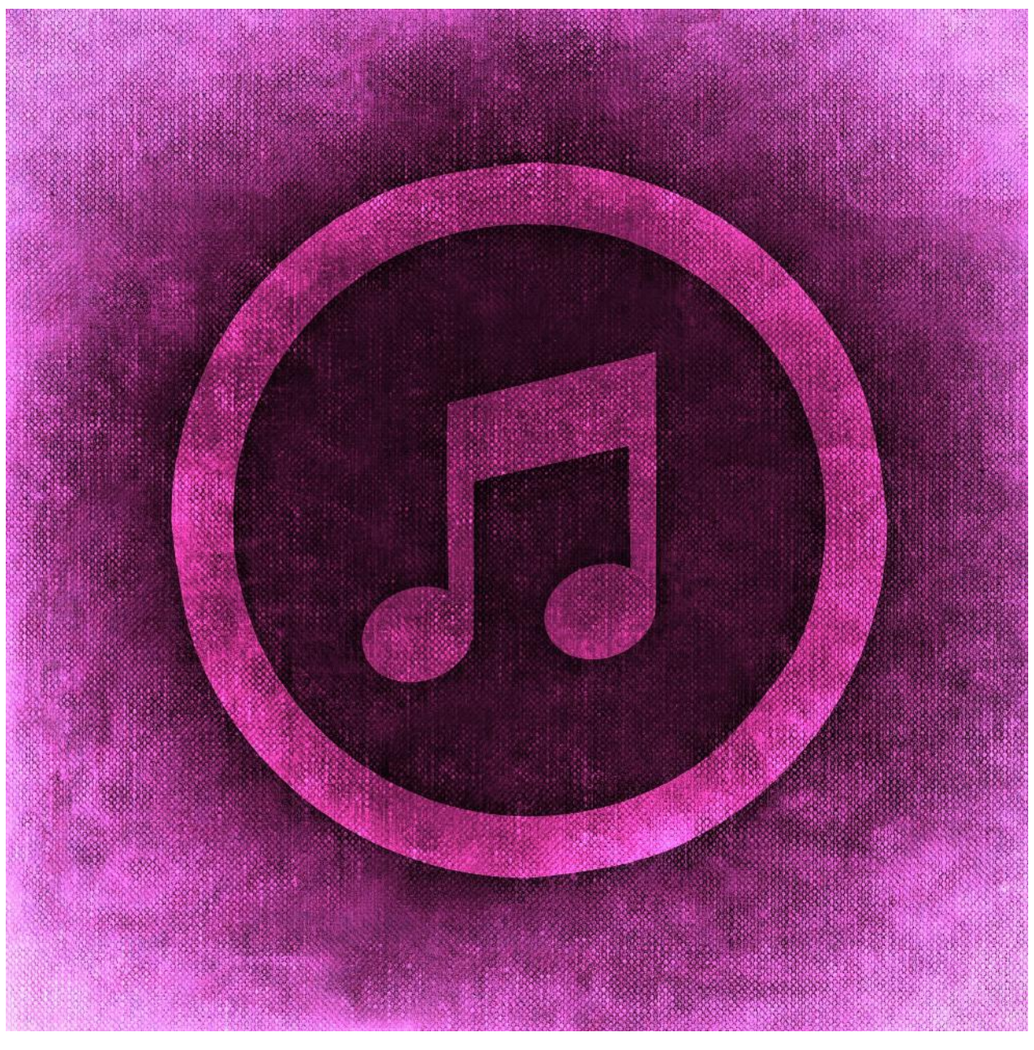
Photograph by Eden Russom



Photograph by Eden Russom



From left: Ahmed Ahmedin, Zeineb Beshir, Hajait Mndal, Adem Faid, Barnabas Mebrahtu, Mahmoud Ahmed, Mohammed Zemil, Zemach, and Mohammed Duruf.





II
CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

La Grande Musica del Cinema Italiano

During the first weeks of December, as the year approached its end, I was invited by a friend to attend a classical music concert. The invitation, extended to me a few hours before the concert, didn't specify who would perform or for what occasion.

When I got there, Cinema Roma was packed full of people, and it took me a few minutes to find a seat. I had arrived just in time to catch the opening address given by the Italian ambassador to Eritrea, Mr. Marco Mancini, explaining that a special concert was being hosted to mark the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the State of Eritrea and the Republic of Italy – an event organized by the Italian Embassy in collaboration with the Commission of Culture and Sports. An Italian quartet would be playing *The Greatest Music of Italian Cinema.* Instead of classical music, the evening's performance would merge two of the modern age's defining arts: music and cinema.

The quartet was made up of world-class musicians. Its members included the award-winning pianist Françoise de Clossey, bass player Lorenzo Mancini, guitar player Gianluca Verrengia, and, leading the ensemble, the renowned trumpeter and composer maestro Mauro Maur. As they took their positions on the stage, Mauro Maur spoke of the hospitality and warm welcome they encountered in Eritrea.

He also mentioned the challenges (mainly if one played a wind instrument) of the high-altitude atmosphere they were not used to. His playful and charming demeanor endeared him to the audience immediately.

As the quartet began to play the most memorable of Italian film scores, a slideshow of vintage film posters and film images was displayed on the large screen behind them. The first few songs from the earlier films leaned towards classical jazz and were played with only the piano and the trumpet. When they approached the more modern films, they were joined by the bass. Except for that one marvelously executed solo, Lorenzo Mancini's bass remained in the background, never calling attention to itself but reverberating throughout the music like an invisible base.

Between the pieces, the ebullient Mauro Maur took several minutes to share his experiences and recount anecdotes of his time working with Ennio Morricone. Ennio Morricone, considered to be Italy's most outstanding film music composer, created most of the film soundtracks on the program. Morricone has left his marks on cinema and can be heard today in the works of the world's finest film composers, such as Hans Zimmer, and the songs of countless rock bands. A close friend and long-time collaborator of Morricone's, Maur was the chief trumpet player of several of his works. Maur later played a beautifully moving piece that Morricone had dedicated to him.

At one point, Maur recalled an exciting story about Françoise de Clossey, whom the great Oscar Peterson mentored at a young age. When Peterson heard eight-year-old Françoise on the piano, he was so amazed he decided to give her further lessons. Oscar Peterson was among the most brilliant jazz pianists of the last century. De Clossey then played a lively jazz number as a tribute to her mentor, the jumpy notes making her fingers fly over the keys.

In scope and expression, Italian cinema has dominated cinema of the past century. And even today, it has not lost its distinctive, intimate style of expression. Despite being more knowledgeable about the filmmakers than the music composers of the films, I found myself thinking that most of the tracks sounded highly familiar. It is said of an excellent film score that you don't always notice during the film, but afterward, you never forget it.

As the quartet entered into the Spaghetti Western era characterized primarily by Sergio Leone's films, they began to play the score from *Per Pugni del Dollari.* In contrast, the poster of the film appeared on the screen behind. Gianluca Verrengia, so far silent, now started to strum his guitar, and the laconic notes, so emblematic of Western films, sauntered over to our ears.

Nina Rota wrote the music for the rest of the films on the program. Rota, who had worked with Fellini on many of his films, composed the emotionally charged scores of such influential films as *Amarcord, La Strada, Il Padrino*, and *La Dolce Vita*.

When I stepped into Cinema Roma that evening, a concert of iconic Italian film soundtracks was not what I had expected. What good fortune, then, that I happened to attend because the formidable quartet had delivered an electrifying performance despite maestro Maur's reservations about Asmara's rarefied highland air.

Italy and Eritrea's complicated, interlocking history goes back over a century. "We have lived together for many decades," Ambassador Mancini had pointed out. However, the relationship between the two peoples did not start amicably or on equal footing. This dynamic did come to change over the years. During the armed struggle, for instance, many Eritreans who were forced to live abroad settled in Italy, and the Festival of Eritrea was held for many years in the city of Bologna. Moreover, after Eritrea achieved its independence, Italy was among the earliest countries to acknowledge Eritrea as a sovereign state.

Music is a great healer. For this reason alone, celebrating our 30 years of diplomatic ties by hosting a musical performance was a fitting choice. As I exited the cinema, I hoped this concert would set a positive precedent for future cultural collaborations. I hoped it would propel us towards a harmonious and mutual phase by healing the old scars of a colonial past and bridging the gap between the two nations.

III

The Sound of Oasis Staged Annual Classical Music Concert

The classical music group The Sound of Oasis performed their annual concert on the 15th of this past December at the Cinema Asmara Opera House. They were held under the theme “Peace Dialogue through Music,” this year’s performance – the group’s first public outing since the pandemic – comprised over 27 pieces, including three original songs.

A classical music concert would have attracted only a handful of guests in earlier years. There were even instances when audience members grew restless, demonstrated by the buzz of conversation that could be heard across the aisles and the early-goers who would leave halfway through the concert. Now, though, that perception seems to be gradually changing. The performers appear to have found a comfortable musical niche on the stage, a conducive platform that encourages their musical aspirations, and, most importantly, a captive audience. The Cinema Asmara auditorium was packed with many balconies and boxes above, which were also occupied – mostly, and surprisingly, by youngsters. These annual Sound of Oasis concerts are coming in for increasingly more attention amongst the general public than they have enjoyed. Their latest concert was marvelous. By the end, the duration was pushing almost three hours. And yet, it was very heartening to see that the audience remained seated, attentive.

The Sound of Oasis is a classical music project initiated by Alganesh Solomon and Bissirat Dessalegn over 12 years ago. The project has humble beginnings. It all started in 2010 with home recitals of jovial piano pieces and Christmas carols for family and close friends. These informal gatherings were arranged by parents concerned to foster and encourage their children’s musical studies, as well as to introduce other children to the genre of classical music and inspire in them a desire to study serious music. This last point continues to be significant to the project since its first public performance in 2013. The Sound of Oasis has staged not one but two concerts: one to be performed a few hours earlier for students and another for the main event. For this reason, these annual concerts have never required an entry fee for attendees.

The project has since evolved into a formal classical music group – the only one in the country – that puts on a concert of classical music once every year without fail. During the challenging COVID years, the Sound of Oasis staged virtual concerts, which later aired on Eri-TV.

These annual Sound of Oasis concerts are coming in for increasingly more attention amongst the general public than they have enjoyed.

As a first-of-its-kind grassroots music project, The Sound of Oasis did not encounter a well-worn route to success and has had to forge its path. Along the way, the project has relied heavily on the support and goodwill of many individuals and institutions. In 2013, the newly assembled project secured sponsorship with the Alliance Française and held its first formal classical music concert at Cinema Roma. Alliance Française sponsored the subsequent two years until SUKE, the long-time friend and ally of Eritrea, took over as the sponsor of The Sound of Oasis in 2016 and has continued to extend the team’s massive support.

As a first-of-its-kind grassroots music project, The Sound of Oasis did not encounter a well-worn route to success and has had to forge its path.



Here, the idea was conceived to formalize the events and organize performances for a bigger audience. This led to the formation of a classical music group called The Sound of Oasis.



The Sound of Oasis at Cinema Roma concert, 2013, posing with Alganesh Solomon (back row, third from right).



The Sound of Oasis concert, 2014. Hosting their customary second concert for students.

Short for *Schweizerisches Unterstützungskomitee für Eritrea* (Swiss Support Committee for Eritrea), SUKE was founded in 1977 by Dr. Toni Locher, then a young medical student, for the sole purpose of providing aid and support for Eritrea. While technically a non-government organization, SUKE insists on describing itself as a solidarity group and not a typical Western NGO. The committed and tireless efforts SUKE has put into helping Eritrean cause pre- and post-independence attest to this categorization.

Under the sponsorship of SUKE, The Sound of Oasis has been the beneficiary of 16 pianos: 14 upright pianos, one grand piano, and one baby grand piano. Additionally, SUKE sponsors numerous masterclasses, crash courses, and workshops yearly for students, which music experts from the University of Zurich provide. More recently, the performers completed an intense piano tuning course by a German piano technician whose services were obtained by SUKE. Considering the somewhat esoteric nature of classical music in Eritrea, it is unlikely that the technical expertise needed to maintain and refurbish musical instruments will crop up locally. That is why the students acquiring piano tuning skills push them a step towards the necessary self-sufficiency that is required to continue performing and to excel.

With the collaboration of the Commission of Culture and Sport and the Chinese Embassy in Eritrea, the performers could also attend piano technique courses organized by the Confucius Institute at the National Commission for Higher Education.

There is no doubt of the extreme importance of these crash courses and workshops. However, considering the students' increasing skill level and technique, these once-a-year masterclasses remain too few and far between.

Administratively, The Sound of Oasis lies under the Commission of Culture and Sport umbrella, with partner institutions working closely with the project, including Asmara Music School, the Eritrean Musician's Association, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church Music School. The project follows a yearly curriculum encompassing music theory, solfeggio, aural and vocal training, ensemble, piano, and violin training taught by renowned music instructors like Barnabas Mebrahtu, Elias Weldegebriel, and Mohammedsaleh Husien Ahmed.The serious way The Sound of Oasis conducts itself has helped cultivate a sense of discipline and professionalism in its members. As of today, the group has 20 performers: 5 advanced pianists (who have now begun instructing the new members), 5 progressing to advanced level, three violinists, one cellist (the only practicing cellist in Eritrea), one clarinetist, two guitarists, and three vocalists. Every year, the group organizes auditions where potential members are screened and allowed to join if they meet the standards.



Attending piano tuning courses.



Attending piano technique courses with Chinese instructors from the Confucius Institute at the National Commission for Higher Education.

The Sound of Oasis has created a platform wherein music students who persist and excel in their studies have encountered life-changing opportunities to pursue complex and advanced instruction that they wouldn't have experienced elsewhere. Proof of this is the case of pianist Noel Araya, who was granted a full scholarship to study in Germany five years prior. . He is attaining his Masters in Piano and Music Pedagogy at the University of Music in Munster. The academic institution has maintained contact with the group and has expressed earnest plans to offer additional scholarships to other advanced members.

Another member following his opera studies at the St. Louis Conservatory in Missouri is opera singer Benhur Mossasghi. This follows the intense two-week-long workshop offered by the YES ACADEMY (Youth Excellence on Stage) from the US. During this time, group members took courses on classical piano concerts, music production, hip-hop arts, jazz improvisation, and songwriting.

The Sound of Oasis project has also contributed significantly to the success of previous members who have pursued a professional music path. One such member, singer and songwriter Elham Mohammed, who left The Sound of Oasis some years ago to venture into the music industry, is making a name for herself, releasing one hit single after another.



Noel Araya currently studying at the University of Music in Munster, Germany.



Benhur Mossasghi pursuing Opera Studies at Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, USA.

As it currently stands, The Sound of Oasis project holds immense potential in terms of growth and specialization. Although much generous help has been put into its success, much help is still needed to sustain and propel it. The priority at present is a determination to increase the quantity and quality of concerts per year, which, in turn, will call for advanced technique instructions and, most crucially, the availability of a designated venue members of the project can dedicate solely for practice.

Project coordinators Alganesh Solomon and Rahel Asghedom continue to be involved with every aspect of the project and have done a commendable job organizing the group's lessons, workshops, private performances, annual concerts, and so much more.

The Sound of Oasis is devoted principally to the study and performance of classical music. However, as was evident in their last concert, whose program included classic Tigrinya oldies and a Saho song, the project is also interested in the interpretation and performance of local, traditional music through the complex instrumentation of concert music. Alganesh Solomon explains the significance behind this creative move, "There is no shortage of memorable, iconic Eritrean songs that have attained the status of classics, just as there are so many beautiful ethnic songs that are, unfortunately, confined to a local audience. We decided to showcase local works in our concerts as a way to contribute to the introduction of Eritrean music to a larger, global audience and also as a way to facilitate the process through which it can be understood and appreciated."

PHOTOS OF THE SOUND OF OASIS' 2023 CONCERT

Photograph by Eden Russom


















The Sound of Oasis
The Sound of Oasis
The Sound of Oasis





Dexter's Story

“Bridging Cultures Through Music”

“Eritrea?” “What is that?” “Where is that?” “Is that in Africa?” I am frequently asked these and similar questions when I inform people of my academic pursuits. I am a Black American who highly appreciates, performs, composes, and studies traditional music from the culturally elusive Horn of Africa.

Moreover, I am a non-Tigrinya-speaking musician in his late fifties, and I am doing graduate research on the music of the often misunderstood and misrepresented nation of Eritrea. My intention to bring this country (in particular) and the surrounding region (in general) into the larger discourse of African music remains intact. It is a complicated negotiation, but I have found my happy place and scholarly purpose within the soundscapes of the African Red Sea.

How does my Southern-bred, Baptist/Methodist church upbringing—primarily infused with soul, blues, funk, jazz, Afrobeat, and a healthy sprinkling of folk music and rock ‘n’ roll—find resonance in northeast Africa? I have my suspicions. The sounds initially washed over me during my undergraduate years at Cal in the Bay Area when a friend and I used to frequent a restaurant called the Blue Nile on Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley. I distinctly remember becoming enamored with the dimly lit atmosphere, the smell of berbere, the injera, a beautiful server named Mimi, and the pentatonic and nostalgic music playing throughout the space.

Fast forward to my tenure in the Los Angeles-based band Ethio Cali in the 2010s, where I would explore playing, arranging, and composing for the all-star horn section, which featured bandleader Todd Simon, Randal Fisher, and a young Kamasi Washington before his ascension into superstardom. I would begin to audition my musical interpretation of northeast Africa in this live performance context. It is no secret that Dr. Mulatu Astatke’s Ethio Jazz would become as important to me as the popular West African reverberations of Fela Kuti and the South African legacy of Hugh Masekea.

During several trips to Ethiopia, I learned about the many indigenous cultural expressions of the Amhara, Southern Oromo, Somali, Nubian, Tigray, Harari, Eastern Desert, and the Red Sea regions. I became enamored and transported by the kirar’s lilting sound, a stringed instrument ubiquitous to the entire area. My ears began to tune into the rich and complex sound of the bowed one-string wata/massenqo, the dry thump of the koboro drum, and the mezmur of the Orthodox Christian church. While visiting asmaribets, tejbets, and cultural centers, my life took a turn when I heard Tigrinya music for the first time and vowed to visit Asmara at the next opportunity.

Back home, it all began to click for me musically as I released original music on the Soundway label and completed my M.A. in African Studies on jazz from the Horn of Africa.

However, I was still curious about the small, enigmatic African country in the north. After some time, I was granted a tourist visa from the Eritrean embassy in Washington D.C., getting summer travel funding, and being accepted into the Ethnomusicology Ph.D. program at UCLA.

I picked a random week to visit Eritrea and bought my first Ethiopian Airlines plane ticket to Asmara while in Addis Ababa. With great serendipity and fortune, I landed during the 2019 Festival Eritrea. Of all the weeks of the year for a musician/researcher to travel to Asmara, the August week of the festival is by far the most opportune. As my driver drove on Hday Street from the airport, past Hospital Sembel and Asmara Palace Hotel, I saw crowds walking around and inside the Expo grounds. I asked my driver, who explained what was happening there in English as best he could. I was intrigued and knew I would find a way to return.

Imagine my surprise and delight at being able to attend one of Eritrea's most meaningful events. Since Eritrea's independence in 1991, Festival Eritrea has been an annual celebration of the country's diverse cultural mix, showcasing music, dancing, theater, food, regional agriculture, and traditions. I walked the entire way to the remote Expo grounds from my hotel in the center of town, paid for the Nakfa cover, and entered an unbelievable world. On display were exemplary cultural representations of Eritrea's nine recognized ethnic groups: Afar, B'dawit, Bilen, Kunama, Nara, Rashaida, Saho, Tigrinya and Tigré, and more. The experience changed my trajectory, prompting me to focus my dissertation research on the traditional music of Eritrea.

The great anthropologist and writer Zora Neale Hurston once said, "No matter how you go, the horizon is still way beyond you." I have been to Eritrea five times since that auspicious week in 2019, and my gratitude, excitement, and commitment have not waned. Each trip exposes new perspectives of the country and the indigenous cultures, and this special connection to ኣሕዋተይን ኣሓተይን (my brothers and sisters) has incredible far-reaching value. I realize that my work 1) functions as a cultural bridge; 2) provides insights into shared African heritages; 3) challenges misconceptions and notions of representation; 4) fosters inclusion and diversity; 5) contributes to new artistic expressions; 6) advocates for, preserves, and documents Eritrea heritage; and 7) offers me personal growth.

Lastly, my love for the music of the Horn of Africa, Africa, and the world has become more complete and meaningful since I have engaged with Eritrean music. As I write my Ethnomusicology dissertation with the support of indigenous colleagues, scholars, and friends such as Raymok Ketema, Benhur Ghezehey, Miriam Adhanom, Awet Okbey, and Stanford University's Issayas Tesfamariam, I am also surrendering to my unique positionality as a Black American to make a more considerable difference in my music-oriented scholarship. In the words of the late rapper/entrepreneur Ermias "Nipsey Hussle" Asghedom, "the marathon continues…"



Dexter playing different musical insturments.

