

SECTION F, GEOGRAPHY

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 1967

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It should be understood at the outset that Addis Ababa is not a typical city of Ethiopia. It is a mixture of the old and the new. It is one of the few cities of the country (along with Asmara) in which electricity is available 24 hr a day, in which a number of families have running water and inside plumbing, and where there is a basic pattern of paved streets. However, Addis Ababa does not have as completely a modern look as Asmara and perhaps a few other places. Many old and traditional features still exist and these are more typical of Ethiopia than the very new and modern.

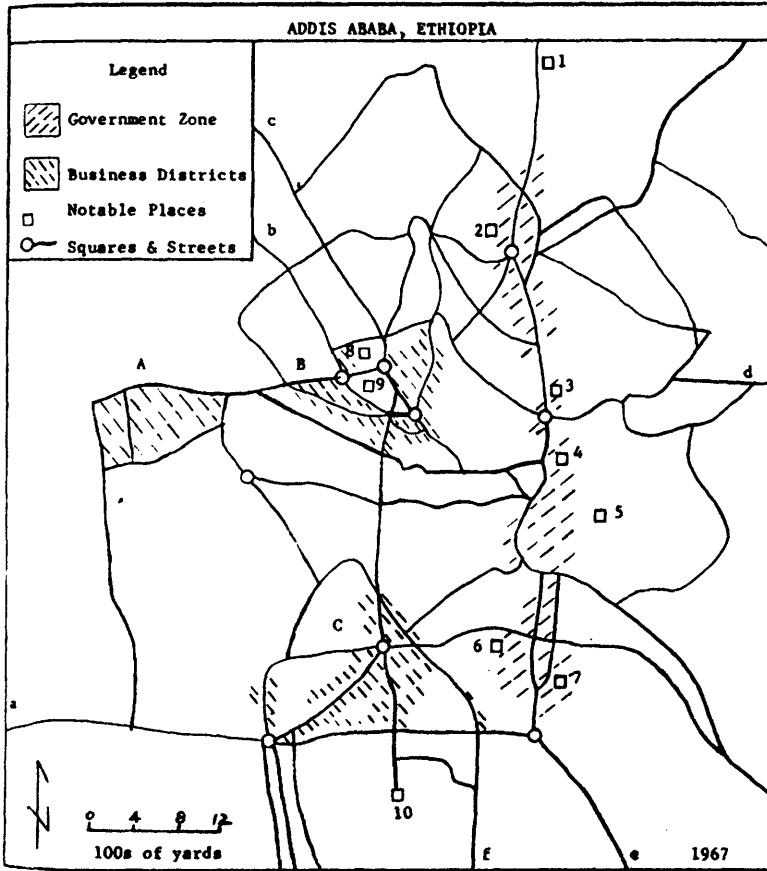
Addis Ababa has the general functional areas of American and European cities. These include central business districts, sub-business districts, business streets, scattered neighborhood stores, and various kinds of residential areas. And like most national capitals there is a government zone but, unlike most United States cities, open markets (baskets, pottery, etc.) are held in different parts of the city.

Addis Ababa (about 500,000 population) in 1967 is a mixture of traditional and modern and the theme of this paper is the contrast of the two. The northern higher part of the city is the older and the southern lower, leveler basin area is the newer. The border between them, irregular and transitional, is roughly south of the Mercato (Addis Ketema) and Menelik II Palace, and runs through the Piazza (Arada) business district (see map). Part of the new area juts north in the government zone to the east of the Piazza and includes a modern shopping area around Miazia 27 (Liberation) Square (commonly called Arat Kilo). The extreme northern edge of the city on Entoto Mountain ridge is where the city began and the original development still contains two old churches. Out from the base of Entoto, in the northern part of the city, are the older embassies including the American, British, German, and French (as well as some more recent ones in the old buildings) and also the old palaces, government buildings, army compounds, and a hierarchy of housing, with scattered good houses, some average and many poor ones around them. This hierarchy developed from the settlement of nobles in nice houses with their protectors, followers, workers, and hangers-on settling around them in poorer houses. The compounds (yards) of all palaces and schools, most churches and embassies, many public buildings, and the houses of the wealthy have rock walls or other enclosures around them. Zabanyas (guards) are hired to watch them (at least at night) and may receive as little as United States \$10.00 per month, for some their total earnings. The poorer people use cheaper enclosing material, often poles two inches in diameter set closely together and sometimes around several grouped houses. Some of the poorest houses are without fences.

This apparent jumbling of high class and poor housing is more a feature of the northern than the southern area. There is poor housing in the south as well as the north but there is more evidence of residential zones, sectors, and nuclei in the south than in the north. A nucleus of fairly recent and new, large modern embassies and houses is found around the old airport and associated Jimma Road, and a very new sector of the same is along the boulevard to the new airport.

There are three main business districts. The Arada (Galla, or Piazza in Italian) to the west of the Government Zone is the oldest and is a mixture of shops: some small (both poor and good), some average-sized

(mostly good one- and two-story buildings), and some grouped or isolated large three- to five-story (one 8) buildings. Prices are set with standard discounts. This is the main shopping area of the city for Europeans and some of the wealthier Ethiopians. Another business district, the Addis Ketema (or Mercato in Italian) to the west, has a large area of small shops with two new one-story buildings containing stalls and counters inside. On one side of the Mercato is the largest open trading area in the city. The greatest volume of retail business takes place in this area (Berlan, 1961), as most people trade here most or part of the time; even tourists shop in the souvenir section. Bargaining is the rule with prices starting roughly double the expected sale price. The newest business



The main network of smooth asphalt streets is shown. Business districts: A - Addis Ketema or Mercato, B - Arada or Piazza, C - Haile Selassie I Square. Notable places: 1. United States Embassy, 2, 3. Haile Selassie I University, 4. Parliament, 5. Menelik II Palace, 6. Jubilee Palace, 7. Africa Hall, 8. Saint George Church, 9. City Hall (new), 10. Railway Station. Roads leading to: a. Old Airport and Jimma, b. Ambo (west), c. Debre Marcos, d. Dessie, e. Bole International Airport, f. Debre Zeit and Rift Valley.

district is situated south of the Arada. It is associated with Haile Selassie I Square, which is west of Africa Hall and Jubilee Palace, and has the largest grouping of new, high buildings, the closest grouping of the nicest tourist hotels, and the main offices of most airlines. The commercial and national banks moved into a new building here in late 1966 and a new Central Post Office is being constructed this year.

Addis Ababa is sometimes called "the forest city" (Pankhurst, 1962). The eucalyptus tree, introduced by Menelik II, is the most common species. Many small plots of ground have been planted with this tree and it also is grown throughout the residential areas of the city. The older and poorer buildings in Addis Ababa are made with a frame of poles and sticks covered with mud called "chica" and often painted pastels. The better of these are well made, pleasing in appearance, and will last over 50 years. Most buildings are roofed with corrugated sheet iron. Even the highest new buildings while being constructed are surrounded by scaffolding of poles nailed, bolted and tied together.

Only a widely spaced system of asphalted main streets (more closely spaced in the business districts) ties the city together and cuts it into irregularly shaped areas. Dirt and cobblestone streets and paths run between the main arteries. By far the nicest street of the city runs north and south through the government section from near the foot of Entoto Mountain southward past the American Embassy, Old Palace grounds (now the main campus of Haile Selassie I University), Imperial Guard building, Crown Prince's residence, through Arat Kilo Square, by Parliament, the Gibi (that is Menelik II Palace Grounds), and between Africa Hall and the new Jubilee Palace of Haile Selassie I. The boulevard continues beyond Maskal Square to the new airport. This street is divided by a parkway between Africa Hall and Jubilee Palace, but has narrower dividers on the airport road and near Arat Kilo Square. Along this street are sidewalks which are also found along main streets in the business districts, but not along other asphalt streets or the rock and dirt streets. In driving along the streets without sidewalks one must dodge people, some carrying head loads and some of whom are farmers bringing cattle, sheep, goats, or loaded burros through the city to the Mercato. The congestion is particularly great after a rain when the pedestrians prefer to walk on the hard, narrow asphalt road rather than in the mud.

Automobiles vary from the Emperor's Rolls Royces and large American cars, and embassies' Mercedes Benz, Citroens, Opels, Rovers, Peugeotts, and American types to passenger models that are usually medium-sized and small European cars. Fiats and Volkswagens seem most numerous. A few large automobiles, used as taxis, have drivers catering to tourists at high fares around the tourist hotels. However, numerous small Fiat taxis can be hailed to take one most places for the equivalent of 10¢ American. A regular bus service covers all main streets and costs United States 6¢ one way, 10¢ round trip.

The better streets are generally kept quite clean although the narrow and poor streets may be very dirty and sometimes filthy. As my children said, the little streets all smell like public bathrooms, which they actually are. Sometimes people may be seen in the middle of the city, and even from a main street as at Ras Makonnen Bridge, taking a bath in the waters of a stream in the nude.

Besides the wealthy and/or educated Ethiopians and foreigners wearing western dress, people may be seen in a wide range of clothing including the barefoot shama-clad Ethiopian. Many of the poor men workers some barefoot, wear shorts and various kinds of shirts. Farmers coming into town may or may not be barefooted and commonly wear khaki or blue jodpurs with a loose-fitting shirt and a shama. Their wives wear long dresses and shamas and usually go barefooted. Among the city women the

wealthier and/or educated and the school and university girls wear western clothing and have in their wardrobes one or more western-length white Ethiopian dresses with colored borders. Other city women usually go barefooted and wear long dresses and shamas. The traditional men's wear of white jodpurs and a loose white shirt, plus shama, is worn in Addis Ababa only on holidays or other special days and then only by a relatively few. All shamas are white, the men's usually plain while the women's often have a narrow colored band near the ends.

Beggars are found at various spots throughout the city, some of sound body, while others are lame, blind, or with other infirmities. Many people in passing within a few blocks of a church bow toward it and some, in going by a church wall or upon entering a churchyard, kiss the wall or sidewalk. There are many shoeshine boys near the movie houses (cinemas), the public buildings, and the university. They work very hard at shining one's shoes for the equivalent of 4¢ American. Patches and repatches of various sizes and colors are very common on the clothing, especially the trousers of the poor boys and men.

Addis Ababa in 1967 is a fascinating city. Building of modern government and business buildings, many six to ten stories, is going on rapidly. It is hoped that the disease, dirt, and poverty can be eliminated but that much of the better architecture of different kinds and periods will be retained to keep the character of the city. Buildings that should be considered for preservation include among others the Old Municipality Complex, the French Embassy buildings, many of the churches, some of the houses of various styles, and possibly such buildings as the old Central Post Office and the Itegue and Ras Hotels.

LITERATURE CITED

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