

	<i>mek</i> (mäq) (A) deep pit		
HEA94	Mek (Mec) (village)	11/35	[+ Gu]
	<i>meka</i> (mäqa) (A) kind of reed, <i>Arundo donax</i> , can be used for cutting pens; <i>meka</i> (meeqa) (O) how much?		
	<i>maka</i> (maqaa) (O) name		
HCH71	Meka 06°59'/35°50' 2049 m, near Shewa Gimira	06/35	[Gz]
HEH99c	Meka (Meca) (abandoned)	12/36	[+ Gu]
HFD07	Mekabir Anbesa (Mek'abir A., Meqabir A.) 13°39'/38°12' 1202 m, west of Sekota in Simen	13/38	[Gz q]
HC...	Mekakalenyte Demeke, in Dalocha wereda The school was started in 1983/84, with grade 6 added in 1988/89. In 1993/94 there were 248 boys and 27 girls, with 4 male teachers. [12th Int. Conf. of Ethiopian Studies 1994 p 141]	07/38	[n]
HCE66	Mekale (Mecale), cf Mekele	05/39	[+ WO Gu]
HED97	Mekalyes, see Mekane Iyesus		
HEM02	Mekamechit (Mecamecit) (pass) 2040 m	11/39	[+ Gu]
	<i>mekan</i> (mäkan) (Geez,A) 1. place; 2. (also <i>mehan</i> ) (A) barren, sterile /woman or cattle/; <i>mekan</i> (mäqan) (A,T) lintel, door frame; <i>mekane</i> (T) place /for/, abode of; <i>mekan</i> (mäkan) (A), <i>mekwan</i> (mäkwan) (T) sterile; <i>Mekan, Shuro</i> , a small Nilotic tribe living along the Ethiopia-Sudan border, cf Me'en		
HEU13	Mekan (Mecan, Mecan, Makhan) see under Korbeta	12/39	[+ Gu WO 18]
HEU13	Mekan (pass) 2512 m The artist William Simpson from London was at Mekan on 7 May 1868 when accompanying Napier's headquarters on the way back from Mekdela.	12/39	
??	Mekane Akiset (Makana A.) (historical) In the district of Selesit which was perhaps in Agame? Sebagades (1818-1831) made a land charter to the convent of Mekane Akiset. The document suggests early foundation, either by Gebre Mesqel of the 500s or by Yishaq with the throne name of Gebre Mesqel (1412-1427). It was rebuilt by Dejazmach Gebre Mesqel in the 1700s or early 1800s. Twelve estates are named in the preserved document. [Huntingford, The land charters ..., A.A. etc 1965 p 71-72, 99]	../..	[x]
	<i>mekane birhan</i> (A,T) place of light		
HES37	<b>Mekane Birhan</b> (Mecane Berhan, Macanna?) (Deresge, Derasge, Derasghie) one: 12°59'/38°07' 2916 m; another: 13°01'/38°08' 2803 m also stated 2980/3035 m, near or same as Deresge Coordinates would give map code HES36. Centre in 1964 of Janamora wereda. Within a radius of 10 km there are at km 4SW Felayna Mikael (Felaina Micael) (village) 2296 m 10N Gina Kidane Mihret (Ghina Chid. Meret) (village) 3094 m 9NE Genemora Arisagh (village, or two: Genemora + Arisagh?) 3159 m "A month ago I would have laughed at my map for calling Derasghie a 'town', but now /17 January 1967/ it seems just that to me. Amidst the straggle of <i>tukuls</i> and oblong mud huts there are two Muslim traders' stalls, in which one can buy Chinese torches and batteries, Indian cotton, Polish soap, Czechoslovakian pocket-combs, kerosene and salt. There are also a primary school, a Governor's office, a Health Centre and a Police Post - all these institutions being housed in extremely primitive buildings." "-- within moments I was being marched off to the Governor's office. When we appeared	12/38 12/38	[Gz Ad LM] [MS WO Gu]

in his compound the Big Man was about to leave for Debarak, but he postponed his departure to cope with this disconcerting problem, for which convention provided no set answer. Immediately a twenty-year-old 'Dresser' from the Health Centre was summoned as interpreter; but unfortunately Asmare speaks minimal English and his Amharic pride led him to confuse various issues by pretending to understand much more than he did." "The Governor demanded my non-existent travel permit and when I produced my visa instead he scrutinized it suspiciously, complained that he could not read the signature and asked who had signed it. I replied 'The Ethiopian Consul in London', but had to admit to not knowing the Consul's name -- I decided that the moment had come for me to claim unblushingly that Leilt Aida was one of my closest friends - and at once the atmosphere changed completely and *talla* was brought forth."

"Inevitably, the Governor wanted to provide me with an escort, but I successfully argued that the walk to Debarak would be an Old Ladies' Outing compared with trekking in the High Semiens. Then, as both Jock and I are in need of rest, I asked if we might have lodgings for three nights - which will give me an opportunity to see the Timkat ceremonies -- and the Governor immediately told Asmare to show me to the 'guest-room' beside his office."

"This guest-room is more weather-proof than the average hut, as the inner walls have been well plastered with cow-dung. -- There is no furniture, the tin door won't shut and when I arrived the uneven mud floor was thinly covered with straw: but before his departure the Governor ordered a 'carpet' of freshly-cut blue-gum branches."

"Asmare guided me to Derasghie Mariam, the most important of the local churches. It is, of course, famous - by now I've realised that to the locals every highland parish church is famous - and Asmare proudly informed me that the Emperor Theodore was crowned within its sanctuary. Its murals are the finest I've yet seen -- I greatly appreciated what I could see of these gay or bloodthirsty saints. It is clear that at some period Derasghie produced - or attracted - artists whose imagination and sense of humour could not be repressed by ecclesiastical conventions."

"The clergy here are not very amiable. At the enclosure gatehouse, where a score of blind and maimed were patiently awaiting alms, three priests objected to my entering -- and they only relented on hearing Asmare mention the magic name of Leilt Aida. Then, when we were leaving, I gave the chief priest a dollar - but he looked at it with angry disdain and aggressively demanded five dollars. So I snatched the note off his open palm and gave it to the beggars instead."

"Here one gets a most exhilarating sense of space, for Derasghie is on a plateau so vast that mountains are visible only in the far distance to east and west - where their crests appear just above the edges of the plain."

18 January: "Perhaps because of my disagreement with the clergy at Derasghie Mariam, Asmare brought me this evening to a smaller church nearer the town. -- Soon after our arrival within the enclosure a procession left the church, preceded by a gun-man and led by an elderly priest -- bearing on his head the Tabot -- The procession was completed by two drummer *debtaras*, dressed in lay clothes -- down a steep slope it was followed by scores of chanting men, ululating women and silent children - who were more interested in the *faranj* than in the Tabot."

"After the Tabot had disappeared /inside a tent/ a strip of matting was laid on the ploughed earth for the local V.I.P.s and a *debtara* invited me to take a seat. Then a priest came from the tent, carrying a basket of hot, blessed *dabo*, and having given the first piece to the *faranj* he distributed the rest amongst the general public - who each reverently kissed their hunk before eating it."

The author also observed the festivities on the following day.

"At eleven o'clock a tiny boy in spotless white tunic left the tent ringing a large bronze bell and followed by the inevitable gun-man. Then appeared a handsome young priest, robed in black and scarlet silk and wearing a golden crown surmounted by a silver cross. He was followed by the Tabot itself -- The procession was completed by seventeen priests from other churches -- The laity's progress was less orderly. -- Half-way to the church the

procession halted beside a small tent, and the Tabot-laden priest disappeared to drink *talla*. -- During this pause the horsemen began to race seriously -- The midday sun was very hot as we started to climb the rock-strewn church hill, yet within the enclosure the tireless young men resumed their leapings and whoopings, which contrasted curiously with the formal, stately movements of the nearby dancing priests."

"Usually highlanders rise at dawn, but this morning /20 January/ I could find no one to load Jock until 8.30. A small boy accompanied us to the edge of the town and pointed out the track to Dabat --"

[Dervla Murphy, In Ethiopia with a mule, 1969 p 115-123 (1994 p 118-126)]

The Deresge primary school in 1968 had 125 boys and 45 girls, with 4 teachers.

pict F J Simoons, Northwest Ethiopia, USA 1960 p 12 Grazmach Gebre Maryam

HES69 Mekane Birhan (Macanna) (village) 3401 m 13/38 [LM WO x]  
pict F J Simoons, Northwest Ethiopia, USA 1960

fig. 1 mountains seen from Ras Dejen

HFE24 Mekane Birhan 13/38 [MS]

*mekane iyesus* (A) abode of Jesus

HED86 Mekane Iyesus (Mecan Jesus) 11°38'/38°04' 2616 m 11/38 [+ WO Gz]  
(M. Yesus, Mekalyes), south-east of Debre Tabor,  
WO has the place at map code HED97

HED97 Mekane Iyesus (M. Yesus, Mecan Jesus, M. Iesus) 11/38 [MS Ad Gu Gz]  
11°44'/38°11' 3314 m, see also Mokshi  
(centre in 1964 of Iste wereda & of Mehal Iste sub-district)  
Spelling of the post office was MEKANE YESUS around 1975.  
The primary school /in which Mekane Iyesus?/ in 1968 had  
217 boys and 81 girls, with 7 teachers.

*mekane selam* (A) place of peace

HDT74 **Mekane Selam** (M. Salam) Gz: 10°38'/38°47' 1829 m 10/38 [Gz LM Ad Po]  
(Denbi Mekane Selam), MS: 10°40'/38°40' = HDT72  
(centre (-1956-1980-) of Borena /& Sayint/ awraja, and  
in 2000 of Debre Sina wereda; with sub-post office under Dessie)

1950s Acting sub-province Governor of Borena awraja in 1959  
was Fitawrari Wende Haylu.

1960s The primary school in 1968 had 671 boys and 61 girls,  
with 8 male teachers and one female.

An elementary school building constructed of concrete elements and  
with Swedish assistance through ESBU was completed around 1970.  
[SIDA 1971]

1990s In 1997 there were domestic flights of the EAL between Mekane Selam and  
Addis Abeba and Dessie/Kombolcha.

Mekane Selam had an unpaved runway, length about 1500 m.

Around 1999: "Mekane Selam is 180 km by very bad road from Dessie. It does boast an  
airstrip, however, which hosts 3 flights weekly between Addis and Dessie (in the dry  
season only)."

"Mekane Selam is the back of beyond. It is literally the end of the road, and one of the  
most western points you can reach in Wollo by car. You expect to run into unusual things  
here. This is an ancient and historical area for the Amhara people. When I saw multi-sided  
pillars which looked Axumite integrated into the walls and driveways of the town I was  
interested and excite. These pillars are characteristic markings for old sites in Ethiopia -  
places like Mertule Maryam -- I asked excitedly about where the pillars had come from  
and I was told that there was a place by the river with hundreds of them."

"Although everyone had given me puzzled looks when I asked about 'Axum' pillars, I

assumed this was due to their profound ignorance and forgotten history. It did not deter my exploratory zeal. With pith helmet firmly in place, I led our small but valiant crew out to recruit a local guide and drive to the stop off point to go to the 'pillars'. Along the road we saw several more examples of the five sided rocks as part of walls or holding up teleohone poles."

"We hopped out of the car and descended a precipitous slope of farmers fields, more and more bits of pillars visible. We walked down for about 15 minutes to a river valley, turned a corner, and suddenly it was in front of us! My visions of an Axum pillar field evaporated. The pillars were a natural formation. -- The rocks (basaltic intrusions I think) were crystallized into tightly packed 5 sided pillars - some twenty feet high or more. Because they were broken off at various heights in some places they looked like steps. On the top, their smooth surface looked like tiles of a floor."

"The phenomenon stretched for about 100 feet on each side of the river. My Ethiopian friend said they looked like New York - a tightly packed skyline. Most of them stood straight up, but some jutted horizontally from the surface, while others stuck out of the ground like jagged teeth."

"The novelty of our 'discovery' was undermined by the information that the local Commercial Bank of Ethiopia had been built with the pillars. We trudged back up the slope in the gathering gloom. We had just been told that six local murderers had beaten up their guard and escaped, so we didn't want to stick around (why so many murderers in this little town?)."

"We did drop by the bank next day, and sure enough it was attractively constructed of small horizontal pieces of the pillars, with their characteristic 5 sided look. -- So my reputation as an archaeological nobody remains intact."

[John Graham in AddisTribune 2000/03/17]

HDU91c **Mekane Silase** (Makana Sellasie) 10/39 [+ x]

(historically recorded), near Were Ilu

The Portuguese journey, as described by Alvares, on 26 September 1520 passed "a very large church, which is named Maçam Celacem". The Portuguese were not allowed to enter its compound. There seems to be no description of it by any European writer although ruins are left.

[Beckingham & Huntingford, *The Prester John ...*, vol I 1961 p 254]

The name means Place of the Trinity. Francisco Alvares wrote:

"On 1 January 1521, we came and stopped at another large church -- Macham Celacem -- message from the Prester, to say that this church was new, and that as yet they had not said mass in it --"

Comment by Beckingham and Huntingford: Although the church of Mekane Silase was begun by Na'od, it was unfinished when he died in 1508, and the building was completed by his son Lebna Dengel, evidently only a short time before the Portuguese arrived.

This convent was in the district of Geshe and its present-day ruins are about 20 km north-northwest of Were Ilu. Almeida says that the kings of Ethiopia could be crowned only at Aksum or at Mekane Silase.

The place was burnt by Ahmed Grañ on 3 November 1531.

In 1881 Menilek II had some excavations made there to uncover the ruins. Some ecclesiastical objects were found and distributed among the churches in the region. There is no record of them.

Alvares: "This church is large and high, and the walls are of white hewn stone, they do not fix the upper woodwork upon the walls, because they could not support it -- It has its principle door lined with plates of metal -- The church has three aisles in the body of the church, raised on six supports. -- There were suspended all round the tower sixteen curtains that could be drawn -- /In the neighbourhood there was also a smaller church of the mother of the Prester, well built for its size./"

[Beckingham & Huntingford, *The Prester John ...*, vol II 1961 p 338-341, 582]

"A Muslim chronicler noted casually that the Church of the Holy Trinity - the *Makana*

*Selassie* - in the country of Biet Amhara, now known as Wollo, was 130 feet high and was covered with gleaming gold, and for this reason, being situated atop a high mountain, was visible for miles around. Granj supervised its destruction."

[C Jesman, *The Ethiopian paradox*, London 1963 p 45]

Abba Gorgoryos was born there, but little is known about his life in Ethiopia. He served for some time at the court of Susneyos (who reigned 1607-1632). As secretary of Alphonso Mendez he came to Europe where he was known as Abba Gregorius. He lived in Rome together with three other Ethiopian priests in "San Stefano dei Mori" near the Vatican. It was from him that Hiob Ludolf received most information when he wrote the first comprehensive European works about Ethiopia, of which *Historia Aethiopica* 1681 became most widely known.

[E Haberland in 3rd Int. Conf. of Ethiopian Studies 1969 p 133-135]

When Hiob Ludolf visited Santo Stefano dei Mori in Rome in 1649 he met Abba Gregory from Makan Sellasie in the Amhara province. Ludolf and Gregory could, with some initial difficulty, converse in classical Ethiopic. Gregory was invited to stay several months in Gotha in Germany during 1652 and informed Ludolf much on Geez and later also on Amharic. Gregory then intended to return to his own country but perished at sea when he took a ship across the Mediterranean. Plate II(a) shows a contemporary portrait of Abba Gregorios Aethiops.

[Ullendorff (1960)1973 p 9-10]

H....	Mekane Silase (M. Selassie) (centre in 1964 of Chissa sub-district)	10/39	[+ Ad]
H....	Mekane Tsiyon (centre in 1964 of Gemo sub-district)	10/37	[Ad]
HED97	Mekane Yesus, see Mekane Iyesus mekanisa: <i>mekenissa</i> (Gurage) <i>Croton macrostachys</i> , see <i>makanissa</i>		
GDF93	Mekanisa (Maconisa), cf <i>Makanissa</i>	08/34	[LM WO]
HDH78	Mekanisa 09°44'/36°26' 1950 m	09/36	[Gz]
	<i>mekar</i> (T) artful		
HES44 text	Mekara (Mecara, Mekkara) (area) Debebe Work, Land tenure system in Mekkara, <i>in Economic Journal</i> (Addis Abeba) vol 1, 1966	13/37	[+ WO x]
HEM92	Mekare (Mecare, Mecarre, Mancare, Adi Mancarre) (large village) 12°33'/39°39' 1469 m, see under Korem Coordinates would give map code HEM83	12/39	[LM Gu Gz WO]
HEC68	Mekari (Makar, Mucara, Macuar) (mountain) 11°25'/37°22' 2154 m	11/37	[Gz]
HDM.?	Mekbebiya (with church Maryam) in Bulga/Kasim wereda	09/39?	[x]
HCK89	Mekbesa (Mek'besa, Meqbesa) 07°06'/38°22' 1793 m west of lake Awasa	07/38	[Gz q]
HED68	Mekdela (Mek'dela, Meqdela, Makdala, Magdala) (Mäqdäla) 11°33'/38°17' 2097 m Coordinates would give map code HED78	11/38	[Gz q WO Wa]
HEE69	<b>Mekdela</b> (Maqdala, Magdala, Mukdala) (Meqdela, Makdela) (historical place) (plateau) 11°26'/39°19' (11°33'/38°18') 2520/2777 m MS coordinates would give map code HEE59. Centre in 1964 of Zobil sub-district. Within 10 km west of Mekdela plateau there are Metcha Meda, Esla (mountain) and Aragye which was the site of a British camp in 1868.	11/39 11/39	[MS x 18 Wa] [Ad WO Br]

- geol In central Ethiopia the Trap Series reaches its maximum development.  
At Mekdela the succession is:
6. Compact basalt
  5. White argillaceous sediment
  4. Basalt and basaltic tuff
  3. Coarse brown sandstone (15-18m) with black shale and silicified tree-trunks
  2. Porphyritic trachyte
  1. Basalt (base not seen)
- At Mekdela fossils of the freshwater gastropod *Nicolia aegyptica* have been found.  
[Mohr, Geology 1961 p 127]  
The scientist W.T. Blanford accompanied the British expedition in 1868 and studied geology and zoology.  
"All the hills around Magdala appear to be of horizontal traps, chiefly basalt, although trachyte also occurs, and the plateau of the fortress itself consists of the latter rock -- Interstratifications of white shale, much hardened as if by lava-flows, were met with in two or three places -- but no organic remains could be detected in them."  
"The camp before Magdala was certainly the most unpleasant abode in which I found myself in Abyssinia. The whole force was crowded into the smallest possible space, in small thin tents -- the only food was inferior flour and tough beef, and it was difficult to obtain sufficient water to drink."  
[W T Blanford, London 1870 p 90-91]  
Blanford left the camp before Mekdela on 16 April for his return journey.  
"The released prisoners from Magdala were on their march towards the coast, and I met several of them, amongst them Dr. Schimper, the veteran naturalist, who has passed forty years in exploring the botany, zoology, and geology of the country -- has retained the geological ideas of a past generation -- has indirectly contributed more perhaps than any other living European in making the fauna and flora of the Ethiopian highlands known to the scientific world of Europe."  
[Blanford p 93-94]
- 1830s There was a village and a church at the top of the amba, which /later/ became used as a fortress and a prison.
- 1850s Wube Haile Maryam was among those defeated by Kassa (the future Tewodros II) in the battle of Ayshal in June 1853. He eventually made peace with Kassa but was again defeated by him at Deresge in February 1855 and then imprisoned at Mekdela. Wube was released from chains in February 1860 when Tewodros married his daughter Tirunesh, but he continued to be kept in prison and died there in 1867.  
[P B Henze, Layers of time, London 2000 p 124]  
Tewodros fought a battle at Mekdela during a campaign in Wello in November 1856.  
[Zänäb 1902]
- 1863 Abuna Selama was kept by Emperor Tewodros at Mekdela from 1863 until 1867 when the abuna died. Massaia states that he was poisoned.  
[G Massaja, Mes trente-cinq années ..., Paris, vol I (orig. Italian ed. 1885) p 107]
- 1864 Eight European prisoners were in November 1864 taken to Mekdela, including consul Cameron who had been in chains since the beginning of January.
- 1865 At Mekdela the first well-documented arsenal in Ethiopian history was established, with 15 cannon, 7 mortars, 11,063 rifles of different types, 875 pistols and 481 bayonets, as well as ammunition including 555 cannon-shells and mortar-shells and 83,563 bullets.  
[Bahru Zewde 1991 p 34]  
By 1865 Menilek had been a prisoner for ten years on Mekdela. Even he had been a pupil of the missionary Theophilus Waldmeier.  
The Shewans engineered the escape of Menilek on 30 June or 1 July 1865, with the planning done by Germame Welde Hawaryat. Horses had been bought in advance. About twenty Shewans, including Menilek and his mother, after a feast which made many

drunken, and after midnight left through gates which had been left unguarded with the connivance of Tewodros's son Meshesha. Menilek's wife Altash, a daughter of Tewodros, was left behind. By dawn the fugitives reached a camp in Wello some kilometres to the south.

Tewodros took a terrible revenge on 25 Wello hostages. Their hands and feet were cut off and the bodies thrown over the precipice to die in agony.

[C Prouty, Empress Taytu ..., 1986 p 6-7]

Those who escaped went in direction of Wello and may have had contacts with its Queen Worqitu in advance. Tewodros soon learnt about the escape and that Worqitu's troops had met the fugitives. Worqitu's son, an *imam*, was prisoner on Mekdela. As a revenge, Tewodros ordered the *imam* and others, altogether 29 Oromo dignitaries, to be executed, and thereafter also 12 Amhara notables. This bloodletting caused rebellion in certain regions.

[Marcus, Menelik II, (1975)1995 p 24-25]

(Marcus 1994 p 70 says "twenty-nine Welo dignitaries massacred and a dozen Amhara notables beaten to death with bamboo rods.")

Tewodros's seizure of the stronghold of Mekdela on 12 September 1865 terminated his Wello campaign - for the time being.

Later Tewodros entrusted Mekdela to one of his most loyal followers, Grazmach Alame.

[Bahru Zewde 1991 p 30-31]

1866 In mid-1866 Hormuzd Rassam and his companions as well as the earlier Mekdela prisoners, except Mackerer and McKilvie, were arrested and sent off to the mountain prison.

1867 The British government made the final decision in mid-August 1867 to mount a military expedition to release the captives at Mekdela. The command was entrusted to Sir Robert Napier.

[S Rubenson, The survival of Ethiopian independence, 1976]

Together with Queen Worqitu of Wello the ambitious Menilek launched an expedition which approached Mekdela on 30 November 1867. His army was estimated at 30,000 men. However, he retired on 2 December without giving battle, judging the risk to be too great. A little later Wagshum Gobaze also appeared about 50 km from Mekdela without achieving anything in his attempt.

[Marcus, Menelik II]

1868 Tewodros with his forces arrived to the plateau in March 1868 after a difficult journey from Debre Tabor.

The **battle of Mekdela** with the British expedition is here regarded as national history and, especially concerning its background, will be told only briefly in this local history. However, the bibliography (below under "Texts") is fairly comprehensive. An unusual number of books about the events and about Ethiopia in general were published within a short period in European countries.

Menilek in practice provided none of the promised aid to the British. Dejazmach Kasa of Tigray (the future Yohannes IV) on the other hand had three meetings with Major Grant in February 1868 and then formally communicated to Napier that he would co-operate in obtaining supplies for the expeditionary army by establishing markets near its main camp sites.

[Marcus, Menelik II, p 28-30]

"On 10 April 1868 /Tewodros's/ army of about 4,000 descended to attack the British advance force of about 2,000 on the plain below Meqdela. The Ethiopians were slaughtered by effective rifle fire and bayonets in hand-to-hand combat. When dusk fell -- 700 dead bodies were counted and the wounded were estimated at more than 1,000. The Anglo-Indian forces had 20 wounded of whom two died later /but several hundreds died of diseases during Napier's campaign/."

"The fortress was stormed on Easter Monday, 13 April. As the soldiers poured on to the mountain plateau, they did not immediately notice the body of the emperor lying on the ground. He had led the resistance at the gate, and then, rather than be captured, had taken

the pistol sent to him by Queen Victoria -- and shot himself in the mouth."

[C Prouty, *Empress Taytu* .., 1986 p 10-11]

Short examples from Aleqa Welde Maryam's chronicle of the battle:

"The English troops marched towards Salamghe and occupied the whole plain -- The famous mortar of which we have spoken and which had been taken to the market place, lay there. The English looked at it without much interest."

When the mortar was completed, Tewodros said to Waldmeier and his workers: 'Fire the mortar, let me hear its voice and judge its range!' The workers had fear of doing this and made all sorts of excuses, and the mortar was never fired.

"A terrible battle soon began. -- The noise of cannon blending with the crackle of gunfire sounded like the rumbling of thunder during the season of the rains. -- There were three different types of shell."

"After they had rushed up through the gate the English entered the town; Tewodros then went up to the higher gateway and sat down near it. The enemy was searching for him. -- But when Tewodros saw them he decided it was better to die than to fall prisoner into their hands and, condemning himself as if he had been a rebel, he blew out his brain with a pistol."

[R Pankhurst, *The Ethiopian royal chronicles*, Oxford Univ. Press 1967 p 156-157]

The British strike force of 5,000 men of the Napier expedition proceeded inland from the Red Sea coast. The only battle of the campaign was fought on 10 April on the Erogi plain at the foot of Mekdela. The British attack on Mekdela itself began on 13 April. The emperor released his army, many of whom were killed by the neighbouring Wello Oromo. After Tewodros himself had committed suicide, he was buried in the church at Mekdela on 14 April. The British evacuated the area on 17-18 April. Menelik had sent a Shewan mission with provisions for Napier's army, but they arrived too late when the British were already on their way back to the coast.

[Marcus, *Menelik II*, p 31-32]

"/15 April:/ Gobazze has refused to take Magdala, and we are to burn it up tomorrow. -- We are collecting the loot, and I am much bothered with it. All is to be brought to Dalanta and we are to have a sale there. -- The neighbourhood is covered with dead men who have been dug up by the Gallas, and dead cattle, and the refuse of the Magdala people, who are now gone over Bashilo. We are much hampered by the crowds of poor devils turned out from Magdala."

"Magdala burnt today /17 April/. Marett has been busy bursting all the guns, but he has not been able to manage the big mortar. We are burning large quantities of corn -- which we cannot carry away -- The prisoners are not gone yet."

[from diary of Colonel Milway]

Richard Holmes (1835-1911) was appointed by the British Museum to accompany the British expedition. His task was to obtain Ethiopian objects for the museum. Three of his letters have been published by Richard Pankhurst, from which here a few extracts:

"/16 April/ -- into the fortress I entered its gate with the Commander in Chief /Robert Napier/. I knew I must be in at once or many things might disappear -- I had not half an hour before I obtained from a soldier -- a chalice of gold /with an inscription from circa 1560/. I also obtained the curious gilded or gold triple crown of the Abuna /Note: This crown was returned to Ethiopia in 1925./. -- Sir Robert Napier has given orders that I am to have the first selection from the articles which have been taken, and which are all under guard. -- Of the MSS which will all be brought down I will send a full list --"

Holmes sent his second letter on 22 April from Camp Dalanta Plain, where the loot seized had just been auctioned for fair distribution of money among the men. Most of the manuscripts, however, had been retained for shipment to the British Museum, and no list of them could be compiled before their departure. Holmes had made some sketches, one of them a portrait of the head of the dead emperor. He made purchases for the museum at the auction, accompanied by a detailed list.

[Pankhurst *in* *AddisTribune* 2001/04/06]

"From a scientific point of view, the expedition had results of major importance. Apart



from a large number of miscellaneous writings -- official reports, &c., there were invaluable scientific observations and collections of manuscripts. T.J. Holland and H.M. Hozier produced the three volumes of the official *Record of the Expedition to Abyssinia*, while the geographer C.R. Markham and the geologist W.T. Blanford placed the results of their detailed surveys before the world of scholarship. The haul of nearly 400 manuscripts from the library of the Church of Madhane Alam -- was not only the greatest accession to Ethiopic manuscript literature ever made, but placed the study of Ethiopic literary history on an entirely new basis. Apart from this official collection a large number of MSS., probably no fewer than 150-200, were brought together by individual members of the expeditionary forces. Most of these found their way into university libraries -- The British Museum /with catalogue published in 1877/ received 373 manuscripts of great value -- The campaign undertaken to release a few captives had thus far-reaching and quite unexpected results."

[E Ullendorff, *The Ethiopians*, (1960 p 19)1973 p 18]

- 1871 Menilek and Mohammed Ali fought against Abba Wataw in late 1871, but they could not dislodge him out of Mekdela fortress.
- 1875 By 1874-1875 Yohannes had imposed his authority over the northern heartland. Menilek had decided to quell the revolt of Abba Wato /or Wataw/ of Wollo, who turned to Yohannes for help. However, when Yohannes received word that the Egyptians were advancing from Massawa, he left Abba Wato to fend for himself. Menilek recaptured Mekdela, imprisoned Abba Wato, and appointed Mahammad Ali as governor of Wollo. [Marcus p 39-40 + Bahru Zewde 1991 p 45 + Pankhurst 1998 p 177]
- 1912 In November 1911, Ras Abate appeared to want to attack the Amhara establishment. He was ordered to come to Addis Abeba. With much power arrayed against him and the show of support for Lij Iyasu from the nobles, Abate had little choice but to capitulate. He arrived in the capital on 29 December. On 2 January 1912, he was escorted by Ras Mikael to be imprisoned on Amba Magdala (Mekdela). [Marcus, *Menelik II*, p 257]  
In December 1911 Ras Mikael of Wello seized Ras Abate Bwayalew in Addis Abeba and had him imprisoned in Mekdela, where he stayed until the battle of Segele (Sagale) in 1916. [Bahru Zewde 1991 p 121]
- 1930s On 20 April 1936 when Emperor Haile Selassie and his followers passed near the historical mountain, they were attacked by local warriors and some servants of the Emperor were killed near their master. Hundreds of houses were said to be burning on the mountain itself.  
"Crossing a Blue Nile tributary the column pushed on to Amba Magdela, last citadel of Tewodros, harassed as was his fleeing army in 1869, by the local Galla. Tired of being sniped at, Hailé Selassié sent the remnant of the Imperial Guard up Tewodros's Magdela citadel and once again its houses were fired."  
[R Greenfield, *Ethiopia*, London 1965 p 219]
- 1990s Tewodros's canon Sevastopol is still there and estimated to weigh 7 tons. There is the Mekdela Maryam church /see below/ and a rock church Fula-Amba Giyorgis. A third church Selamge Selassie is said to be very old. [Äthiopien 1999 p 311]  
The mortar 'Sevastopol' lying at Mekdela has lately been reproduced as a monument in the national capital (this reproduction made complete with the carriage also), placed at the roundabout named Tewodros Square in central Addis Abeba. Doctor Pankhurst and Professor Rubenson advised strongly against bringing the original piece and thought that it should continue to rest in peace where it is.
- 2000s "Fortunately I didn't know how gruelling it was to get to the Makdella fortress, so I went. It involved a 36 kilometer walk with intermittent riding on a mule -- down into a huge gorge and back up onto a high plateau. -- Although there isn't much left of the fortress, the fabulous cannon which Tewodros forced the missionaries to make for him still lies abandoned in a field at the top."

"The start-off point for the Makdella plateau is Tenta town, you can find a guide there. I mistakenly though the Makdella plateau was in neighbouring Makdella woreda, don't make the same understandable mistake."

[John Graham in AddisTribune 2000/03/10]

In England there is an Association for the Return of Maqdala Loot, AFROMET, which has petitioned the Queen, the House of Commons and others about returning objects to Ethiopia. The House of Commons Select Committee on Cultural Objects released an official report on 16 December 2003, and its section on 'sacred objects' seems to implicitly support AFROMET:

"One example of a claim involving indisputably sacred objects concerns the 'Magdala treasures'. -- The objects sought most ardently by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church are, perhaps, the Tabots which focus the presence of God in every Ethiopian church and are held in the greatest reverence as symbolic of the Ark in the Jewish Temple. The British Museum does not display the Tabots within its collection, paradoxically, in deference to the practice of the Ethiopian Church. -- We hope that the British Museum's legal consultations have this case in mind --"

The museum also holds many other objects, including two silver royal drums and colourful royal tents - and part of Tewodros's hair and clothing.

[AddisTribune 2004/01/30]

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picts Illustrated London News 1868 (drawings at the storming on 13 April)  
 30 May, Tewodros as he lay dead,  
 6 June, storming of mountain (+ priests and villager of Wadela),  
 13 June, destruction of Mekdela by fire;  
 R Acton 1868 p 58, 63 reproduced in *Ethiopia engraved* 1988  
 p 83 steep side of fortress, p 84 plateau on fire;  
 H Rassam 1869 vol II p 304 dragging huge mortar Sebastopol,  
 reproduced in *Ethiopia engraved* p 79;  
 A A Isaacs 1886 p 292 settlement with Silase hill in distance,  
 reproduced in *Ethiopia engraved* p 82;  
 H A Stern 1868 p 337 thatched church where Tewodros was buried,  
 reproduced in *Ethiopia engraved* p 84;  
 G Bianchi 1896 p 181 the rock;  
 F Wencker-Wildberg, Abessinien, Berlin 1935, plate 30 overall view;  
 H de Monfreid, Ménélik ..., Paris 1954 p 121 the place in flames,  
 from a sketch by Major Bagries;  
 Ethiopia Observer vol VIII 1964 no 3 p 269-270 the large mortar  
 and a smaller cannon as lying on the ground in later years, and  
 a measured drawing of the large mortar;  
 S Rubenson, King of Kings Tewodros ..., Addis Abeba 1966  
 p 72-73 photos of the mountain from south-west and from north,  
 and the mortar in the 1860s and 1960s, p 88 drawing  
 (from Rassam) and photo of the mountain;  
 S Rubenson, The survival ..., A.A. 1976 p 84-85 [fig 10, 13]  
 photos of the mountain same as above;  
 Bahru Zewde, A history of modern ..., London etc 1991 p 29  
 mortar being dragged up the slopes, p 39 foreigners as prisoners;  
 R Pankhurst, A social history ..., The Red Sea Press 1992  
 p 332 Mekdela on fire, from Acton 1868.

JFA54	Mekdela (Maglalla)	14/40	[LM WO]
HEE58	Mekdela Maryam (Mek'dela M.) (church) 11°21'/39°11', south-west of Mekdela plateau The church is said to have been founded under Emperor Yishak (1414-1442).	11/39	[Gz]
HEE69	Mekdela sub-district (Meqdela ..) (centre in 1964 = Mekdela)	11/39	[+ Ad]
HE...	Mekdela sub-district (Meqdela ..) (-1964-1997-) (centre in 1964 = Tekulesh)	12/39?	[+ Ad n]
HEE69	Mekdela wereda (Meqdela ..) (centre in 1964 = Amba Maryam)	11/39	[+ Ad]
HEU50	Mekdelawit Maryam (Mek'delawit M.) (church) 13°09'/39°25', east of Samre	13/39	[Gz]
HDD22	Mekechita (Mek'ech'ita, Meqechita) 10°12'/38°36' 2456 m, west of Addis Derra	10/38	[Gz q]
??	Mekeda wereda (-1998-)	../..	[n]
	<i>Mekele</i> (Mäqälä): Baeteman's Amharic dictionary gives it as a name but does not explain it as a word		
HEU91	<b>Mekele</b> (Mekelle, Macalle, Maqualle, Makale) (Mek'ele, Meqele, Makalle) MS: 13°30'/39°30' 2062/2135 m Gz: 13°30'/39°28' 2084 m Centre (-1967-1980-) of Inderta awraja. With churches Iyesus, Maryam, Silase, Tekle Haymanot. Within a radius of 10 km there are at km	13/39	[MS Yo Gu x]

- 5SE Enda Iyesus (E. Iesus, E. Jesus) with hill c2150 m
- 10SE (Shefta, see under Kwiha)
- 7S Debri (waterfalls)
- 7W Nogwade (Adi Noguade, Negaida) (village)
- 10NE (Arena, see under Kwiha)
- ?? Adi Gera (village)
- ?? Aguddi
- ?? Gobo Zena (Gobozena) (village)
- ?? Grarot (village)
- ?? Rabea (village)
- ?? Issala (village)
- ?? Bahri (village)
- ?? Romanet (village)
- meteo Mean monthly rainfall in 1954-1957 was 251 mm in July, 228 in August, around 60 in March and June, and almost nothing in January, February, October, November, December.
- 1880s The town is known from the time of Yohannes IV (1872-1889) who moved to Mekele after first having had his residence for some time in Debre Tabor. The palace of Emperor Yohannes, at the northern edge of the present-day town, was completed in 1884. It was built by Giacomo Naretti, who had served Yohannes already at Debre Tabor, and he was assisted by William Schimper, a son of the botanist Baron Schimper. (Giacomo Naretti received the order to build the castle in 1880 or 1881. He died in Mekele in 1890). The style of the palace can be regarded as a crossing of Gondarine and Neo-Gothic. There is a large banquet hall and a two-storey annex with the throne room upstairs. The stair is very steep. Harrison Smith reported in 1886 that the Emperor did not like it. (In the 1990s the palace is a regional museum.) [Äthiopien 1999]
- 1888 The increasingly beset Emperor Yohannes experienced a further blow of fate in June 1888 when his son and heir, Ras Araya Selassie, who had been gathering a large army for Begemder, died of smallpox in Mekele. [P B Henze, Layers of time, London 2000, p 159] On 7 July 1888 Emperor Yohannes left Mekele, heading under heavy rains for Gojjam to fight Negus Tekle Haymanot.
- 1889 In July 1889 the rases Mengesha and Alula left for Mekele, while Dabbab Araya entered Abiy Adi. It was probably between 17 and 19 July 1889 that Dabbab entered Mekele. [Ehrlich 1996] /Italian source:/ "Three days they were making a feast. Debeb was dressed in the clothes of the Negus and as Mangascia had promised him, he himself declared Debeb as the king of Ethiopia. After 3 days Mangascia invited him to his palace in Makale where Alula was waiting to arrest him." Dabbab reportedly entered the palace, was immediately detained by Alula's soldiers, put in chains and sent to Amba Salama. Six days after Dabbab's arrest, Ras Alula left Mengesha and headed for Adwa. In early September 1889 Mengesha left Mekele for Adwa after calling on Alula to join him there. Alula ignored his orders, being annoyed with Mengesha's duplicity and suspicious that Mengesha might betray him. In late October Dejazmach Seyum Gebre Kidan entered Mekele and immediately led his 1,500 well equipped troops towards Adwa where there was a fight between Seyum and Mengesha on 2 and 3 November. [Ehrlich 1996 p 130, 145, 148]
- 1890s According to Wylde the Mekele market, held on Mondays, was regarded as large in the 1890s. It was the largest market for salt in all Ethiopia.
- 1890 Menilek seemed to be cooperating with the Italians at the time he was crowned Emperor of Ethiopia on 3 November 1889. On 17 December, upon hearing of Seyum's failure, he left Addis Abeba and entered Mekele on 23 February 1890. [Ehrlich]

"Menilek presided over the submission of the Tigray leaders, except for Mengesha Yohannes, who made an appointment to submit 20 days hence. In Meqelle, Menilek was joined by his dear friend and cousin, Mekonnen, and the rest of the delegation returning from their six-month visit to Italy and Jerusalem. Menilek's anger at the Italian occupation of Adwa was assuaged by Mekonnen's news that 10,000 new Wetterly rifles and several million cartridges were on their way."

[C Prouty, Empress Taytu ..., 1986 p 70]

Dejazmach Sebhat of Agame, who had also come to Mekele as the Italian candidate for the Tigrean government, was rejected by Menilek who nominated Seyum over him. Sebhat, however, was quick to leave Mekele and head back to Agame to defend it from Seyum. The latter was left with no choice but to accompany Menilek back to Shewa, when he left Mekele on 19 March 1890.

[Ehrlich 1996 p 151-153]

- 1891 In February or March 1891, Mengesha left his camp at Atsbi and returned to Mekele, probably heading for Shewa. Ras Alula, after forcing Dejazmach Meshesha Werqe from the local political scene in the north, collected a substantial force and in March 1891 dared to enter Mekele and face Ras Mengesha. It was quickly learnt that Mengesha insisted on his marching to Addis Abeba. In late March Alula left Mekele, heading for Temben, a step which was justifiably regarded as an obvious act of rebellion. In early April 1891 Meshesha Werqe arrived at Mekele, only to find Mengesha extremely reluctant to take the projected trip to the Shewan court. The probable immediate reason was a mutiny in the fortress on Amba Salama.

[Ehrlich p 162-165]

The journalist Luigi Mercatelli was at the court of Ras Mengesha in 1891 and wrote about him. He later reported also about the war of 1895-1896.

- 1892 Around mid-May 1892 all the Tigrean chiefs assembled again in Mengesha's palace in Mekele, where they jointly reaffirmed their request to General Baratieri in Eritrea for cartridges and grain. When Baratieri made a polite reply to a letter from Mengesha of 20 May 1892 the request for grain was not even mentioned.

Both Alula and Sebhat, acting upon Mengesha's invitation for *Mesqel* in September 1892, arrived in Mekele and expressed their loyalty to their master. On 22 September, De Martino was instructed by Baratieri to hasten to Mekele to ensure that Ras Alula would not cause Mengesha to deviate from his resolve to submit to Emperor Menilek. When De Martino arrived at Mekele, the pro-Shewan decision had already been announced by Mengesha.

Mengesha, Alula and Hagos had marched from Mekele to Adwa. Mengesha returned to Mekele to meet his envoy Tesfaye returning from Menilek. Ras Alula informed Ras Sebhat that he intended an open rebellion against Mengesha. When Alula received an invitation from Mengesha to come to Mekele, he responded by beating the *negarit* /drum/ to assemble an army.

[Ehrlich p 173, 179-180]

- 1895 (Concerning Italians surrounded in a fort, see below under *Mekele : Inda Iyesus.*)

- 1896 (See continuation below about free passage of the Italians away from the fort.)

When in early 1896 Menilek reorganised the government of Tigray after the battle of Adwa, Dejazmach Tedla Abbaguben was made governor over Endarta (Inderta), with headquarters in Mekele, so as to be able to report on the attitudes in Ras Mengesha's castle there.

[Ehrlich 1996 p 194]

- 1900s Some provincial governors with their seat in Mekele were

Ras Mengesha (d 1906)

Ras Seyoum (d 1960)

1930s Tembien and Agame only, all Tigray 1941-43, 1947-60

Ras Mengesha Seyoum

all Tigray 1961-74

- 1904 The Italian telegraph line Asmara-Addis Abeba which was constructed in 1902-1904 had

an office in Mekele.

1910 Dejazmach Seyum in 1910 was assigned Mekele, which was Dejazmach Abraha's former post.

1914 In late February 1914, Dejazmach Seyum encamped near Mekele and continued to mobilize troops.

[Marcus, Menelik II, (1975)1995 p 263]

In 1914 the Swedish EFS mission had decided to open a station in Mekele and place four missionaries there, but because of the outbreak of World War I nothing came out of this plan.

The missionary Karl Nyström made a second journey to Mekele /in 1915?/. This time he brought with him from Eritrea his wife Agnes and their son Harald. They started mission work. The Italians did not permit any reinforcement travelling to them through Eritrea, and they even tried to call the Nyström family back to Eritrea. Nyströms had left three of their children behind, and the Dejazmach sent a message to the Italian Governor with a veiled threat that if the Swedish children were not released, the Dejazmach would come and fetch them himself. Anna-Lena Jönsson escorted them to the border.

Soon afterwards the male Swedish missionaries in Eritrea were expelled. On 3 January 1916 also the four female missionaries had to leave Debaroa, but three of them remained in Asmara throughout World War II.

Dejazmach Seyum did not keep his promise to build a hospital and school in Mekele, so the Nyströms moved to Adwa instead.

[. Bibeltrogn Vänners historia .., 1961 p 84-86, 97]

1930s Spelling used by the post was MEKELE (-1931-1963-).

Just before the war there was an Italian physician Dr Leco and an Italian telegraphist. The few foreign traders were all Greeks. Important among them was Clentis Parissis. The post office had weekly communication with Addis Abeba.

1935 Just at the beginning of the war, Friedrich Wencker-Wildberg published a book about nature and towns in Ethiopia. Concerning Mekele he wrote that it had about 5,000 inhabitants and that Haile Selassie Gugsu had repaired the old palace to serve as his seat. He had some European education and had studied at Geneva. After the occupation he was the first to hoist the Italian flag, and his guard of about 1,500 was put at De Bono's disposal.

[Wencker-Wildberg, Berlin 1935 p 134-139]

On 8 October 1935 General Santini reported that Haile Selassie Gugsu had asked for Italian assistance to attack Dejazmach Hailu Kebede who was at Mekele with about 7,000 men.

[Emilio De Bono 1937 p 177]

On 3 November Pirzio-Biroli's Eritreans and Santini's First Corps advanced to meet a few miles north of Mekele. On the 8th the Italians were in sight of the town. Haile Selassie Gugsu's men raised the cry 'Makalle, Makalle'. There was no resistance. It seems that Dejaz Haile Kebede had sacked the town - the *gibbi* constructed for Emperor Yohannes was in ruins - and then the army of Wag had fallen back into the interior. Santini and Haile Selassie Gugsu entered the town together.

[Mockler 1984 p 65]

At 9 o'clock in the morning of 8 November Mekele was occupied and the Italian flag was hoisted over the ruins of the fort Enda Iyesus. The Eritrean Corps proceeded southwards, and the *presidio* of the built-up part of Mekele was handed over to Haile Selassie Gugsu. Marshal De Bono was angered when a couple of old followers of Haile Selassie Gugsu tried to offer him advice.

The old *gibbi* of Yohannes IV was internally in ruins, so De Bono chose for his headquarters the former Italian telegraph office, as it was the best constructed building in the town.

"Makallè è una poverissima cosa, come lo sono tutte le località del Tigrai."

[De Bono p 203, 212]

"The advance on Macallè was effected between the 3rd and the 8th November, by the Ist

Corps from Adigrat and the Eritrean Corps from Enticciò. This advance was facilitated by the distance of the enemy, who were still concentrating to the south of Dessiè."

"/In December 1935/ I hastened to the utmost the work already in progress, of organizing the aerodrome at Sciafat, near Macallè, sending there a whole regiment from the IIIrd Corps."

"Our situation during this period /around December/ may be thus summed up: In the Macallè sector, 62 battalions and 350 guns constituted a powerful force ready to oppose any attack -- and prepared also, within a very short time -- to take the offensive."

[Badoglio (Eng. ed.) 1937 p 14, 30, 39]

1936

The Third Ambulance of the Ethiopian Red Cross, under Dr. Schuppler from Austria, worked with Ras Kassa's troops near Mekele. It was severely bombed in January 1936. Thirty bombs fell round the Red Cross flags, but as nobody believed that the Italians were going to respect the Red Cross, all had taken cover and none were hurt or killed.

[Red Cross pamphlet 1965]

Ras Kassa and Ras Seyum had by 9 January reached Abiy Adi. Badoglio concentrated his guns, over 300 of them, back at Mekele, reinforced the Tembien with some of the troops gathered at Mekele, formed a Fourth Corps out of the newly-arrived *Cosseria* division and the '3rd February' to protect his lines of communication north of Adwa from another incursion of Ras Imru, loosed his bombers against Ras Mulugeta on Amba Aradam - and cabled Mussolini on 11 January informing him that he would have to hold up the long-promised offensive in order to face an Ethiopian attack.

[Mockler 1984 p 83]

"On January 19th the IIIrd Corps, which formed part of my mobile force, left the positions at Macallè and, without striking a blow, reached those of Debri-Negaidà, where it halted, holding itself in readiness."

[Badoglio 1937 p 52]

"The 'Pusteria' Alpine Division, which had completed its disembarkation at Massawa on January 20th -- moved rapidly up -- reaching Hauzien at the end of the month, whence it continued its way, partly by lorry transport, to Macallè.

The 'Assietta' Division, which had begun disembarkation at Massawa on the 25th and completed it on the 30th, was brought entirely (with the exception of its pack-animals) by motor-lorry to Macallè, where, on February 2nd it was reassembled complete and took over occupation of the defended camp there --

The Ist Eritrean Division, on February 5th, began moving into the Macallè area, transferring from Tembien, where I no longer felt any anxiety --"

[Badoglio 1937 p 70-71]

Mekele /which part with no Italians?/ was hit by poison gas bombs on 21 January.

In the beginning of February 1936, Badoglio had eleven complete divisions in the north, seven of these concentrated at Mekele. On 4 February Badoglio issued operation orders to their commanders.

[Mockler 1984 p 96]

The military airfield at Mekele was the most important one for Italy during the war. In a single day on 22 January airplanes starting from there had a total of about 200 flight hours. Planes landed or lifted every five minutes.

On 13 April thirteen large bombers started from Mekele and were joined by nine fighters over Serdo, and then they flew over Addis Abeba in formation and only as a demonstration of Italian air power. They arrived at 10.40 on 14 April over the capital where the sky was clear.

[P Gentizon, *La conquista ...*, Italian ed. Milano 1937 p 35, 213]

Civilian post office of the Italians was opened on 1 July 1936 (or in August?).

Its cancellations read MACALLE' \* ETIOPIA in 1936 and

MACALLE' \* ERITREA in 1937. [Philatelic source]

1937

Rainfall 1097 mm was recorded for the year 1937.

1938

About 12,000 inhabitants of which about 100 Italians in the town itself. Market on Mondays. *Commissariato*, post, telephone, hospital.



Albergo Amba Aradam with 4 rooms and two restaurants.

The *gibbi* of Dejazmach Abraha was deserted.

To the north was the church of Enda Tekle Haymanot, and more to the east the church of Enda Kidane Mihret, also a work of G. Naretti. Near the round and more poor church of Enda Medhani Alem there was a graveyard with the tomb of Giustino Naretti, the architect/builder who died in Mekele at the age of 58.

To the south-west was the octagonal church of Enda Maryam, in masonry and built in 1930 by a contractor Di Mauro from Asmara. The church of Enda Gaber was at one kilometre to the north.

According to a master plan of the occupying Italians, a new city would be developed to the west of Enda Maryam.

[Guida 1938]

Ilario Scuteri was road builder in the Mekele area and owned a carpentry shop in Mekele from 1938 until he became prisoner of war in 1941.

1939 Alberto Pollera was the Italian official to reinstate Ras Seyum Mengesha to his old command in mid-July 1939. Soon after, Pollera was struck in a thunderstorm and died from pneumonia already on 1 August.

In the Italian time, Mekele was seat of the *Vice Residenza di Aragurè*, and the post was held from November 1939 to 25 April 1941 by Alfredo Buffoni.

1943 After the liberation, the Ethiopian post office was opened on 30 April 1943.

In the early 1940s there was a rebellion generally called *Woyene*. An aggrieved local official, Blatta Haile Mariam Redda, became its principal leader. After a series of battles beginning 22 May 1943 the Woyene rebels were in control of Mekele and most of eastern Tigray. However, after three weeks of increasingly bitter attacks, the army, with the assistance of British officers and aerial bombardment, was victorious in October. Government retribution was quick and severe. The Territorials spread violence throughout Tigray."

[Young 1997]

After a first victory at Kwiha of the Weyane revolt, they in mid-September 1943 moved, 20,000 strong, to Enda Iyesus, the fort overlooking Mekele. By 20 September they turned south to face an army sent by the Emperor.

[P B Henze, *Layers of time*, London 2000 p 250-251]

British air raids because of the 'woyane revolt' in September-October 1943 were carried out with three Blenheims from Aden. Leaflets were dropped five times from 15 September, and bombing began on 6 October. 54 bombs were dropped over Mekele, and at the market 70 civilians were killed and 200 wounded.

Ethiopian government forces recaptured Mekele on 14 October 1943, which was the last day of bombing..

[P Gilkes, *The dying lion*, London 1975 p 180, 189-190]

Interview: "Before the bombardment they dropped pamphlets. The people went towards the bombs. They were glittering in the sun and they thought these were pamphlets too and they ran towards them to catch them. -- Many never found their relatives because they could never be identified. -- There was a bad smell for weeks in the market place -- We were instructed by the *Weyane* leaders to gather all the bits of bodies together. We never knew whether they were Christian or Muslim and we buried them together in one grave."

[Hammond 1999 p 253]

Abebe Aregai (1905-1960), who had been Minister of War 1942-1943, became Governor of Tigre Province 1943-1947 and then returned to be Minister of War again.

"Ras Abebe Aregai, an Amhara, was temporarily retained as governor, but the occupying troops were withdrawn. After Ras Seyoum Mengesha's return in 1947, wereda governors were appointed by him. However, Seyoum's deputy, Fitawrari Yemane Hassen, a Shewan Amhara, became the real power in the territory. A measure of provincial autonomy was retained, but the trend toward state centralisation continued."

The principal historian of the *Woyene* is Gebru Tareke (*Journal of Modern African Studies* 1982 no 2; conference Howard University 1983; *Africa/Rome* 1984 no 2),

and historian of Tigray until 1974 is Haggai Ehrlich (International Conferences of Ethiopian Studies 1980-1984 etc).

[Young 1997]

Dejazmach Mengesha Seyoum came back to Mekele "under grave suspicion and was in fact condemned to death, although later pardoned".

[Gilkes 1975]

1944 "In October 1944, I was at Makallé, trying to arrange a mule-trek -- to the west. Makallé was the headquarters chosen by King John of Tigré when he came to power after the fall of Theodore in 1868, and it is still the capital of Tigré. It is a dreary place set in a featureless landscape, dominated from on high by the fort of Enda Yasus. Fine sites were usually chosen by the Ethiopian kings, but I could never see the special advantage or attraction of this one."

"However, the town is not without interest. It contains many good specimens of domestic stone-building, some of them two-storeyed. In the humbler parts of the town the houses are mostly rectangular and single-storeyed, with a stone stairway, projecting boldly from the wall, leading up to the flat roof. Sheep and goats are often sent up on to the roof for the night, and a bundle of brush-wood fixed at the top of the steps to prevent their escape."

"The market of Makallé, held on Mondays, is one of the largest and most important in northern Ethiopia. The great square is packed to overflowing on market days with thousands of country people from all over Tigré, and traders from far afield. It is the centre of a great salt trade, the salt being obtained from old marine deposits in the Danakil desert to the east. Vast quantities of it are brought up on mule and camel-back and sawn into the bars or *amolés* which used to pass as currency. From Makallé it is distributed by lorry and mule transport to every part of northern Ethiopia."

[D Buxton, Travels in Ethiopia, London (1949)1957 p 119]

1947 The firm Haji Abdu had a transport enterprise Mekele-Senafe, and the Italian employee Concetto Bonaiuti worked there 1947-1949.

1949 The hospital had one doctor and 50 beds. The hospital was financed by a special direct grant by the US government. Litchfield Whiting made drawings for a hospital at Mekele before 1958. These were not executed?

1953 Working for the Swedish BV Mission in 1953 was teacher Gebre Kidan.

1954 The telephone book listed 7 numbers in Mekele, but none on personal name except that of the Ras.

1955 Around 1955 Mekele had service by Ethiopian Air Lines three times a week in direction Addis Abeba and twice a week in direction Asmara.

1956 The British traveller Thomas Pakenham was there in early 1956.

"Makalle is a town of stony streets and rough stone houses, a bleak town in a bleak landscape. I was disturbed by the atmosphere. This was a different world from the green plains of the Shoan highlands -- Many of the buildings were in ruins; and there were no new buildings to compensate -- I asked an old man in a bar why there was so much damage. He said that I should know; it was we who had bombed it /in 1943/. -- Now that the great days of Makalle were over, the people lived on in the shell of the former capital."

"The palace was in one way a striking contrast to the town. Its stucco walls, decked with swallow-tail battlements, and its airy courtyards planted with pepper trees were freshly whitewashed -- But there was no one to be seen. I wandered unchallenged through several outer courtyards and reached the main entrance to the palace. Still unmolested I wandered into its audience chamber. The fusty hall slumbered under a white shroud of dust-sheets. I wandered out again -- In a moment I was ushered into the presence of Ras Seyum himself."

"The room was decorated in an unusual blend of styles. -- the biggest single object in the room was an over life-size photograph of the Emperor John -- very nearly the smallest was Ras Seyum who sat, a diminutive figure in a Marshal's uniform, on a chintz-covered sofa."

"His Highness was polite but distant. -- Perhaps the Governor-General had not been more specific because he wanted to make a few inquiries about us; perhaps it was merely that his pen had run out of ink. By that evening, at any rate, we had received a note from Ras Seyum, written on the fly-leaf of a diary and warmly recommending us - we managed to get it translated - to the Mamre or Abbot of Debra Damo."

[T Pakenham, *The mountains of Rasselas*, London 1959(1998) p 80-81]

- 1957 In 1957 Yohannes IV School was one of 9 provincial secondary schools in Ethiopia (if Eritrea is excluded).  
By then a 100-number telephone switchboard had been installed at Mekele.  
A branch of the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia was established at Mekele within the period 1952-1967.
- 1958 By 1958 Mekele was one of 27 places in Ethiopia ranked as First Class Township. Yohannes IV School in that year had 68 male students, and in 1960 it had 244 male and 2 female students in secondary education.
- 1959 Provincial Governor-General in 1959 was Ras Seyoum Mengesha (b 1887). There had been periods of enforced residence in Addis Abeba. He was among the hostages killed in the attempted coup in December 1960. He was a grandson of Yohannes IV. Sub-province Governor of Inderta awraja was Dejazmach Taffere Tessema. Provincial Director of Tigre Teklay Gizat (appointed on 2 October 1958) was Dejazmach Tefera Mesfin.  
The post as Secretary General was vacant in 1959.  
Provincial chief of police was Lt.Col. Moges Beyene and deputy chief was Lt.Col. Bekele Wogaye.
- 1960s The Yohannes IV Sports Stadium was fenced and well maintained in the 1960s and had 5,000 seats.
- 1961 Ras Mengesha Seyoum became Governor-General of Tigray province in February 1961 upon the death of his father the previous year. Mengesha challenged Tigray's peripheral status by carrying out a number of infrastructural projects and establishing TAIDL /cf below/ through public subscription. However, there was only a marginal increase in industrial employment, and the few jobs created were paid for by Mengesha's taxation of peasants.  
[Young 1997]  
Ato Lesane Worque Sahle Georghis was appointed Secretary-General of Tigray on 1 April 1961.
- 1962 The average daily traffic on the Kwiha side in 1962 was 5 buses, 25 cars, and 43 trucks.
- 1965 In 1965 Mekele had only one industrial establishment (food sector) officially listed. A soap factory and a paint factory were under construction by the end of that year, see below.  
The third of five planned Seed Multiplication Centres in Ethiopia was to be established at Mekele, with 40 hectares of land.  
[News]  
"Makalle is situated on a treeless plain, bounded on the west by the Takazze Gorge and on the north and east by a small escarpment. To the south, the plain breaks into rolling hills which merge into the horizon."  
"To the west of Makalle, in the Tembien Mountains, are great forests which produce incense, the aromatic resin which is one of Ethiopia's most ancient exports. To best utilize this natural resource, the governor has founded a private share company, TAIDL (Tigre Agricultural and Industrial Development, Ltd), which is carrying out plans to export the best incense and make use of the rest in the production of resin based paints, insecticides, and plastics. The factories for the production of these goods are located east of the city -- TAIDL also owns and operates the Abraha Castle Hotel."  
Toward the end of the 1800s, Dejazmach Abraha Araya had a castle built on a small knoll south of Mekele. In the mid-1900s the castle was nothing but a massive ruin. TAIDL took it over and restored it. (The Governor-General's wife, Princess Aida, a grand-daughter of

Emperor Haile Selassie, was active for the restoration.)

"A pleasant place to spend an afternoon or evening is the small *buna biet* located in a shady park on the eastern edge of the city. The traditional round building has a decorative bamboo-roofed outside porch. Take the first right-hand turn immediately beyond the football stadium as you enter Makalle on the Quiha road. You will see the park with a fountain in the centre and the *tukul* on the eastern fringe of the trees."

[Welcome to Ethiopia, A.A. circa 1965 p 67-68]

Surveys of the Central Statistical Office in the mid-1960s found that of the town population in Mekele ten years of age or older, there were 6,180 men of which 46.0% literate and 9,850 women of which 8.8% literate. 27% of the males and 32% of the females living there (in 1965) had been born in the town.

Other statistics for 1965 say that there were 1,740 owned, 4,080 rented, and 360 unspecified dwellings. Of these 4,660 used piped water, 100 water from wells, and 1,390 from streams. 0.5% of the households had flush toilets, 58.4% had pit latrines, and 40.0% had none.

1966 The airport was opened for EAL in 1966. The Emperor arrived by air for a visit on 23 May 1966.

In that year it was decided that a contractor would be engaged to design a master plan for Mekele.

"Makalle lies west of the road /from Asmara, on 26 December 1966/ and previously it was necessary to overshoot it and then turn back north from Quiha; but a few years ago -- Ras Mangasha -- designed a direct ten-mile jeep track to the town, and did most of the construction work himself with a bulldozer and tractors. As we hairpinned steeply down the mountainside I had my first glimpse of Tigre's provincial capital - a little town sheltered by eucalyptus trees on the edge of a wide and windswept plain."

"We drove straight to the new tourist hotel, a converted eighty-year-old castle, managed by Indians, which stands small and square on a low hill. -- though tourist hotels are not my natural habitat, I find the wall-to-wall carpeting and the pink-tiled bathroom sufficiently compensate for by eccentric electricity and a moody water supply. When countless servants had pitted themselves against the plumbing for over an hour we achieved baths --"

"As I write a fiendish gale is tearing around the hotel, incessantly howling, whining, rattling and roaring. Makalle is renowned for these strong, cold winds, which rise during the late afternoon and continue until dawn."

"Leilt Aida appeared alone in the courtyard to receive us. It can be disconcerting to meet a princess who seems like a princess; one feels as though a fairy-tale had come true - especially with a background of high turrets standing out blackly against a moon-blue sky. Haile Selassie's eldest grandchild is very elegant and very beautiful - olive skinned, with a triangular face, large and lovely eyes and the finest of bones. The likeness to her grandfather is at first quite intimidating, but is soon countered by a subtle sense of humour and a kindly graciousness."

[Dervla Murphy, In Ethiopia with a mule, 1969 p 22 (1994 p 23)]

"Yohannes IV's stone palace-fortress -- not very suitable for a family of eleven and innumerable servants, so an inconspicuous bungalow has recently been built on to the south wing."

On the next morning, 27 December, Miss Murphy bought a mule for her lone journey through the highlands.

"Ras Mangasha's career -- is a curious one. Officially he is a senior civil servant in a centralised bureaucracy; actually he remains the hereditary prince of the Tigreans - a people to whom bureaucrats mean nothing and feudal lords everything. This vigorous great-grandson of Yohannes IV has shown a traditional independence in organising his latest project." Dervla Murphy was invited by Princess Aida to go by car and visit the ongoing road construction project in direction of Addis Abeba, where Ras Mengesha himself acted as engineer and foreman. Local peasants approached and offered gifts of bread.

"I went to the open-air market, where I hoped to find a suitable walking-stick. The market-place covers about two acres and scores of villagers from surrounding districts - the majority women suckling babies - sat on the dusty ground behind small piles of eggs, grain or unfamiliar herbs."

"We found that *dulas* (heavy sticks) are not marketed here, since people prefer to cut and prepare their own weapons, so I looked for a substitute at several of the poky Arab huckster-stalls that line the narrower streets. -- A delighted crowd followed me up the street, all perfectly understanding what I meant but none willing to part with his beloved *dula*. Then an Arab trader offered his own light stick for fifty cents and I gladly accepted it - against the advice of my Tigrean followers, who despise light sticks."

"I sensed a mixture of curiosity, amusement, shyness and suspicion; and, despite the status of my escort, I was given no special treatment -- A minor Ethiopian official would have been received with much more ceremony, and one could see that the Princess' servant was regarded as a person of far greater consequence than the Princess' foreign friend."

[Dervla Murphy p 24-29 (25-30)]

"Much of the route from Makalle to Adua follows a makeshift motor-track constructed during the Italian occupation but neglected for the past quarter of a century. Our guide evidently disapproved of Leilt Aida allowing *farajns* to travel unescorted and he asked several peasant who were walking in our direction if they would take charge of us; but all were soon turning off this main track towards their settlements and eventually Gabre Maskal was persuaded to turn back."

[Dervla p 31(32)]

1967 Population 23,105 as counted in 1967, with 75.5% illiteracy.

In May 1967 four Swedish students arrived to Ethiopia to make a project as part of their education, namely to plan a housing area at Mekele.

In the 1967 telephone book there are numbers, besides the self-evident official offices, for Abraha Hotel, Commercial Bank, Emperor Yohannes Secondary School, the High Court, Kana Zegelila Hotel, Leul Ras Mengesha Yohannes Hotel, the malaria eradication centre, the meteorological office, Ras Seyum Mengesha Hospital, Slaughter House S.C., Tigray Agricultural & Industrial Development (TAIDL), and US Information Service.

Of numbers on personal names there were 22 of Christian type (including Abune Yohannes) and 11 of Moslem type, and no name of foreigners.

1968 Atse Yohannes IV primary school in 1968 had 629 boys and 435 girls, with 17 male and 3 female teachers.

Mekele Elementary School had 501 boys and 385 girls, with 16 male teachers and one female.

Aynalem primary school (also in Mekele town?) had 921 boys and 582 girls, with 23 male and 3 female teachers.

Princess Zenebe Work mission school had 147 boys and 115 girls in grades 1-5, with 7 male teachers (of which one foreign) and one female.

An elementary school building, "Mekele III", constructed of concrete elements and with Swedish assistance through ESBU was completed around 1970.

[SIDA 1971]

1970s There was an experiment station of the Institute of Agricultural Research (-1973-).

1973 A reporter from Nairobi was in a group who flew to Mekele in August 1973.

"The hills round the town are fresh green, and there is no obvious sign of the drought -- The Rehabilitation Centre -- is made up of long corrugated iron sheets and a few brick buildings. A few of the healthier children are playing around outside, and about a dozen seriously ill people are lying in the clinic, on real beds."

"But the bulk of the inmates, 400 old people, women and children, are lying or sitting listlessly on their mats in the sheds, one for men and boys, another for women, infants and girls. -- The squad of helpers are themselves orphans left over from the last severe famine in 1962. Now after 10 years of care and education they have a chance to help others --

most of the weaker ones - about 500 in this shelter so far - have died, and hundreds are back on the road to health."

Gebremeskel Abay, vice-mayor of Mekele, said they needed Eth\$ 6,000 a month to feed the destitutes. Oxfam had provided Eth\$ 15,000 and there were other donors.

[JOE Magazine (Nairobi) December 1973 p 24-25]

- 1974 Ras Mengesha remained governor of Tigray until October 1974, when he was ordered to surrender. Rather than comply, he went into the hills and began organizing a resistance movement. In early 1975 he left Tigray and joined other aristocrats to form the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU).

[M & D Ottaway 1978 p 86]

Dr Haile Selassie Belay was appointed Governor General of Tigray in early October 1974 when Ras Mengesha Seyum had disappeared and was not expected to return. The Ras was later said to have arrived in the Sudan in November.

[News]

- 1975 Population 47,157 in 1975.

Spelling used by the post was MEKELE except during the Italian occupation.

On 1 February 1975 a convoy of 52 tanks, 20 armoured cars and a number of troop carriers were seen passing Mekele and heading towards Eritrea.

[News]

The Aba Selama Kesate Berhan school of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, with further education of its priests, was supported by the Swedish Church Mission (c1975-1978).

[Mission source]

- 1976 On 17 September 1976 one Mr Tom Davies was abducted by guerrillas from a farm project near Mekele. He was a British expert, aged 45 and working for the FAO. Four of his Ethiopian colleagues were also abducted but were later released.

[Keesing's p 28222]

- 1977 In 1976 the Derg began a counter-insurgency campaign known as the Red Terror. By 1977 it was implemented in the towns of Tigray. Under the Derg's regional representative, Sileshi Mengesha, any expression of regional identity or dissent was interpreted as being counter-revolutionary. Mere possession of an opposition pamphlet led to arrest and possible torture and death. - Before the formal introduction of the Red Terror, some twenty-one teachers were arrested at the Ethiopian Teachers Association in Mekele, accused of supporting the TPLF, and taken away from Tigray, after which they were never heard of again.

[Young 1997]

Interview: "When I entered Mekelle prison, really, it was very hard to believe what I saw. There was not enough room for all the five hundred prisoners, so most of them were lying on the ground. More than half were being tortured and you were forced to hear their screams of pain. -- They executed thirty-two prisoners, also from the main prison and threw them in the streets. -- Some of the mothers searched out their children and fell down upon their bodies. -- The third time, they killed twenty-six prisoners, including two women. Then, after two months and two weeks of imprisonment, they let us go, more than a hundred prisoners. Most of the students by that time were terrorized by the Red Terror so they tried to keep out of politics.

[Hammond 1999 p 100]

- 1978 Population 41,235 as estimated in January 1978. A little over 28% of those living there were born in the town.

There were petrol filling stations of Agip, Mobil, Shell (-1978-).

- 1982 The main hotel (Abraha Castle?) around 1982 had 32 beds, and its manager was Kassaye Kebede.

In late 1982 shelters for famine-stricken people were set up at Mekele by the government.

- 1983 By March 1983 the Mekele shelter had 30,000 people.

In May the Church Relief Services made its first distributions at Mekele of grants from the Agency for International Development.

[Jansson et al 1987 p 52]

On 7 November 1983 representatives from Catholic Relief Services reported from a visit to Mekele, predicting a 90 per cent crop failure for that season.

1984 In August 1984 a new television transmitter was opened in Mekele, a little before the 10-year anniversary of the Revolution. It had been supplied by the British company Crow of Reading at a cost of about £500,000.

[P Gill, A year in the death ..., London 1986 p 11, 56]

From mid-August to mid-October 1984 no trucks at all reached Mekele with famine relief supplies. The destitute population in Mekele rose to 32,000.

A BBC television crew filmed in Mekele in October 1984. By then the documented deaths were occurring at the rate of 15 to 25 per day.

[Jansson .. p 57]

The first flight of chartered Transamerica planes landed in Mekele on 2 November 1984.

[R W Solberg, Miracle in Ethiopia, New York 1991 p 58-59]

By the first week of November 1984 there were 20 airplanes and 30 helicopters from seven countries involved in airlifting relief supplies to central distribution points, primarily Mekele and Aksum.

[Jansson .. p 154]

In a CBS television program broadcast on 18 November "thousands of American families would get their first look at the heart-wrenching scenes of starvation in the crowded camps of Bati and Makelle". (See also under Bati.)

[Solberg 1991 p 3]

On 11 December a DC-3 airplane to Mekele was full of foreign journalists and high aid officials. The author cited here found that almost everything was 'khaki colour' in Mekele.

[F Dufresne, L'Éthiopie se meurt! Canada 1985 p 53-57]

The photographer Mohamed Amin and the writer Graham Hancock reported in 1984:

"In one place that we filmed in Makalle there was a patch of ground, like a sheep-pen, surrounded by a low stone wall about four feet high. Grouped inside this wall there were maybe 150 starving people who, for no special reason, had been selected to be fed and to receive blankets. Outside the wall there were about 10,000 other people, just as starved, just as near to death, who were not going to get fed that day, or the next day, and maybe were not going to get fed at all because there was almost no food in Makalle at that time. Anyway, the officials went round inside the wall handing out grain, tins of donated butter, blankets and second-hand clothes to the lucky hundred and fifty. The others outside, who were virtually condemned to death, just stood there -- I think it was this calmness, this passivity, that got to me because I knew that if I had been in their position, with maybe my own child dying, I would not have just stood there and watched others be given the chance of life. I think I would have done anything, rioted, killed, to get the food I needed."

[G Hancock, Ethiopia, the challenge of hunger, London 1985 p 9]

Hancock made another round trip together with aid representatives. They also landed in Mekele /in December?/:

"Makalle airport stands on an exposed plain on the outskirts of the old city. -- There was a great deal of activity. A Transamerica Hercules was offloading supplies of relief grain and, as I went to photograph it, another landed in a tumult of dust and noise. Moments later a third Hercules came in - this time one of the RAF planes on its first flight of the day out of Assab. Off to one side, on an improvised apron, dozens of Soviet Mil-6 and Mil-8 helicopters were lined up being loaded with grain destined for remote parts of the province."

"On the drive from the airport into Makalle we stopped to visit one of many semi-permanent 'shelters' for drought-victims: a straggling, tented camp pitched by the side of the road. The few thousand inhabitants, predominantly women and children, gazed uninterestedly at us with the dull resigned eyes of cattle awaiting slaughter. All seemed to be covered in a layer of dust as though they had sought to bury themselves in the unfruitful earth. -- A few mothers, clutching inert rag-draped bundles, huddled behind a

makeshift windbreak of dry stone where a pale fire burned."

"As we climbed back into the RRC's Land-Rover to continue the journey into Makalle, I could see that Tom Kelly and Joe Kennedy were as shaken as I was. -- In Makalle, we spent some time with the local representative of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, a man whose task of caring for the two million famine victims of Tigre seemed about as impossible as King Canute's legendary attempt to hold back the sea. He pointed out gratefully, however, that his organization was not alone: in addition to the four massive camps set up by the RRC around Makalle, the Red Cross, UNICEF, Catholic Relief Services and many other non-governmental organizations and voluntary agencies had established their own feeding centres."

[G Hancock, Ethiopia, the challenge of hunger, London 1985 p 86-87]

"Outside a shelter set up by the Red Cross to supply supplementary feeding to severely malnourished infants some 3,000 to 4,000 mothers had gathered, each hoping that their baby would be numbered amongst the lucky hundred to be admitted that day. Nurse Greta Weichlinger told me: 'Our capacity here is for 640 children -- The criterion for admission is that a child should be below 70 per cent of normal body weight. -- A few weeks ago, before the international emergency aid really began to arrive, there was no food anywhere in Makalle -- Now at least, with the airlift, I believe that those I turn away may have a chance of finding food somewhere in the town.'"

"In the RRC's main centre at Makalle, tens of thousands of drought refugees had gathered, cramped together in a crowded, insanitary ghetto of tents and huts dumped down on a stony, litter-strewn plain. -- I was shocked to find, at first undistinguishable amongst the Tigrinya-speaking highland peasants, groups of Afar nomads, men, women and children together --"

"The city's small hospital has already been so deluged with the halt and the sick that it can no longer even make a pretence of practising normal medicine and has had to institute a police of triage - concentrating its attentions on those potentially productive people whom it makes the best social and economic sense to save. In this equation the elderly do not figure at all: if they fall ill they are simply left to die."

"Triage, also, is the philosophy of the resettlement programme, to which a great many famine victims are called but relatively few are chosen. On our way out of Makalle, in a reservation close to the airport, we came across a group of about 2,000 would-be migrants waiting to be driven to the runway where they would board Soviet Antonov cargo planes and be flown to new settlements in the virgin lands of Kaffa, Illubabor and Wollega."

[Hancock 1985 p 88-90]

1985 In early 1985 there were seven famine camps in the Mekele area with a total population of 75,000 and 20,000 more waiting to get in. From 10 February until the end of March, no food convoys were able to reach Mekele because of the military action in the area. In March, 50-60 persons died every day.

[Solberg 1991 p 119]

"My first visit to Mekelle /UN representative Kurt Jansson/ was in January 1985 and it was a real shock. The camps were severely overcrowded, with very poor facilities. People not admitted to the camps for medical treatment or supplementary feeding had practically no shelter against the cold and the strong winds -- I remember standing one morning at dawn on a hill overlooking the road leading to Mekelle. I saw a never-ending stream of people walking slowly up the slope towards the camp. The latter was already full and the new arrivals moved on. I wondered where they were heading. Following the stream of people for a while I realised that they simply stopped at some point hoping to get food."

"The next day, in the company of RRC officials, I visited one of these sites. The new arrivals had dug a hole in the ground or piled up stones as protection against the wind. They had no belongings, their clothing was in rags. They had no blankets or anything to cover themselves. -- How these people survived until help arrived was a mystery. But perhaps I did not quite understand the staying power of the Ethiopian peasant families, very likely the most enduring in the world."

[Jansson .. p 58]



A serious infectious disease in the Mekele camp in early 1985 was said by foreign medical staff to be cholera, but government authorities did not like this word to be spread. The effort to rescue the people of Tigray was so great that the shelters in Mekele by mid-1985 were well organized and supplied with various medical groups, even individual volunteer doctors and medical personnel. The voluntary agencies operating in Tigray were:

Ethiopian Orthodox Church Relief Agency,  
 Médecins sans Frontiers,  
 Japan 24 Hour T.V. Charity Committee,  
 Mekane Yesus Church,  
 Action Internationale Contre La Faim,  
 Austrian Medical Team,  
 Adventist Development and Relief Agency,  
 SOS Kinderdorf International,  
 World Vision International,  
 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC),  
 Catholic Relief Service (CRS),  
 National Red Cross,  
 Africare,  
 Catholic Secretariat.

"In spite of all these efforts I believe that the people of Tigray suffered more than any other population affected by the drought and famine. Their resilience and fortitude were incredible in the face of all these hardships."

"In spite of the fact that the conflict in Eritrea was more publicized than Tigray's, the people of Eritrea suffered less. -- The government stuck to its position that there was no area out of its control thus officially blocking all efforts to reach the people trapped in the conflict areas. -- The RRC knew that there were voluntary agencies in Ethiopia involved in what we considered illegal cross-border operations. -- as long as their activities didn't go beyond the limits of humanitarian aid, we didn't report it."

"The ICRC was the only agency that managed to get into the hinterlands of the major conflict areas from the Ethiopian side. Flying from their bases in Asmara and Makale, using planes hired from Sweden and Belgium, they airdropped considerable amounts of food in rebel controlled areas. The Belgian crew was an extremely dedicated group --"

"If Mengistu, Legesse or one of the fanatical senior bureaucrats had known about their flights they would surely have been condemned and perhaps expelled. One time there was a rumor that the ICRC was dropping not food but anti-government leaflets. From that point on government security agents were put into their planes -- to make sure that what was being transmitted and dropped was food and not armaments or counter-revolutionary leaflets."

[Dawit Wolde Giorgis, Red tears, 1989 p 323-325]

"During July and early August 1985, programmes on a larger scale were arranged at the Mekelle relief centre from which about 50,000 people were returned to their homes. -- During a visit I made in July 1985, with Commissioner Dawit, the Counsellor of the US Embassy, and the Chief Delegate of the ICRC as well as RRC department heads, arrangements for the Mekelle programme were discussed and procedures agreed upon in detail. -- The number of people to be returned would depend on the availability of food, seeds and farm implements, the exercise would be voluntary and an RRC task force and the four NGOs working in Mekelle would do the work. Those unwilling or unable to return home would be permitted to stay in the relief centre. Here again I assigned two of our monitors, Martin Büechi and Paavo Pitkanen to help with the operation and to supervise it from beginning to end. Food distribution points nearer the homes of the people returning were established."

"There was a serious incident during the Mekelle operation. Some 70-100 men who had been registered by the ICRC and RRC for receiving rations and supplies in order to return home were suddenly rounded up by the peasant militia and placed in a resettlement transit

camp near the Mekelle airport. Our monitors tried in vain to have them released and returned to the relief centre. The efforts of the ICRC also failed. I took up the matter with Commissioner Dawit who agreed that it would be very damaging if this matter was not resolved and that it would have a very adverse effect on future programmes of repatriation from the relief centres. Dawit telephoned the party secretary of Tigray, his former classmate at the Military Academy in Addis. The latter immediately called Martin Buechi and informed him that the men were to be sent back to the relief centre. ICRC verified that this had been done."

[Jansson et al 1987 p 63]

1986 The TPLF in a spectacular operation in February 1986 released 1,800 Derg prisoners from the Mekele prison. The operation was named Agazi after one of the founder fighters of the TPLF, who was killed in the second year of the armed struggle.

[Hammond 1999 page xi]

Interview: "Mulugeta recalls the conditions in Mekelle prison -- Twenty eight cells, four by five meters in size, contained eighteen hundred to two thousand prisoners, sometimes more. There were usually about sixty-five or seventy people in each cell. There was no room to lie down at night or even to sit. -- The food was so bad, there was no resistance to cholera, to typhoid, to relapsing fever. Sometimes twenty or thirty prisoners would die at a time. In fact, the government wants the prisoners to die.

[Hammond 1999 p 35-36]

"Preparation for the operation /targeting the prison/ began many weeks beforehand. The Front knew from their underground informants in Mekelle the size and location of the garrison and that the feared 119th brigade were stationed there. -- Two forces (about two hundred fighters) were sent into a remote area for training. -- First, they built an adobe replica of the prison, complete with cells and towers, the locations of the lights, the types of guns and their positions."

"The plan included a number of diversionary tactics -- The main diversion was at a Dergue garrison about twenty kilometers from Mekelle /at Wajirat/, where there was a fortified trench built by the Italians. Meley's force destroyed several guardposts with artillery, and, as forecast, the 119th Brigade was immediately dispatched from Mekelle. Then Meley's brigade, stationed at a strategic point, let the 119th pass and then blocked the road to prevent their return."

"Meanwhile, the two commando forces were about to penetrate the outer defences of Mekelle. These were the only fighters who knew that the real target was the prison. The guardposts were barely a hundred meters apart. It took an hour-and-a-half for the fighters to creep or crouch-walk, silently and one at a time in the darkness. -- By the time they had slid through, undetected, two separate forces were attacking the airport -- and a truck depot inside the town, destroying a hundred trucks. The commando fighters penetrated from the north and the force against the truck depot from the south. A further battalion was just outside the town, awaiting the first shot and staged an artillery attack on the 16th Division, which was still in the barracks in Mekelle. The Dergue forces were in total confusion."

"There was a wall and a trench around the prison. When grenades had dispatched the guards in the four watchtowers, a few fighters scaled the wall and opened the main gate for their companions. -- They tried to run in all directions, but we got them together in one place outside the prison."

There were two mistakes: The leader of one unit fell into a latrine pit with a radio. More serious was that one prison hut was overlooked and its doors never unlocked. The forces involved finally met together at Samre with the prisoners.

[Hammond 1999 p 166-167]

The famine camps were closed after some time. The Agency for International Development spoke of terminating all emergency aid at the end of 1986.

[Solberg 1991 p 159]

1987 Population 65,581 in 1987, a three-fold increase in twenty years.

By August 1987, the world learnt that Ethiopia was in the throes of a new crisis, but the

famine camps at Mekele and elsewhere were not recreated.

[Solberg 1991 p 176]

- 1988 In a series of offensives launched on 25 February 1988 TPLF fighters bypassed Mekele but took control of Maychew, Korem and other places along the Dessie-Mekele road. By June 1988 the TPLF controlled the whole of Tigray except the town of Mekele and its surrounding within a radius of 15 km.

[Tekeste Melake *in* 12th Int. Conf. of Ethiopian Studies 1994]

On 4-5 June 1988 Derg soldiers burnt six villages near Mekele: Adi Gera, Gobozena, Garot, Rabea, Issala, Bahri.

[Africa Watch 1991]

After the serious defeat of Derg forces in December 1988, the government sent 2,400 conscripts and the 103rd Commando Army Division with its four brigades from Mekele to Shire. At the same time the 17th Army Division with its three brigades from Gondar and two additional brigades from Wello were sent to Mekele. The forward Headquarters of TRA (the Third Revolutionary Army) was transferred from Mekele to Shire.

[12th Int. Conf.]

- 1989 On 24 February 1989 the top government official Legesse Asfaw and the Chief of Staff of the armed forces arrived to Mekele from Addis Abeba. Date for an evacuation process, incongruously named Zemecha Kitaw, "Punitive Campaign", was secretly decided to be 27 February 1989. Contrary to the government's plan, the process was rather more of running away to save life than a tactical retreat.

The Derg's collapse in Tigray in February 1989 was so rapid that it was three days before the TPLF was able to occupy the abandoned capital of Mekele on 25 February. The retreating Derg forces still found time to remove cash from the banks and sabotage public facilities. But the vandalism was not entirely one-sided, and in the interim between the Derg and the TPLF, some local citizens in Mekele and other towns went on rampages which included the pillaging of schools until parents of the students could organise their defence.

/Note: It was also an air force base that was captured by the TPLF./

[Young 1997]

The engineering unit of TRA went on destroying institutions and property beginning from 11:00 in the morning. As further destruction continued the youth of Mekele stormed the arms store of the Regional Military Commissariat and took more than 1,000 rifles and a considerable number of bullets. Some started firing into the open air. The government's engineering unit then ran away from Mekele on its way to Wello. The town of Mekele remained to be a vacuum until its being controlled by the TPLF forces three days after the evacuation of government forces. A few days later the whole of Tigray came under the complete control of the TPLF.

[12th Int. Conf. of Ethiopian Studies 1994 + Hammond 1999 p 320]

On 26 February, two army tanks shelled the electricity generating station, destroying completely five huge generators, each capable of producing one megawatt of power. Bedding and instruments from the hospitals were systematically looted by soldiers. Residents of the town looted many furnishings.

[Africa Watch 1991]

On October 27 and 29, late 1989, there were government bombing attacks on Mekele, and 31 persons were killed in the first of these attacks.

The Mekele attack caused many residents to leave the town. The hospital was evacuated during daylight hours, with all patients returning at nightfall for medical attention. Even at night, no electric light was used for fear of attracting the attention of overflying high-altitude Antonov planes, which were occasionally used for bombing at night.

[Africa Watch 1991]

The British author/reporter Jenny Hammond arrived to Mekele in mid-1989/?/.

"Tigrayans placed so much symbolic value on its liberation even if it was not their own home town. This would be my base for a week or two -- I stayed in the Green Hotel, so called because in Haile Selassie's time the dusty broken space before its entrance had been

filled with gardens and fountains beneath lofty eucalyptus trees. Only the trees were still there -- The two women who ran the day-to-day affairs of the hotel blamed it all on the Dergue, but exactly how the Dergue had destroyed the garden was never explained." "The hotel belonged to a family called Gebrekristos. The owner's son was a well-known fighter in the Front's Foreign Affairs department. -- Other sons and daughters were also fighters and perhaps because of this connection or because they felt uneasy in the grander Castle Hotel, fighters and Front members would often use the dining room for meetings." /Interview about memories:/ "After six hours the TPLF came,' said Askale, a mother of two young children, whose husband was away in the Dergue army. 'They came through the castle at about six in the evening in a single line The light was getting dim. Everybody came out of their houses and showed their joy, and they were ululating. They came down, men and women fighters together, and went off to different parts of the town.'" "I went to see Tadelle, the new TPLF administrator of Mekelle -- I found him in a little office in a small house previously occupied by a Dergue official. His list of problems was formidable. There was no electricity and, without power, no water. The hospital was virtually paralyzed by lack of staff and its building and equipment had been vandalized; there were no teachers to run the school; all the humanitarian organizations had left with the Dergue except the SOS School and the Catholic Mission, leaving large numbers of orphans and war disabled to join the mass of those newly without income and dependent on relief. These included massive numbers of prostitutes who had lost their clientele. In addition, the list of dead and injured from the multiple rings of mines around the town was growing longer by the day."

[Hammond 1999 p 204-205]

"A letter from Tadelle secured permission for Heshe and me to go a couple of days later /to see the prison/. It had been empty since the Dergue troops left in February, freeing the prisoners as they went, to add to the chaos. On the edge of the town, the prison was a complex of crude single story buildings within a series of concentric outer walls. The gate in the second wall was partially bricked up -- Through the next gate was the dusty compound where relatives were admitted to bring food and medicines and within that was the prisoners' compound, the heart of the prison."

"Several long stone buildings lay in parallel in a small yard. Each building was divided into large cells about five meters square with a single unglazed window high in the roof. - - Nothing had been disturbed. The cells were filled with the detritus of the miserable lives spent in them, piles of disgusting rags and filthy mats and mattresses, tin cans, rubbish of every kind left in the casual swirls in which the prisoners had abandoned them. -- Feeling myself suffocating, I could not stay there long."

[Hammond 1999 p 208-209]

1990 By mid-May 1990 the JRP (Joint Relief Partnership) had moved 2,400 tons of food by truck from Dessie, across the frontier between Derg-held and TPLF-held country.

[News]

The *baito* assembly started functioning in Mekele in November 1990.

1991 The British researcher/author Jenny Hammond in Mekele interviewed Aklilu Tekemte on 6 February 1991 and Yemane Kidane (field name 'Jamaica') on 25 March.

[Hammond 1999 p 441]

On Sunday 17 February (Monday 18?) 1991 the 16th anniversary of the Tigray revolution was celebrated at the stadium with a parade lasting for two hours. Last in the parade were trucks, anti-aircraft guns, heavy artillery, tanks, and a display of coming electrification with winking lightbulbs on a truck.

[Hammond 1999 p 316]

"Mulugeta -- takes me to Mekelle prison. Last time I came here, the town was barely free of the Dergue and the empty prison was full of the ghosts of the tortured; now it has been turned into metal workshops. The compounds where relatives formerly queued with food for a chance to see their sons and daughters or husbands or brothers are now busy with a different activity. The air rings with the din of hammers on metal."

"See the raw materials?' Mulugeta says, pointing to a dump of old military vehicles

captured from the Dergue and now past repair. -- a couple of men stripping down a battered landcruiser: others are beating panels flat for recycling."

"The Front has been working for some years to overcome the superstitions and discrimination associated with metal-working, by paying trainees from other social groups to acquire metal-working skills. -- In one place, they are stacking up cooking stoves; in another steel drums; in another buckets. In the forge, three men work as a team."

[Hammons 1999 p 315]

September 1991: Chekol Kidane, an official of the Relief Society of Tigray, said his organisation had been obliged to reduce the numbers getting a 15 kg per month grain and flour ration by 40 per cent because of supply problems. "People are suffering the consequences of last year's drought."

[Financial Times, 9 Sep 1991]

1992 On 20 February 1992 President Meles Zenawi laid a cornerstone for a monument to be erected in memory of martyrs in the struggle against the Derg regime.

Late in 1992 a Danish traveller Hjalte Tin with wife and teenage son and daughter stayed overnight in a cheap inn at Mekele. They were touring Africa on motorcycles.

"Outside the open café door Makalle passes in revue: a town girl with make-up in long trousers and T-shirt, men with wrapped heads, short trousers, thin legs and the long sticks which all men in Africa carry around. People with yellow plastic bottles from the relief aid. A camel and many pack donkeys, a bleating goat. No passenger cars, but UN trucks and the white Landcruisers of the aid organizations. -- Some men pass on bicycles, a couple of soldiers make conversation with the new power holders of the country, young men with large Afro hair mops and dressed in military camouflage uniforms."

[Rasmussen & Tin, Fra Cape til Cairo, Copenhagen 1994 p 198]

1993 Various business enterprises were established in Mekele from 1993 onward, see list below under 1998.

1994 Population 96,938 as counted in 1994. According to another figure 119,779 in October this made Mekele the fourth largest provincial town in Ethiopia.

1995 The OAU Observer Group of 81 members were represented at the polling stations of Mekele and eleven other major towns at the elections on 7 May 1995.

By 1995 private investors had overcome their fears of government policy and instability. Stores proliferated in Mekele. Private investment in industry was virtually non-existent. In mid-1995 the Endowment Fund for the Rehabilitation of Tigray (EFFORT) was established to meet this need and provide funding for war veterans and their families. Resources for EFFORT were collected in several different ways.

[Young 1997]

"Mekele is the smartest and, I would imagine, the most rapidly developing town in the country, with a new-looking town centre that surely has nothing to do with the large Tigrean presence in the current Ethiopian government. Mekele is a likeable place, with good facilities and the welcoming air that is so typical of Tigre, and although it lacks for bona fide tourist attractions, it would be just about the perfect place to break for a day between long bus trips or rest up after a few days hiking in Gheralta."

"Certainly worth a look is the large market, where you may sometimes see camel-borne salt-traders, recently arrived from the Danakil Desert. The Yohannis IV Museum is sited in the castle -- It's dominated by rather esoteric displays of royal paraphernalia, but the combination of the rooftop view and the photographic display of various rock-hewn churches justifies the nominal entrance fee. Mekele is lively at night, when the streets ring with the Tigrean music that emanates from the bars."

"The government-owned Castle Hotel, part of the Ghion chain, is set in a 19th-century stone castle on a hill overlooking the town. It's an attractive hotel, if a little pretentious -- The Inda Raesi Hotel, near the hospital, is managed by Experience Ethiopia Tours, and is the obvious place to head for if you are using this company's services -- Other relatively upmarket options are the Ambassador Hotel and the Green Hotel -- The Hawzen Hotel, still under construction when I visited, is expected to be a bit smarter and pricier.

Cheaper hotels are scattered throughout town. -- If you are literally just crashing over in Mekele, the Nyala Hotel and Lemlem Hotel are adequate and conveniently close to the bus station (at least until the bus station is relocated). -- it's worth the extra walk to find somewhere nicer, such as the Anuwa Hotel (painted orange next to the Rendezvous Restaurant) or the Omtsugi Hotel (white-on-green signpost and large red gate) -- The signposted Sunrise Hotel is a bit more expensive -- The other hotels marked on the map are ordinary dollar-a-night hotels with communal cold showers. The exception is the Ethiopia Hotel, an overpriced, showerless dump, which is on the map purely because the English signpost is a useful landmark."

[Bradt 1995(1998) p 321-323 with town plan sketch p 322]

A new road between Mekele and Adwa was opened in early 1995 and follows the line of a former caravan track. The road makes it possible to cross the marvellous Tembien massif. The opening of this new road makes it possible to visit over twenty churches and monasteries which were previously difficult to reach.

[Camerapix 1995]

There are several round churches in the town. The Moslem quarter in the northwest contains a market and a mosque. The museum is arranged to be a Regional Museum telling also about Aksum, Adwa, Yeha etc. The town plan on p 351 shows both the old and the new bus station, which latter is at the middle eastern side. The city centre with restaurants etc is rather at the "Piazza" in front of Yohannes Palace. The airport is towards the southeast.

[Äthiopien 1999 p 350-354 with plan showing hotels and restaurants]

Saturday is the main market day. Mekele has the largest market for salt in Ethiopia.

"The Wolwalo Hotel is basic but very clean. More peaceful and reasonably clean is the Nur Salam Pension. -- The new Fasika Hotel is probably the best place in the budget category -- The Queen Saba Hotel has not-bad rooms -- Best in the middle range is the new Hawelti Hotel -- it has two pleasant terraces. The well-known Abreha Castle Hotel is now looking a bit shabby for the price, but its terrace overlooking the town is a great place for an evening drink. The new Hawzen Hotel -- also has a nightclub. Top of the top-end range is the well-designed Bubu Hills Hotel, set on a hill above the town. It has rooms with fridge, telephone and satellite TV."

The previous airport is 7 km out of town, and a new international airport is under construction. In the late 1990s the number of flights per week are 7 to Addis Abeba, 5 to Bahir Dar, 3 or 4 to Aksum and Lalibela, 3 to Inda Silase.

[Lonely planet 2000 p 199-201, with twon plan]

1997 From the airport, named *Alula Aba Nega*, there were domestic EAL flights between Mekele and Addis Abeba and Aksum,

The unpaved runway, length about 3000 m, was together with Bahir Dar the longest in the Ethiopian countryside. Instrument approach procedure had been published.

The Tigrayan consortium *Endowment Fund For the Rehabilitation of Tigray* (EFFORT), chaired by former defence minister Seye Abraha, around October 1997 set up a subsidiary in Mekele named *High Tech Park Pvt Ltd*.

[News]

1998 In 1998 the government established four new universities in Ethiopia, the one in Mekele by redesignating Mekele Business College as a university college. The following enterprises with address in Mekele are labelled by the author Vestal as "business establishments of the EPRDF/TPLF":

*Tesfa Livestock Development SC*

Established in August 1993

Board members W/ro Roman G/Sellasie,

W/ro Shishay Aseffa, Mekonnen Tesfahunegn

Activities: livestock, beef, dairy products etc

for local and international markets

*Bruh Chemical SC*

Established in February 1995  
 Board members Fire T/Michael T/Tsion,  
 Isayaas Desta Hailu, Berhe Hailu Zerefa  
 Activities: manufacture of soda, acid, salt  
 and similar chemicals

*Trans-Ethiopia SC*

Established in March 1993  
 Board members Tekle Shiferaw Sahle, Tsegay Taimyallew  
 Sebhatleab, Gebre Yohannes G/Kidan Engida  
 Activities: freight and passenger transport, import of vehicles etc;  
 competes successfully with government transport companies  
 such as Woyira and Comet Transport Enterprises

*Hiwot Agricultural Mechanization SC*

Established in March 1993  
 Board members W/ro Kedisan Nega Medhanie,  
 W/ro Gebriel Tadese Berhe, W/ro Gerima G/Sellasié  
 Activities: related to cash crops, agricultural machinery, etc

*Mesebo Building Materials Manufacturing SC*

Activities: construction of a cement factory in the Mesebo area

*Mesfin Industrial Engineering SC*

Company named after a deceased veteran TPLF member

*Selam Bus Line SC*

Established in May 1994  
 Activities: business with premises, buses, machinery etc  
 and also providing bus services

[T M Vestal, Ethiopia - A post-cold war ..., USA 1999 p 156, 214-217]

When Ethiopia bombed Asmara airport on 5 June 1998, Eritrea retaliated the same afternoon with its small new air force by bombing Mekele, hitting a school full of children.

[Brothers at war, 2000 p 1, 60]

The Ayder Elementary School was bombed in the afternoon when there were over 2,300 children at the school. A second raid occurred after parents had arrived to retrieve their children from the wreckage. Over 50 civilians were killed and close to 200 were wounded. One year later a ceremonial commemoration was held at the school.

[ENA news]

2000 "Mekelle is one of the most pleasant places to visit in Ethiopia. The people are nice, the streets are wide and good for walking. As a foreigner, one of the most pleasant things about visiting Mekelle is the lack of hassle from locals - there are no crowds following you --"

*Accommodation:*

"Perhaps in anticipation of a tourist boom -- there have been three very fine hotels built in the city. These were started before the war with Eritrea broke out, and no doubt they have suffered from the lack of visitors due to the latest war. The hotels were quite empty when I visited, apart from the occasional group of rough looking men with Bulgarian or Ukrainian accents. I didn't ask them what they did!"

"The nicest of the hotels in my humble opinion is the Axum. Predictably their designs and motifs are Axumite -- The foyer area is wide and spacious -- Even the restaurant is nice in this hotel! -- There is satellite TV in the rooms! -- there are several other nice places - the Hawzien Hotel in particular. Although the Castle Hotel lacks some of the comforts of the Axum, it compensates with its historic resonance. -- The best room to stay in is the one in the castle turret. It is a government hotel, so the rates are high for foreigners."

*The Monument to the War:*

"The artistic tower spiralling more than 100 feet (=30 metres/ above the ground, mounted by a large ball, is visible through much of Mekelle. This is the centrepiece of the large war memorial. Entranceways to the memorial are surprisingly stark, but the memorial

itself is wonderfully new and engrossing."

"As you enter the central portion on top of the pink cut stone, the memorial stretches on both sides from the central tower. On each side are larger than life figures, representing the victims and victors of the war. Appropriately black and stick like, the figures include mothers and children trekking out from the famine, several of them not making it. With them are the hardy Tigrayan fighters, machine guns over their backs and trusty donkeys in tow."

"Appropriately enough, one of the tanks left over from the war lies just beside the monument, and is a somewhat dubious playground for children. My children showed no hesitation in crawling all over and into the tank, with the unbounded curiosity about war items which affects many of us!

Massive lights flood the monument at night, an eerie reminder of the recent war. Mekelle was only captured from the Derg in 1989, yet the monument is the only visible reminder of the devastation of the time.

The monument is a short walk from the hilltop Castle hotel. To the west of the monument you can see the recently constructed buildings of the attractive Mekelle University."

*Johannes Castle:*

"Around the castle is the only place in Mekelle where I've confronted officious and difficult behaviour from the military and guards. -- If you brave the roadblock, however, the visit is worth it. The Castle itself is the major attraction, a high multi-turreted classic castle. -- Unlike the Debre Tabor castle, which is a ruin, the Mekelle castle is well preserved and eminently visible. -- under renovation, with promises of new displays on its reopening. -- The grounds are also nice and quite well kept, with lovely trees and lawns and flowers. Some machine guns, probably 1930's Italian era, guard the front entranceway."

*Ayder School:*

"The school sits in an ordinary poor residential district of Mekelle, across from a beautiful new hospital that has been built, reputedly, with the assistance of the all pervasive Sheikh Mohammed Al Amoudi. A clumsy fence surrounds the school, and the gate is marked by a simple sign.

Inside the grounds, the school has a look of normality -- It is still an active school, a mere bombing couldn't close a precious educational institution here."

"As you get closer to the buildings, the normality wears off. You can see the holes in the walls of the classrooms, where the shrapnel from the cluster bombs dug through the cement. One of the long classrooms has a huge hole in the roof, and other have chunks gouged out next to their windows. All this damage has been left as it is, a mute testimony to the destruction of June the 5th /2000/.

Inside the classroom with the hole in the roof is a museum to the killings. The desks of the students are still in the room -- Three students died in this classroom - the surprise is that more didn't. Along the wall are tables where the detritus of the attack is displayed, cardboard casing of the cluster bombs, anti-personnel canisters, metal shell casings. More riveting are the posters and photos that show the victims. Eleven children died in the attack, along with a teacher and a woman with a baby on her back. Their blood spattered bodies are shown in image after image."

"Perhaps the most horrifying thing was that the plane that attacked circled around and came back, attacking again the people who had rushed to aid victims of the first attack. This attack galvanized Ethiopia -- The country arose from the shock of the initial invasion into a steely and unified resolve, which eventually resulted in the defeat of Eritrea. -- For me the visit was shockingly moving and emotional, more than I had expected. I suspect the school will remain the major reminder of the bloody war with Eritrea."

[John Graham in AddisTribune 2000/09/08]

- 2001 Population about 119,200 in 2001 would make Mekele the sixth largest town in Ethiopia.  
Acting president of the Tigray regional government in 2001



- was Tsegay Berhe.  
Voice of the Revolution of Tigray (founded in 1985) broadcast 57 hours per week in 2001, in Tigrinya and Afar languages.
- 2003 The private Dashen Bank in May 2003 inaugurated its 28th branch in Ethiopia. Dr Solomon Inquay, Speaker of the House of Tigray National Regional State, was present at the ceremony.  
It was computerized and upgraded to Wide Area Network.  
[AddisTribune 2003/05/02]
- map Macallé 1:400,000 Istituto Geografico Militare 1909.  
texts C. Conti Rossini, La relazione di Pietro Felter sullo sgombero di Macale, *in Studi Etiopici* vol 3 1943 no 2;  
Admassou Shiferaou, Rapport sur la découverte d'antiquités trouvées dans les locaux du Gouvernement Général de Maqallé, *in Annales d'Éthiopie* 1955 vol 1 p 11-15;  
A. Caquot & A.J. Drewes, Les monuments recueillis à Maqallé (Tigré) *in Annales d'Éthiopie* 1955 vol 1 p 17-41;  
Gunilla Bjerén, Makelle (Ethiopia): Elementary school drop-out 1967, Uppsala/Sweden, Scand. Inst. of African Studies, Research Report 5, 1969;
- picts G Simon, L'Éthiopie .., Paris 1885 at p 344 view with house of the Nigus;  
G Massaia 1885-95 vol IX p 219 palace and surroundings, reproduced in *Ethiopia engraved* 1988 p 88;  
G Bianchi 1896 p 85 palace of Emperor Yohannes;  
F Wencker-Wildberg, Abessinien, Berlin 1935 pl 33 overall view, pl 34 palace of Emperor Yohannes, pl 35 distance view of ditto, with ruins;  
P Badoglio, The war in Abyssinia, New York 1937, opposite p 39 air photo with indication of the location of various parts of the Italian headquarters around December 1935;  
L'Industria in A.O.I, Roma 1939 p 278 camel caravan and mountains, and another photo of market with many people;  
Gli annali .., anno III vol I /Roma 1940/ p 804-805[1] outpatients clinic;  
Gli annali .., anno IV vol 4, Roma 1941 p 1186-1187[9] drawing by Lino Bianchi Barriviera;  
D Mathew, Ethiopia, London 1947 p 230 air view of palace and its hill;  
D Buxton, Travels .., London 1949(1957) p 96-97[4] house of local type with steps to flat roof;  
P Hartlmaier, Amba Ras, Frankfurt/Main 1953 (Golden lion, London 1956) pl 48 (pl 23) round building: former royal residence?  
pl 60 (pl 29) close-up photo of Ras Seyum;  
Beckingham & Huntingford, The Prester John .. vol I, Cambridge 1961 p 181 camel caravan with salt;  
Liberation Silver Jubilee, A.A. 1966 p 84 HQ of governorate-general;  
Ethiopia Observer vol XI /1967/ no 4 p 297 the palace;  
C Monty, Éthiopie .., Paris 1968 p 55 school children;  
Addis Reporter 1969 no 29 p 15 the palace;  
Camerapix guide 1995 p 108-109 part of the town with church and landscape behind;  
T Pakenham, The mountains of Rasselas, London 1998 (luxury ed.) p 72, 74 colour photos of type of landscape in the area;  
Svenska journalen 1988 no 9 p 18-19 famine relief camp with tents;  
J Hammond, Fire from the ashes (Red Sea Press) 1999 p 222-223[6] at the Green Hotel, [8] shops at market, [10-11] metal workshop in former prison.
- Mekele : Adi Gera**  
This village near Mekele was burnt by Derg government soldiers on 4-5 June 1988.

[Africa Watch 1991]

**Mekele : Bahri**

This village near Mekele was burnt by Derg government soldiers on 4-5 June 1988.

[Africa Watch 1991]

**Mekele : Debri**

A pleasant excursion is to Debri Falls, about 7 km south of the town. They are not as high as the Romanat Falls, but they are just as picturesque. The road past Abraha Castel Hotel ends at an old /Italian-time/ airport which is strewn with rusted machinery. From here, walk towards the village visible to the southwest. Soon a canyon appears. Walk along the edge of it to the left for about 100 m and the falls are heard straight ahead.

[Welcome to Ethiopia, A.A. circa 1965 p 69]

**Mekele : Inda Iyesus** (Enda Yasus)

Outside Mekele 4.5 km in the direction of Kwiha.

The village of Adi Iyesus is nearby.

1895

The Italian fort at Mekele was situated in the old church of Enda Yasus and its graveyard; the tombstones had been broken and fitted together to form the fort's outer walls. Begun on 18 October 1895 and still unfinished, the fort was small and badly placed, being commanded by a mountain ridge on the north. At the fall of Amba Alage on 7 December the fort was not yet fully supplied. The defenders had only 300,000 cartridges and a few thousand shells with which to withstand the imperial army. More seriously, the water supply was outside the fort. [Henze]

"One of the two churches in Meqelle was an ancient one, Enda Iyesus, built at an elevation of 2,225 meters. The Italians took over the church, after paying the priests 1,000 talers and giving a guarantee that they would build another in its place. They proceeded to burn down all habitations in the vicinity to eliminate places for ambush, and summarily executed a 50-year-old priest and his acolyte who were accused of threatening one of their askaris."

"Major Galliano was in command with about 1,300 men and their women; the latter included some camp-followers while the others were wives of the soldiers. At midnight on 7 December, terrible cries were heard from the women's quarter. The survivors of Amba Alage were straggling in. -- The population of the fort at Meqelle was increased by more than 100 wounded survivors."

[C Prouty, Empress Taytu ..., 1986 p 144-145]

On 7 December the imperial army appeared before Mekele. Several of their tents were pitched 6,500 metres from the fort, well outside the range of the Italian guns. On the 8th there was the first of a number of attacks which lasted, intermittently, until 11 Jan., when a final attempt failed.

When Toselli lost more than 2,000 men on 7 December 1895, General Arimondi was barely able to extract himself and retreated with 400 survivors to Mekele. Since the fort there was not yet complete, Arimondi left the wounded with the garrison and retreated all the way up to the pass south of Adigrat.

While Ras Makonnen moved his forces up to Mekele, Menilek and Taytu led their huge army up the escarpment at Alamata and past lake Ashenge. The imperial army was joined to Ras Makonnen's at Mekele on 6 January 1896. [Henze]

"Ras Mekonnen made his camp a few kilometers from Meqelle and for a month, aside from isolated sniping episodes, neither side made an aggressive move. Messengers went between the Enda Iyesus fort at Meqelle and Mekonnen's camp with polite communications. Mekonnen wrote to Galliano on 12 December saying that he regretted the shedding of Christian blood at Amba Alage, which had been attacked without his orders, but that he was prepared to resume talks. Galliano queried General Baratieri on this offer. Baratieri referred it to Rome. No action was taken because Prime Minister Crispi's thoughts were not on peace, but on revenge for Amba Alage."

"On instructions from the high command, Galliano, on 18 December, sent Lt. Partini to keep alive the notion in Mekonnen's camp that Italy was keenly interested in negotiations.

Partini left the fort with an interpreter and was met about 20 minutes down the pathway by an escort of 50 men who guided him to Mekonnen's tent. He was allowed to sleep in the tent of Lt. Scala who had been captured at Amba Alage. They spent the night talking of Scala's experiences and guessing the strength and intentions of the Ethiopians. -- 'Mekonnen has many guns, many mules, many women ... about 25,000 soldiers.' Partini then rode 192 kilometres to Adigrat to report, covering the journey there and back in four days -- Partini's movements as well as all the mail received in the fort were through the courtesy of Ras Mekonnen who patrolled all access routes."

"By 26 December, Mekonnen had run out of patience with the obviously deliberate delays from the Italian side. -- Still /on 29 December/ Mekonnen requested, and Galliano granted, the services of Dr. Mozzetti to care for the distinguished Ras Mengesha Atikem who had been injured in a fall from his horse. -- Dr. Mozzetti -- was struck by the aristocratic manners, courtesy and hospitality he had received, and found his patient's question, 'Why are the Italians invading my country,' rather embarrassing."

[Prouty p 145-146]

1896

Pietro Felter arrived at Adigrat, and General Baratieri asked him to do everything he could to delay movement of the enemy for 20 days to give him time for reinforcements to arrive from Italy. Felter /well known to Mekonnen from Harar/ arrived at Mekonnen's camp on 5 January 1896. Just before Felter's arrival, Mekonnen had sent what amounted to an ultimatum to Galliano. Mekonnen offered to have all the people in the fort escorted safely to Massawa.

"The army of Emperor Menilek was joined to Ras Mekonnen's forces on 6 January 1896. -- 'In the space of an hour the hills were literally covered with human beings --' It was also the day before Ethiopian Christmas when the fasting period ended. Empress Taytu's nephew, Dejazmach Gesesse, arrived from Semen with sheep, cows and great containers of butter, another tribute to her masterful planning."

"Pietro Felter awoke on the morning of 7 January to the sound of machine-gun fire. This time it was not the hot-headed Fitawrari Gebeyehu who had started a battle, but a runaway mule. The owner chased after his valuable beast and the occupiers of Fort Enda Iyesus fired on him. The emperor gave the order to return fire and thus began the real siege of Meqelle."

"It had been Menilek's intention to bypass Meqelle, leaving a detachment there to keep the Italians bottled up in the fort while he proceeded with the bulk of the army towards the main Italian strength at Adigrat. Instead, for the whole day, each side lobbed shells at the other with no appreciable damage being done."

"Ras Mekonnen volunteered to lead an infantry attack on the fort. This assault began at 10 o'clock on the morning of 8 January and was met with a stalwart defense. Ras Mekonnen was slightly wounded, and some 500 casualties lay on the slopes when he ordered retreat at nightfall. Inside the fort there were six dead and nine wounded from the artillery barrage."

(Wencker-Wildberg:) The Ethiopian cannons aimed too high up on the first day, but after they had adjusted there was much more damage to the fort on the second day.

"Empress Taytu, her brother Ras Wele, and Ras Mengesha Yohannes were reported to have opposed this frontal assault which had ended as they had foreseen with many dead and no penetration of the fort. It was Taytu's idea --, the chronicler reports, to capture the water supply of the Italian redoubt. The emperor gave his approval after reconnaissance had been carried out by Liqemekwas Abate -- and by Azaj Zamanuel -- who agreed that it could be done. -- Just before dawn on 9 January, 900 men from the empress's contingent crept down into the ravine. They built a barricade to protect themselves from enfilading fire, though in fact there was no possible line of fire from the fort to the ravine. They then settled down for the next two weeks, well supplied by the empress with food and drink."

"Major Galliano ordered immediate rationing of fluids. He was concerned, but expected a relief column to free him and his people from any uncomfortable hardship. Each Christian askari was allotted one-third of a liter of water per day and a tot of beer, wine or rum. The teetotal Muslims and the Italians each received half a liter of water. -- Galliano ordered a

reduction in population of the fort. Women not legally married to an ascari, and their children, of whom there were about 100, were ordered to leave the fort. However, many of the expelled women returned at night and their male friends threw them ropes and drew them up over the parapet."

[C Prouty, Empress Taytu .., 1986 p 146-148]

"On 13 January Ras Mekonnen requested an armistice so that he could bury his dead. Galliano refused unless Mekonnen would order his army to retreat 11 kilometers. -- the Ethiopians declined, and the stink of rotting bodies below the fort was an additional plague for those inside. -- Apart from occasional firing by either side, dead silence prevailed after 13 January."

"A woman messenger from Adigrat succeeded in reaching the fort on 18 January. She told Major Galliano that not a single soldier had moved out of Adigrat to relieve him. She returned to Adigrat taking Galliano's message. -- By 17 January, Menilek and Felter had reached an agreement and Felter galloped to Edaga Hamus, some 65 kilometers away, with Menilek's terms. -- Inside the fort on 19 January, the quartermaster distributed the last drops of water. -- Later that evening an emissary arrived with a letter from General Baratieri. -- 'In the name of His Majesty King Umberto, cede the fort at Meqelle to the *negus* of Abyssinia.'"

"The Italian officers may have regretted that their heroic defense had ended in capitulation, but the dying askaris and their women were overjoyed, It was not until the following afternoon at 5 o'clock that the garrison was permitted to draw 30 barrels of water from the stream.."

"The miserable Galliano was received by the emperor honorably the following morning and given a handsome mule; the exodus of the Italian force began. It took them two hours just to cross the encampment which was seething with people. The next few days were spent arranging the purchase of transport animals for the wounded. There was only enough cash in the fort's strong box to pay for half the required number, but Menilek agreed to advance additional mules against future payment."

"The Italian forces were permitted to take their rifles, cannon and loaded machine guns with them, over the fiercely expressed objections of the Tigrayan chiefs and Empress Taytu. The evacuees had to be protected by Ras Mekonnen's men from soldiers who did not share Menilek's repugnance for winning a victory by creating a drought. -- The Mekelle area had been denuded of provisions and fuel."

Prouty p 149-150]

A fifteen-day siege of the Italians ended on 21 January, and the Ethiopian flag was raised over Enda Iyesus. Menilek let the survivors leave with their arms and go back to Adigrat.

[P B Henze, Layers of time, London 2000 p 167-168]

"The Italian public avidly absorbed the emotional reports in their newspapers of the '45-day siege of Meqelle,' eager to believe that a small, brave band of their countrymen had held out against repeated assaults by 'war-crazed black barbarians.' Subsequent study had shown that the siege lasted only 15 days. Nevertheless, there remains every reason to praise the defenders of Meqelle fort as brave men and women."

[Prouty p 144]

Menilek was manoeuvring to lure the Italians out of their fortress into open combat against the numerically superior Ethiopians. The most apparent and compelling reason to liberate the garrison, however, was the need to reposition and resupply the imperial army in the comparatively bountiful Adwa region. To accomplish this the emperor had to protect his army's flank.

Accordingly, Mekele's Italian defenders were offered free passage, with their arms and baggage, to rejoin their compatriots at Idaga Hamus. In view of the fort's encirclement and lack of water, Baratieri had no choice but to accept the proposal. The emperor directed that the Italians march in full panoply alongside the Ethiopians, thus protecting his flank from Baratieri's army. The general was frustrated, but could do nothing.

[Marcus, Menelik II, (1975)1995 p 166-167]

1935 When the Italians had occupied Mekele in October 1935, Marshal De Bono soon visited

the ruins of Fort Enda Iyesus to pay homage to those who fought there forty years earlier.

The plain of Enda Iyesus in 1935-1936 was the headquarters of the *Comando Superiore A.O.* and a base of the *Intendenza* and various other Italian military services, with an airfield.

[Guida 1938]

In the beginning of the 1935-36 war, the radio transmitter in Asmara was used to communicate with Rome, but soon a transmitter erected at Enda Iyesus became the main centre for radio traffic, and during the large battles in northern Ethiopia in February-March 1936 as many as 800 radio telegraph units were in operation. Climatic conditions were favourable, so radios often reached over considerably larger distances in Africa than in Europe.

[R von Xylander, *Die Eroberung ...*, Berlin 1937 p 66]

1938 Around 1938 there were about 300 Ethiopians and 45 Italians at Enda Iyesus.

There was post, *spaccio* with restaurant, Italian centre and various barracks.

[Guida 1938]

texts V. Mantegazza, *Gli italiani in Africa: L'assedio di Macallè*, Firenze 1896, 526 pages;

F. Paronelli, *Amba Alagi e Macallè: Una pagina di storia coloniale*,

colle biografie di Toselli e Galliano, 1896, 112 pages;

Rudini, Caetani & Ricotti, *Avvenimenti d'Africa - Amba Alagi - Macallé*

(Documenti relativi alla politica coloniale italiana 28) Roma, April 1896, 64 p.;

Documenti sul combattimento d'Amba Alagi e sulla difesa di Macallè,

Roma 1896, 104 pages;

G. Moltedo, *L'assedio di Macallè*, Roma 1901, 232 pages;

G.B. Raimondo, *L'assedio di Macallè*, Finalborgo 1901;

A. Riguzzi, *Macallè - Diario - Quarantacinque giorni di assedio*, Palermo 1901, 88 p.

**Mekele : Geba** (river)

To the west of the almost treeless Mekele plain; it is a tributary of the Tekezze.

**Mekele : Gobo Zena** (Gobozena)

This village near Mekele was burnt by Derg government soldiers on 4-5 June 1988.

[Africa Watch 1991]

**Mekele : Grarot**

This village near Mekele was burnt by Derg government soldiers on 4-5 June 1988.

[Africa Watch 1991]

**Mekele : Issala**

This village near Mekele was burnt by Derg government soldiers on 4-5 June 1988.

[Africa Watch 1991]

**Mekele : Rabea**

This village near Mekele was burnt by Derg government soldiers on 4-5 June 1988.

[Africa Watch 1991]

HEU91	Mekele wereda (-1994-) <i>Meken</i> , ethnic group, see Me'en <i>meken</i> (mäqän) (A) on the side; <i>kennya</i> (O) part of wall, cross-piece	13/39	[n]
HEK06	Meken Kenia, see under Debre Tabor	11/38	[WO]
HCS42c	Mekena, locality north-west of Hosaina	07/37	[20]
HEL27	Mekena (Mechena, Mekina) (mountains) 11°58'/39°05' 2316 m, see under Lalibela The Mekena market was regarded as important for horses and mules in the 1800s.	11/39	[+ WO Gu Gz]
HEE29	Mekena Maryam (Machina Maryam) 11°06'/39°17' (church) west of Dessie "Two hours' walk from Genete Maryam is the remote church of Machina Maryam, said traditionally to have been constructed by King Gebre Meskel in the 4th century. The church is constructed under an overhanging rock in a natural cave; to the north, there used to be a monastery."	11/39	[Gz 20]

"Its beautiful frescoes are the main attraction -- The church also contains many bricked-up tombs. -- The church is very little visited, but is well worth the long - and in parts steep - ascent."

[Lonely planet 2000 p 209]

- HEL27 Mekena Medhane Alem (Makina M.A.) 12/39 [x]  
(church built in a cave, same as Mekena Maryam above?)  
at two hours walk above Genete Maryam
- picts B Playne, Saint George .., London 1954  
p 160 drawing of Mechena Medhane Alem, 162 part of frieze;  
G Gerster, Kirchen im Fels, Stuttgart 1968 pl 100-109 with comment p 112;  
D Buxton, The Abyssinians, London 1970 pl 50 the cave church;  
G Gerster, Äthiopien, Zürich 1974 pl 53 same/?! colour photo as next one;  
National Geogr. Mag. vol 138 Dec 1978 p 864 colour photo
- HEL27 Mekena sub-district (centre in 1964 = Lam Wiha) 11/39 [Ad]  
HDU02 Mekenacho (Mek'enach'o, Meqenacho) 09/39 [Gz q]  
09°59'/39°31' 2400 m, west of Sela Dingay
- ?? *mekene* (mäkänä) (A) be or become sterile; (T) frame  
Mekene Gol (Makana Gol) (historical church) ../. [ + Pa]  
Emperor Zara Yaqob (1434-1468) before 1440 built two churches in the land of Tsehay in Amhara. One was called Mekene Gol and the other Debre Negodgwad.  
[Pankhurst, .. Chronicles 1967 p 35]
- HDS72 Mekera Kir (Abbat) (mountain) 10°38'/37°46' 3316 m 10/37 [Gz]  
meket: *meketa* (A) barricade, barrier; interior wall
- HEL03 Meket (area), see under Debre Zebit 11/38 [WO]  
HEL03 Meket wereda (Mekit ..) (in the 1990s) 11/38 [n]  
HEK49 Meketewa (Mek'et'ewa, Meqetewa, Mak'at'awa) 12/38 [Gz q WO]  
(Mechettoa, Mecheloa, Mechiet) 12°11'/38°21' 1964 m
- HEK39 Meketewa sub-district (centre in 1964 = Agisa) 12/38 [Ad]  
GDU85c Mekezen 10/34 [LM]
- meki, maki* (O?) kinds of wild fig tree, *Ficus* spp. ;  
*maki* (O) woolen fabric
- HDE04 **Meki** (Mek'i, Meqi, Maki, Machi, Macchi) 08/38 [Gz Po WO Gu]  
MS: 08°05'/38°50'; Gz: 08°09'/38°49' 1636 m  
(with sub-post office), north of lake Ziway  
MS coordinates would give map code HCT94  
a little more to the south.
- 1920s Visitors in early 1927 found that there was a kind of bridge over the Meki river which could be passed by a motorcar. A foreign farmer in the area had initiated to modify a large tree trunk which had grown more or less across over the water.  
[K Lubinski, Hochzeitsreise .., Leipzig 1929 p 57]  
Possibly a little later in 1927 the Swedish BV missionary Anna-Lena Jönsson was at the main ford. There were so much cattle that she thought it was the only good watering place for quite a large neighbourhood. Her caravan climbed up during about an hour to escape the cattle and wanted to make their camp near a village. The elders there wanted to chase them away, because they felt they would be responsible if a *shifita* attack or anything else happened to the foreigner. Miss Anna-Lena made a speech and told them that they had their own weapons and that they would take full responsibility themselves for their safety. They were then given permission to camp and stay overnight.  
Two men which seemed to be outsiders said that they would sleep near Anna-Lena's camp. They were believed to be potential thieves, so one of her men made his bed between them and stayed armed there. Nothing happened during the night, even if there was risk of shooting. Anna-Lena's caravan continued towards Suksuki.

- [A-L Jönsson, En karavanfärd ..., Sthlm 1927 p 70-76]
- 1960s The first of several Bailey prefabricated steel bridges acquired by the Highway Authority was opened to traffic in January 1961 over the Woja river 25 km from Meki on the Meki-Butajira road. This bridge had a span of 15 metres.  
[Ethiopian Herald]  
"At Maki (133 kms from A.A.) petrol is available and tires can be repaired. Next to the petrol station in the village is a small bar."  
[Welcome to Ethiopia, A.A. circa 1965 p 52]  
Population 2,992 as counted in 1967. In the telephone book of that year there were four numbers, for Bekele Molla, Habte Bahiru, Sebsibe Bego, Taddese Giru.  
The Emperor inspected some public works at Meki on 11 March 1968.  
The primary school in 1968 had 206 boys and 52 girls, with 3 teachers.  
Bekele Molla Hotel around 1969 had 13 double rooms.  
The same chain also had a motel at Meki.
- 1970s "Before the end of March /1974/ peasants in Meki -- rose against landlords, burning the harvests and the houses of the latter and expelling some of them; while the peasants went about settling old grievances and struggling to restore confiscated lands the repressive police moved in, killing a dozen peasants and arresting hundreds."  
[Addis Hiwet, Ethiopia from autocracy .., London 1975 p 107]  
There were reports of attacks on farms outside Meki around 30 March 1974.  
"At least 15 persons are reported killed. -- About ten of them were hacked to death by knives and spears and the bodies of three of them were found in wells."  
[News]  
There was a petrol filling station of Agip (-1978-).  
Spelling used by the post was MEKI around 1974-80.
- 1980s Population about 11,200 in 1984.
- 1990s Meki is of no great interest in itself, but it's a well-equipped little town with several restaurants, pastry shops and dollar-a-night hotels, and there is a Bekele Mola Hotel behind the Agip Garage on the Ziway side of town. Meki is the best base for exploring Koka Dam, which fringes the main road about 20 km back towards Mojo.  
[Bradt 1995(1998)]  
Population about 20,500 in 1994, almost a doubling in ten years, and about 25,200 in 2001.
- 2000s There is an Apostolic Vicariate of the Roman Catholic Church (-2001-).
- HDL35 Meki (Mek'i, Meqi) 09°20'/38°56' 2900 m 09/38 [AA Gz q]  
north-west of Sendafa
- ?? Meki (in Wello) ../.. [n]  
On 5 and 14 October 1990 there were government air raids on Meki in Wello, with five killed and six wounded.  
[Africa Watch 1991]
- mekicho: *mikichio*, *mekichu* (Sidamo O) kind of small /occasionally large/ tree, *Ilex mitis*, also brown olive, *Olea africana*, a medium-sized tree
- HDD09 Mekicho (Mek'icho, Meqicho) 08°09'/38°23' 2133 m 08/38 [Gz q]  
near Butajira
- HDL65 Mekicho 09°39'/38°53' 2625 m, south-east of Fiche 09/38 [AA Gz]  
see under Debre Libanos
- HEL29 Mekidela (Mek'idela, Meqidela) 11/39 [Gz]  
11°58'/39°16' 2382 m
- HEL03 Mekit, see Meket
- HCC37 Mekiyo 05°44'/37°19' 2127 m 05/37 [Gz]  
north-west of Gidole

HDB54	Meko (Maco, I.) (area)	08/36	[+ WO]
HDB63	Meko (Maco) 08°41'/36°02' 2154 m (administrative centre, with church)	08/36	[Gz Ad WO]
HDK88	Meko 09°50'/38°17' 2492 m south-west of Tulu Milki	09/38	[AA Gz]
HDK99	Meko 09°57'/38°24' 2081 m, near Tulu Milki	09/38	[AA Gz]
HDB63	Meko Sachi wereda & sub-district (Mekosachi ..) (centre of both in 1964 = Meko) the one in Arjo awraja?	08/36	[+ Ad]
H...	Meko sub-district (-1997-)	../..	[n]
H...	Meko Wedajo (centre in 1964 of Weglo sub-district)	../..	[Ad]
HDK49	Mekoda (Mocoda) 09°28'/38°21' 2301 m (with church Rufa'el at some distance to the south)	09/38	[AA Gz]
HE..	Mekomia Maryam (centre in 1964 of Sikelt sub-district)	12/37	[Ad]
JDJ35	Mekora (Mek'ora, Meqora) 09°20'/42°07' 1865 m, north-west of Harar	09/42	[Gz q]
HDD26	Mekorkor (Macorcor, Maqorqor) (village) A church there was burnt after the Muslim Gurage leader Hassen Injamo had taken power around 1878. [12th Int. Conf. of Ethiopian Studies 1994 p 712]	08/38	[x WO n]
HD...	Mekosachi, in Arjo awraja The primary school in 1968 had 156 boys and 19 girls in grades 1-5, with two teachers.	08/36?	[Ad]
HDU84	Mekoy 10°44'/39°45' 2105 m north-east of Were Ilu	10/39	[Gz]
??	Mekre (Mäkré) ("place of transit"), cf Mekare When Bä'edä Maryam (1468-1478) visited the provinces, Mäkré was described to him as a "place of transit" in the same area as the important market town of Gende Belo. [Pankhurst 1997]	../..	[+ Pa]
HDD64	Meksa 08°46'/37°56' 3072 m midway between Ambo and Weliso	08/37	[Gz]
HDK76	Meksa 09°41'/38°04' 1708 m	09/38	[AA Gz]
HFE93	Mekwam (Mequam) 14°27'/38°45' (small fort, now ruin, Italian: Fortino Mequam) north of Aksum, near border river of Eritrea <i>mekwan</i> (T) 1. place; 2. barren, sterile	14/38	[+ Gu Gz]
HEE85	Mekwat sub-district (Mequat ..) (centre in 1964 = Filakit)	11/38	[+ Ad]
HEJ44	Mekwenta 12°12'/37°01' 1845 m north of the eastern part of lake Tana	12/37	[Gz]