

## [Harari\_Revival] Harar Review/Who rules Harar

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By Salah Khairo Contin.....

The other edge of this by pass street ends just next to the most famous gate of Harar, Assma DinBeri, on which the phrases &ldquo;Babul Nasri&rsquo; and &ldquo;Sannah&rdquo; are written in Arabic, and the bustling marketing centre, Assma DinBeri Megalla. They are busy, noisy and crowded marketing places in Harar where people residing in the city and near by towns would come and exchange goods and services. I believe that millions of Birrs are changing hands everyday in rather small but crowded shops and stores retailing primary and manufactured commodities including consumer items, contraband goods, furniture and office supplies, etc.

The qat market, Harar bus station, government offices, commercial banks and insurance companies, telecommunication and postal services, hotels and restaurants, grain mills, clinics, taxi ranks, police station, etc, are just there next to one another. As a result it is not uncommon to hear stories of robbery, disputes, acts of physical violence and corruption reported at the police station inside the guard houses of the main gate. This market is the orbit of Harar.

I know the area very well and most of the shop owners in and around the market because my father operated few businesses there and my parent&rsquo;s house in which I grew up is not far off. Consequently, every time I happened to be in Harar, it has been my tradition to visit some of my friends and people I have known, chat with them and briefly study some of the changes that have occurred in their lives and environment.

Readers who are interested to experience some of the hustle and bustle of Assma DinBeri market may click on the following link. The pictures were uploaded by A. Davey on December 2007.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/adavey/sets/72157603389964990/show/>

&ldquo;There has not been many changes in the market since my last visit in July 2007,&rdquo; I said to one of the Gurage businessman I know to find out what he has to say and trigger discussion.

"You must be joking Salah." He said.

"I am serious and can you tell some of the changes you have seen", I requested.

He started numbering them.

"There are too many people who are strangers to Harar. We don't know who is healthy or sick; who is thief and who is not.

"There are many more mini taxis running around "

"Streets are turned marketing platform for selling fruits and vegetables and so access to the market is not easy"

"Many people died of HIV AIDS , there are many are living on medication and it seems that they care less not to infect others

"Ato Belay, Agote Mohammed Abdusalam, Agote, Seman Gebgabe, Agote Abdella Nuro, Agote Muhee Debello, Agote Hassen Sheffaw, Ato Damena Yerdaw, Miss Achamelesh Gofu, etc are the richest business people who are leading the show by operating multimillion birr investment projects in mercantile and capital trades."

"Does any one of these richest people of Harar make any contribution to the development of Harar?", was my second question.

"Of course, they do in that they open economic and employment opportunities for others," He answered.

"I mean do they assist Harar at the time of need?" I said correcting my question.

&ldquo;Not that I know of&rdquo; said my friend.

&ldquo;Why?, asked I.

&ldquo;Because they are not Hararis,&rdquo; he replied.

&ldquo;Ok, is there any Harari who rivals these individuals in Harar in wealth or business?&rdquo; was my other question.

&ldquo;I think that there may be one or two,&rdquo; and then started naming them one after another the people i have already known.

Yes, I have known Ato Belay since 1993. He came to Harar out of no where, built a three story building in the middle of Assma DinBerri Market and started a Hotel business under hiname &ldquo;Belay Bulilding" and now leased to "Awash Bank?". He is a short and skinny guy with round and small face and fluffy hair. He is simple and humble, qat fee and non smoker who prefers to talk more in Oromifa than Amharic although he is of Amhara ethnic background.

He does not have any formal education. Yet, he managed to secure a license as a building contractor and consequently secured several contracts to build multimillion birr projects managed by the Harari government. He is well known for his generosity of financial incentives or dividends to people who do business with him or the stakeholders. He has been publicly honored and provided an award by the Harari President, Murad Abdulhadi, for projects that he had poorly accomplished.

Ato Belay is now neither reachable, nor touchable because he is one of the most powerful businessmen in Harar who exerts his influence beyond the realm of Harari government. It has always been the talk of the town as to how he could manage to secure these valuable building projects in Harar in spite of the fact that there are many Harari contractors.

What a success story to Ato Belay and his associates in the land of Hararis for the son of Menillick and Hailesellasi.

Remember this man is not one of the children but gentile of Harar. According to the teaching of Jesus it would have been Haram to feed the gentile and starve the children. This is for those who ponder and reflect. What does the objective and benefit of the affirmative constitution?

I can talk about individual "Agotes" too if you wish.

On the other hand, Towfiq Abubaker is a Harari who makes a living at Assma Dinbee Market. His father had a barber shop and was a devote Muslim who supported his family out of small income he earned by operating the shop. Awe Abubaker has recently passed away and so his son, Towfiq, took over the role of looking after his mother and siblings by retailing Diesel fuel and gasoline in an old can and scoop, at the intersection of the main gate entrance and "Zegah Uggah" street, sitting amidst a crowd of woman who are selling vegetables and fruits. He is a kind of a comic. Every good thing you talk about the Harari government, he just smiles, turns his face way and say, i strongly disagree.

In front of him a store owned and operated by Awe Haji Ali Khairo who is a member of the Harari Parliament (MP), the chairman of 40 Harari Association (afochas) and long term guardian of Harar Cemetery, Awebdal,

I had a chat with him about Harar, its people and administration.

To be continued