



RESEARCH ARTICLE

HERITAGE AND ITS CONSERVATION IN DIRE DAWA: VANISHING HISTORY OF KEZIRA

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ABSTRACT

Urban centers are heritage by themselves. Cultural heritages are non renewable and non replaceable. Once destroyed, it has gone for good and could not be revived, and replaced in its authentic form. Heritage need protection by laws. In the absence of protective laws, cities would be destroyed by regeneration. The article is aimed at exploring the status of Cultural Heritage in the city of Dire Dawa with particular emphasis on Kezira quarter. This is mainly because some of cultural heritage of Kezira has gone. The study revealed that Kezira's landscape is under major menace of Local Development Project, which has already demolished some of its cultural heritage, hence in appalling condition to vanish its history and identity. The main driving force is the Local Development Project. The absence of strong and effective relevant legislation has given an impetus to LDP. The legal framework for Heritage Conservation of the city has gaps as shown from its failure stop the indiscriminate destruction of its heritage. Failure to address each other among various offices of the city, lack of awareness and lack of commitment are among the factors that contribute to the destruction of cultural heritage, thus vanishing history of Kezira. The article concluded that the condition is more serious that need immediate intervention. Kezira and its landscape deserve designation as cultural heritage of Ethiopia. It recommended the possible solutions for saving kezira's heritage through Historic landscape strategy, thereby protecting the history of Dire Dawa. This article is a kind of a call to conserve the cultural heritage of Kezira and its history threatened by local development project.

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INTRODUCTION

Heritage is selective in its nature, so it is selective from human activities. The aim of heritage protection is to pass on this selection of things with their values intact and in authentic condition to the next generation. Heritage and History are the bedrock for the identity of a certain community or nation, and have un-replaceable value for humanity as one of pillars for sustainable economic development, cooperation among different cultural groups, and as source of information for scientific research. All this attributed values of heritage can be exploited when we manage to protect them from destruction so as to transfer to the next generation (Lambert and Schofield, 243). In this paper, the word heritage is used to refer cultural heritage or used interchangeably. Conservation of cultural heritage is imperative to assure witness to change and continuity of humanity through time and space.

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By its nature, heritage is non-renewable, and once destroyed generations lose them forever. Thus, heritage demand protection through coordinated effort so as to transfer from a generation to generation. That is why it remained the concern of United Nations since 1970s and extended responsibility to its members to adopt legal measures to protect heritage. As signatories of United Nations, Ethiopia has enacted the Proclamation No. 209/2000, and setup the Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage (ARCCH, from here on) "to manage, conserve and use responsibly cultural heritages" (Pro. No.209/2000,preamble). Cultural Heritage is defined as "...the product of creativity and labor of man ...which has a major value in its scientific, historical, cultural, artistic and handicraft content"(ARCCH, Pro. No. 209/2000, art.3(4)). In more elaboration, buildings, memorial places, monuments and palaces attached to the ground with a foundation constitute what is termed as Immovable Tangible Cultural heritage (ARCCH, Pro.No.209/2000, art 1(6), Art. 3(7:b, 8,b)). In Ethiopia 'Conservation' is defined as "a general protection and preservation activity carried on a Cultural Heritage without changing its antique content" (ARCCH, Proc. 209/ 2000). All Ethiopians, starting from individuals, the society to the regional states have the responsibility to

conserve Cultural Heritage. This is because cultural heritage is "...indispensable source of information for the purpose of study and research, and plays major role in enabling the next generation to acquire profound and extensive awareness about its culture and history..."(ARCCCH, Pro.No.209/2000).

It is along aforementioned justifications and problems that the article is conducted to extend efforts to conserve the heritage of Kezira and its landscape thereby protecting history and identity of Dire Dawa which is threatened by the urban regeneration of Kezira.¹ The Local Development Project (LDP from here on) is a form of urban regeneration in the city of Dire Dawa being implemented by demolishing indiscriminately the earlier built heritage of Kezira. The LDP has endangered the survival and continuity of Kezira and its landscape in its authentic form and threatened the entire landscape of Kezira. Thus, it is on the verge of vanishing history of Kezira and Dire Dawa. This destruction needs immediate solution because still there is time to preserve the Heritage of Kezira.

Morphology of Dire Dawa: Kezira- Heritage, History and Identity Overview

Dire Dawa is unique in its urban morphology in history of urbanization in modern Ethiopia. Dire Dawa was not an outgrowth of garrison towns which holds true for most of urban centers- towns and cities; rather it was the construction of the railway company. Dire Dawa is a rail way city for the establishment of the city dates the first day of the arrival of the rail train on December 23, 1902 at its terminal point.² In an independent Ethiopia, Dire Dawa has special because of its two early quarters namely Kezira(European quarter) and Magala(Natives quarter). Kezira and Magala, which constituted the city of Dire Dawa were formed following the rail way stations. This early center popularly known as Kezira/*Gezira*, an Arabic word for town, was curved for European nationals of the railway company employee. Magala- a Somali word for a village, was residence for non-European foreign nationals and Ethiopians. Such dichotomy represents some feature of colonial cities as explained by professor Shiferaw Bekele.³ This is the unique character of Dire Dawa and unique in Ethiopia.

Everything about Dire Dawa starts from the landscape Kezira with the railway terminal as its hub. Kezira flourished along with the establishment of the rail way terminal. Dire Dawa was mentioned as the first planned city in Ethiopia simply because of Kezira which was established by plan but not Magala. Kezira has almost exclusively dominated the artistic work on Dire Dawa. The railway terminal has a big compound of its own which is a collection of different buildings, workshops and rail machines. The whole landscape of workshop represent industrial heritage of the city *per se*.⁴ History and heritage of Dire Dawa are embedded in Kezira's built heritages and landscape. It was due to Kezira that a lot has been written and said about Dire Dawa. The total landscape of kezira with its early buildings, streets, and symbols, early hotels, schools, hospital like French hospital, bank, religious center, palaces, residential buildings are witness to history of Dire Dawa. Kezira is home to construction of hotels and bars with the first hotel built in 1903. Hotel Continental, which was built around 1906, is one among the early hotels in Dire Dawa probably in Ethiopia. Continental hotel has greater significance as cultural heritage. First it is more than one hundred (100) years old.

Second it is a living witness to the evolution of the hotel industry in Dire Dawa and in Ethiopia in general.⁵ Makonnen Bar, founded in 1906 and renovated in 1940s, is inseparable from Kezira, the railway square and Dire Dawa for it is found in front of the railway station. The other hotel built in 1912 is now known by the name *Chemin De Fer* Bar and Restaurant. The house is one hundred years old and it has a decorated wall that inspires the city dwellers and strangers. It has a plaque with the year of its foundation written on it. However, it is not identified as cultural heritage of the city.⁶ Kezira and its landscape is home to buildings with similar story representing different time such as a 1919 built house known as Sheik Ibrahim Billissa's house, the Jews Residential Building with the Star of David built in 1925 (found written on the plaque of the building), the recently demolished Library villa.⁷ The buildings in Kezira are as old as the age of the city. Therefore they can testify the history and achievements of the society, identity of Kezira, urban morphology of Dire Dawa and serve as sources of cultural heritage tourism, sources of scientific knowledge, identity of Dire Dawa, thus, they deserve transfer to the next generation. Kezira and Dire Dawa have unique identity and feature in 20th century Ethiopia. The city of Dire Dawa and its societies were explained interns of Kezira which is the symbol of the Ethio-Djibouti railway. Dire Dawa is a railway city: Railway is an identity to Kezira, Kezira is an identity to Dire Dawa, and Dire Dawa is identity to modern land transportation system and technology in Ethiopia. The identification as rail way city is on the way to disappear as some of Kezira's earlier symbols, buildings, architecture and streets were already replaced by new ones. This is because of urban regeneration.

Kezira: Destruction of Cultural Heritage, lose of Identity and vanishing History

Ethiopian cities have preoccupied themselves with urban regeneration. Urban regeneration is conceived as a way for rapid growth and expansion of cities or towns which is planned to be accomplished by removing old buildings and building new ones instead. Urban regeneration became destructive to built heritages. Demolition of such original architectural buildings and landscape means destruction of heritage, identity and history. Dire Dawa has launched its LDP with regeneration of Kezira as its primary target. Thus, Kezira has become *prima facie* of Dire Dawa urban regeneration. Kezira and its landscape have been subjected to demolition. LDP, thus, has dealt a death blow to Kezira by removing its symbol and identity from the railway square. The rail train statue was placed in the center of the railway square just in front of the railway station office as statue of Kezira and Dire Dawa. The image of Dire Dawa as rail city with its rail symbol erected at railway square was removed and replaced by totally unrelated symbol in 2015.⁸

With the removal of the rail train from Kezira, it is not only Kezira that lost its identity but also Dire Dawa. Harar is identified by its Jugol walls, Awasa by its resorts, Bahir Dar by its palm tree and Dire Dawa by its rail. The removal of the rail train seemed refuting Kezira's image and is the unmaking of history Dire Dawa. It also represent lose of main tourist attraction center of Dire Dawa. The destruction of Kezira's identity is exhibited by dismantling its historic landscape along its road running from the square to Conel passing through the ticket office line. The early architectural buildings, landscape and symbols of Kezira and Dire Dawa are being demolished.

They are built at the heart of the early center of Kezira that remained so far as an identification to Dire Dawa and Kezira. The unmaking of history of Dire Dawa and Kezira is evident with the newly built buildings, on both side of Kezira's road, known as the Dashen bank building, and the ongoing *Nib* bank building. These building complexes are unrelated to history of Kezira in architecture, materials, style. They are buildings of 21st century architecture, raw materials, construction skills and technology.



Figure 1. The newly erected statue of Dire Dawa at railway square as a symbol of Kezira and railway city of Dire Dawa. Alas what a symbol!.(Source: Photo taken by the researcher)



Figure 2. The dismantled rail statue from the railway square (Source: obtained from the railway manger)

The threatened landscape: The more threatening issue is the unsettled issue of the railway workshop and its uncertain future. The railway station complex is a collection of industrial heritage laying on the entire landscape of the center of Kezira. It has administrative buildings, the workshop, forging shop, assembly workshop, smelter and boiler, the machine turning shop, milling and grinding, adjustment and maintenance, and rail cemetery. In nutshell, it constituted both movable and immovable heritage of Kezira, Dire Dawa and the Ethio-Djibouti railway.

Kezira is one of Cultural Heritage sites of Dire Dawa and Ethiopia. By definition, Cultural heritage site incorporate "any place or object with cultural, spiritual, aesthetic, historic, scientific/research or social significance for past, present and future generations" (ARCCH, 209/2000). Cultural Heritage site are places of historical, religious, or cultural significance at a local, state or national level.

The Status of Cultural Heritage Conservation: Causal Analysis

The baseline for Cultural Heritage Conservation (CHC) begins with legal framework which include the national and regional laws concerning CHC, legislation covering other areas such as environment like Environmental Impact Assessment. Heritage conservation needs patronage by legal framework-national-level policies and by public institutions. The government of Ethiopia has constitution, policy and proclamation and institutions like the ARCCH, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism at Federal government level for sustainable exploitation of Cultural Heritage. In this respect, Dire Dawa city administration has formed the Bureau of Trade, Industry and Investment (hereafter the Bureau) to deal with issues related to Cultural Heritage in the city administration under proclamation No.16/2010.⁹ The Bureau has been organized to deal and handle issues of trade, investment and industry in the administration with its power and duties stipulated in article 17 of the proclamation. Article 17 has twenty nine (29) sub-articles. Of these, sub-articles 13 to 24 deals with different issues related to cultural heritages found in the administration in one or other way. The Bureau has been given power-in17(13) to conduct study "on cultural and historical, and natural tourist attraction area; make registration, set standard and quality, administer, preserve and conserve as owner; as well as create conducive sustainable development to transfer for the generation".¹⁰

Sub-articles 14 and 15 are concerned with issues related to the promotion and development of tourism. The Bureau also facilitates conditions to create awareness about implementation of tourism development policies and strategies. Sub-art.17 states the importance of devising strategies to encourage and expand "...cultural asset as an input for development". The city administration has, thus, recognized the economic worth of heritage as it is stipulated in relation to tourism. Sub-article 18 states that the Bureau has been entrusted with the duty to "register and handle antiquities, history and culture of the people of the administration, cause to temporarily accreditation and protection". By definition, Dire Dawa's Cultural heritage embraces both movable and immovable properties that include prehistoric, historic, and ethno-graphic materials, as well as lands, buildings, and structures relevant to Dire Dawa's past. The above stated duties denote the intention of the administration that could be viewed as stepping stone that deserve appreciation. At the same time it has basic shortcomings discussed as follows.

Weakness: In terms of emphasis, more emphasis is given to intangible cultural heritage which is identified by the word "Culture". The tangible cultural heritage which is represented by the word "Antiquities" is given little emphasis and as a result tangible cultural heritages such as architectural building are almost ignored. It is only one sub-article 18, which mention about "Antiquities".

The Dire Dawa city administration proclamation has no single mention of the word "Cultural heritages". The word cultural heritages is replaced by 'Antiquities' and perceived as two different separate words-culture and heritage as it has been reflected in Amharic and English words. The definition of Cultural heritage by ARCCH is binding that works all over Ethiopia. ARCCH pro.No.209/2000, defined 'Cultural Heritage' as single word best in its Amharic version as "eTY".

To be precise it is “Antiquities” that stood for “Cultural Heritage”. It is, therefore, difficult to expect the protection, conservation and promotion of cultural heritages in the absence of relevant definition in legal and frame work. The usage of “Antiquities” in its proclamation at the presence of a term legally declared to serve as a guide and point of reference, is an evidence for lack of awareness. Moreover, the continued usage of the word could imply lack of concern for Cultural Heritage at both federal and city administration level Dire Dawa is a chartered city where federal proclamation is declared to be applicable. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and the ARCCCH could also take its share in failing to provide sufficient training and support for Region States as stated in article 10(ARCCCH, proc. No. 209/2000).

The weakness of legislation has failed efforts for conservation and concomitantly contributed to the destruction of cultural heritage. Such failure is problematic because the identification, documentation, conservation and promotion of cultural heritage depend on such laws, because, planners can only take cultural heritage into consideration if such resources are identified and documented. The Bureau has made limited effort to curtail the destruction of Kezira’s Cultural Heritages threatened by development. The inability of the Bureau may partially be explained in terms of the ways it was organized. To begin with, it seems that cultural heritage is given secondary importance. The primary reason for the existence of the Bureau is to expand and promote trade, industry and investment. The Bureau of Trade, Industry and Investment has created the Cultural and Tourism resource development main core process owners to deal with issues related to tourism and cultural heritage at the level of “Core Process Owner”. Such organizational placement by itself is paradoxical and problematic. The Bureau is assigned with two self contradicting duties and powers. In other words, it has to allow the expansion of industry and investment, and issue license of trade, and on the other hand it has to protect architectural buildings identified as cultural heritages which are located on area given for investors to construct new buildings. The other cause for destruction of cultural heritage of Kezira is failure to exploit the existing laws and lack of commitment. The Environmental Impact Assessment Proclamation, No.299/2002 at the Federal level, and Dire Dawa Environmental Impact Assessment Regulation, No.28/2010 at city administration level are promulgated to protect the destruction of cultural heritage by urban regeneration schemes. Accordingly, “any development plan cannot be approved before conducting impact assessment whether positive or negative.”¹¹ Thus, the LDP could have been implemented after securing approval and permission from the Environmental protection Authority. The impact of the development project on cultural heritages was not properly conducted. Moreover, the Bureau has failed to exploit its power entrusted to it by proclamation No.6/2010 of Dire Dawa. The Bureau is given by article 17(13), the power to “...register, administer, preserve and conserve as owner cultural and historical, and natural tourist attraction areas”.¹² Thus, the Bureau is expected to in exploit the proclamation and regulation to stop the demolition of cultural heritage of Kezira.

The way forward: Conserve Kezira’s Landscape

Kezira deserve Historical Cultural Landscape site. Cultural Heritage sites are firmly attached to cultural identity, territory, communities’ practices, history and practices of a society, and constitute Industrial centers, Recreation/sports and, Cemetery

and Commemorative/Memorial (World Bank, 2010). Kezira and its landscape including the railway station complex needs recognition as Cultural Heritage of Dire Dawa and Ethiopia. The forward for such designation of Kezira can be justified by the following criterion: At First, Kezira is important source of valuable information for historical, industrial (technological) and urban, Socio-cultural study. Thus, Kezira has invaluable evidential / scientific significance. Second, Kezira’s landscape in particular has Historic significance related to historical themes of the last quarter of 19th century European colonial grab, and the only single outlet as the means to connect Ethiopia which was destined to be cut off from foreign relation. The establishment and the signing of the railway constructing concession is related to the historical theme as colonial opposition against the 1889 treaty of Wuchale and the commencement of the railway after 1896 has unique theme as Ethiopia’s outlet at national level. It also has theme related to new and modern transportation system in Ethiopia. The construction of Kezira has created a milieu of social movements which has special attribute with the history of society. Third, Kezira as hub of Railway station is an Industrial heritage *per se*. This is because the railway station complex is not only witness to new industrial technology, but also, it has major value to demonstrate early phases of industrial development and older technologies such as transport sites including railway yards, workshop, and locomotives. In addition, Kezira has wider Social significance as the people of Dire Dawa and the city has been identified by Kezira and the railway. All the above mentioned points are germane to World Heritage Convention and ARCCCH.

At Dire Dawa level, the city administration has identified the railway station as cultural heritage of the city in a letter to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, with Ref.No. AES(Dire) /8/127/924/2, dated 04-05-2012(26/ 8/2004E.C). The Bureau has to include the landscape of Kezira as its Historical Cultural Landscape area of protection. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism has to help the Bureau to improve the organizational structure. ARCCCH has to extend its commitment to strength the legal framework of Dire Dawa. Kezira has its own unique structure, architecture, and history. Sadly enough Dire Dawa’s hub that is Kezira is being demolished. Thus, Dire Dawa, is on the verge of losing its identity. Various and interrelated factors contributed for demolition of Kezira. To cope up with the challenges, address the above problems through utilizing the existing laws and work in coordination until lasting legal framework will be passed. Apply landscape strategy to protect Kezira.

- At last but urgently, restore the identity of Kezira-the dismantled rail statue at railway square.
- Leave Kezira alone as old quarter of 20th century, for the new railway station for 21st century has been built in Melka quarter.

Notes

¹ This paper is an improved and modified form of a seminar paper conducted in 2012 as part of M.A. course fulfillment. At that time the writer has talked to the officials of the city and one official particularly explained that “Local Development Project would not be implemented in Kezira because new rail center is being under-construction” The writer talked with vice-Mayor the city in September 2014, during the presentation of the first draft paper written on History of Dire

Dawa as a preparation for the 6th Ethiopian Urban Forum Panel discussion held in Dire Dawa from November 16-21 2014. The officials had repeated again in June 2015 when the writer and Professor Shiferaw Bekele of Addis Ababa university talked with the official to find ways to preserve the history and Heritage of Kezira and the railway.

² Shiferaw Bekele: "The People of Dire Dawa: Towards a Social History(1902-1936), in the *Proceeding of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol 1.(Paris, 1994)pp.612-617;; Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855-1991*. 2nd ed (Addis Ababa, Athens & Oxford: Addis Ababa University Press, 2002). p.101.; Henri Baldet. "Urban Study of Dire Dawa", (Un published B.A Thesis submitted to the Department of Geography, Addis Ababa University, 1970). p.16.

³ Shiferaw Bekele: "The People of Dire Dawa: Towards a Social History(1902-1936), in the *Proceeding of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol 1.(Paris, 1994)pp.612-617

⁴ Informant: Ato Ayele Wolde Yohannis, Director General Representative in Dire Dawa, 11-05-12

⁵ Shiferaw Bekele, "Aspects of History of Dire Dawa (1902-1936)" A Paper Presented at the Fourth Annual Seminar of the Department of History held in Awassa July 8-12, 1987, p.7, 10.; Henry Baldet, 46, Dire Dawa Visitor's (undated) Guide, 20; Informant: Ato Anteneh Kebede, Manager of the Hotel, BA Degree in Accounting, Age, 31, 18/04/12: 4:00-5:00 local time at the hotel; Leul Ras Imiru Haileselassie, *የጊዜ/ሰዓት ለምሳሌ* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press) p.36,40,

⁶ Informant: Ato Nigatu Birhanu Interviewed at the Hotel on 18/4/12 ; from 3:00-4:30; His age is 50. He got this building as inheritance from his father Birhanu.; Informant: Ato Atire Gebre-mariam, age 85, has been living in Dire Dawa since 1941, 31/5/12; Ato Yonas Yirgu, Vice Manager, age, 29, 23/04/12, education level 12 complete.

⁷ Dire Dawa Visitor's, Guide, p.23 ; Heritage Case Team; Informant: Abdi Yusuf Sheik Hussein, 24-04-2012; Information obtained from AARH office on 26-04-2012; Informant: Ato Yassin Ahmed Shieka, 22-05-2012; Informant: Abdi Yusuf Sheik Hussein, 24-04-2012; Information obtained from AARH office on 26-04-2012; Informants: Ato Atire Gebre-Mariam, Ato Nigatu Birhanu, Ato Tefera Tadesse ,age, 84; 25-05-12; Information obtained from the office of AARH ,26-04-12; Informants: Ato Tefera Tadesse, Ato Israel Niguse, Financial Officer, BA in Accounting, Age 34, 25-05-12

⁸ This was changed for City forum held in Dire Dawa during which the researcher presented a paper on Dire Dawa

⁹ Dire Negarit gazeta, A Proclamation to provide for the Definition of power and Duties and Reestablishment of the Executive and Municipal Service Organs of the Dire Dawa Administration, No.16/2010),p.4

¹⁰ Dire Negarit, No.16/2010 arti.17,sub arti,13.

¹¹ Federal Negarit Gazeta, *Environmental Impact Assessment Proclamation*, No.299/2002 (Addis Ababa, 2002), articles, 3,4,5,6,7.; Dire Negarit Gazeta, *Dire Dawa Provisional administration Environmental Impact Assessment Regulation*, No.28/2010 (Dire Dawa, 2010), articles, 2,3,4,5,6.

¹² Dire Negarit Gazeta, *A Proclamation to Provide for the Definition of Power and Duties and Reestablishment of Executive and Municipal Organs of the Dire Dawa administration*, No.16/2010, 3rd year, No.16 (Dire Dawa, November 2, 2010).

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