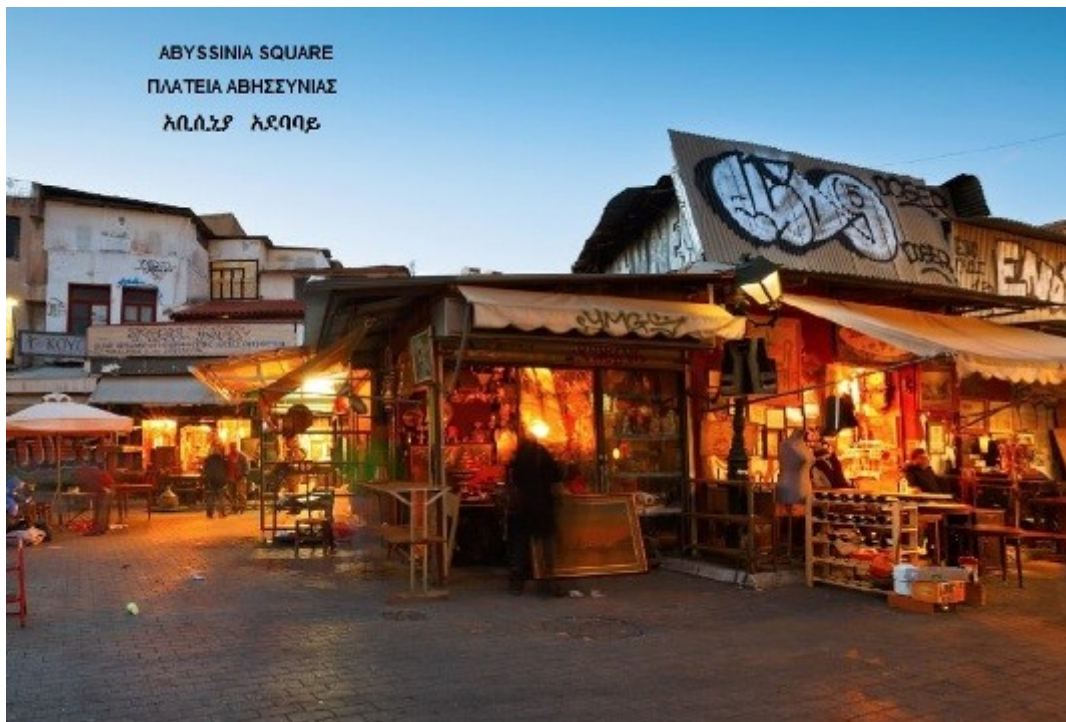




P.O.BOX 14034
GR-115 10 ATHENS
GREECE

**PROPOSAL FOR THE
CREATION OF A MONUMENT
AND SIGNAGE
IN ABYSSINIA SQUARE**

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The proposal is the result of the meeting of the Presidium of the Association of Ethiopian Greeks (S.E.A.) with the Mayor of Athens Mr. Costas Bakoyannis, during which it was clarified that no change will be made to the historical name of the Square. S.E.A. proposed the creation of a monument and signage in the historic square. The costs for the monument and signage will be raised by the S.E.A. through sponsorships along with other partner organizations.



The President Dr. Alexandros Grous, the Mayor of Athens Mr. Costas Bakoyannis, the Vice President Mrs. Myrto Myriallis

The technical and artistic part of the proposal will be supervised by the sculptor and University Professor of Fine Arts Mr. Anthony Michaelides, Vice President of the Faculty of Architecture of the Democritus University of Thrace.



Ο ΔΗΜΑΡΧΟΣ

Αθήνα, 8 Δεκεμβρίου 2022

Προς:
τον Πρόεδρο του Διοικητικού Συμβουλίου του Συλλόγου Ελλήνων Αιθιοπίας,
Δρ. Αλέξανδρο Γκρους

Αγαπητέ κύριε Πρόεδρε,

Σας ευχαριστώ θερμά για την επιστολή που μου αποστείλατε, αλλά και για την πολύ ενδιαφέρουσα και παραγωγική συνάντηση που είχαμε.

Στο πλαίσιο αυτό και σε συνέχεια των αναληθών δημοσιευμάτων περί μετονομασίας της Πλατείας Αβησσυνίας, θα ήθελα να σας υπογραμμίσω ρητώς πως η ονομασία της εν λόγω πλατείας δεν θα υποστεί καμία απολύτως αλλαγή.

Και αυτό, γιατί ως Δημοτική Αρχή επιθυμούμε να κρατήσουμε άσβεστη την φλόγα της ανιδιοτελούς βοήθειας που προσέφερε η Αιθιοπία προς τους Πρόσφυγες της Μικράς Ασίας. Μια χώρα, με την οποία παραμένουμε άρρηκτα συνδεδεμένοι, μέσω της δραστηριότητας σε ποικίλους τομείς Ελληνικής παροικίας.

Τέλος, διερμηνεύοντας τα συναισθήματα όλων των Αθηναίων, θα ήθελα να σας ευχαριστήσω για την πρόθεσή σας να προσφέρετε στον Δήμο Αθηναίων πλακέτα που θα σηματοδοτεί και θα χαρακτηρίζει την ιστορική Πλατεία Αβησσυνίας

Εύχομαι σε εσάς προσωπικά και σε όλα τα μέλη του Συλλόγου Ελλήνων Αιθιοπίας Καλά Χριστούγεννα, με υγεία!

Με εκτίμηση,

Κώστας Μπακογιάννης
Δήμαρχος Αθηναίων

mayor@cityofathens.gr | cityofathens.gr

Δημαρχιακό Μέγαρο | Αθηνάς 63, 10552, Αθήνα, Τ. 2103310861, 2103310862

Letter by the Mayor of Athens confirming that no change will take place in the name of Abyssinia square.



ABYSSINIA SQUARE

Yusurum Square was renamed to Abyssinia Square after a decision of the Municipality of Athens.

The events that led to this decision were:

- That people of Abyssinia origin were living and trading in this area at that time,
- but primarily in memory of the significant aid that was given to Greece, that was distributed in this square to the Greek refugees of the Asia Minor disaster of 1922, by order of Ras Tafari of Abyssinia (who later became the Emperor of Abyssinia Haile Selassie I).



VISIT OF RAS TAFARI IN GREECE IN 1924

OUR PROPOSAL

Our Proposal includes the construction of a monument in a flowerbed within Abyssinia Square and the marking of the entrances to the Square from Ermou Street and Hephaestus Street with two signs (along the lines of the signs for Louise Riancourt and the Philhellenes placed by the Municipality of Athens on the respective streets, etc. Also changing the street signs with the correct writing in English.

PROPOSED TEXT in the MONUMENT and the SIGNAGE:

The text in 3 languages (Greek, English, Amharic) is proposed to write:

Abyssinia Square was named after a decision of the Municipality of Athens. The facts that led to this decision were that people of Abyssinia origin lived and traded in this area. But primarily in memory of the significant aid distributed in this square to the Greek refugees of the Asia Minor disaster of 1922 at the behest of Ras Tafari of Abyssinia (who later became the Emperor of Abyssinia Haile Selassie I).

Abyssinia (from Habesha) was the ancient name of the country, which was later changed to Ethiopia (from the Homeric ancient Greek Ethiops).

Abyssinia Square marks the friendship between the two people.

ABYSSINIA



Abyssinia took its name from the word **Habesha**. The earliest reference to the word Habesha is in engravings of the second or third century BC in Sabaeen as Ḥbšt or Ḥbštm which recount the defeat of GDRT's "king" ḤBŠT. The term seems to refer to a group of peoples rather than a specific ethnicity. However, the South Arabian expert Eduard Glaser has argued that the Egyptian hieroglyphic ḥbstjw, used in reference to "**a foreign people from the incense-producing regions**" (actually produced in Abyssinia). Historically, the term "Habesha" represented the orthodox Ethiopian Christians who spoke Semitic (Ge'ez).

Agriculture and trade with Egypt, southern Arabia and other African peoples ensured the rise of the powerful kingdom of **Axum**, which was founded in the 1st century AD. The Kingdom of Axum, which flourished from the 3rd to the 6th century AD and then survived as a much smaller political entity until the 8th century AD, was the **first state in sub-Saharan Africa to formally adopt Christianity**, around the 4th century AD. The Kingdom of Axum also created its own script, Ge'ez, which is still used today in Ethiopia.

Throughout this Christian kingdom, churches were built, monasteries were established and Bible translations were made. The most important church was in Axum, the church of Maryam Tzion, which, according to later medieval Ethiopian texts, housed the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark, intended to contain the original stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments given by God to Moses, is supposedly still there, but as no one is allowed to see it, confirmation of its existence is difficult to confirm. The most important monastery in the kingdom of Axum was at Debre Damo, founded by the 5th century AD Byzantine ascetic Saint Aregawi, one of the famous Nine Saints who worked to spread Christianity in the region by founding churches and monasteries. The success of these efforts meant that Christianity would continue to be practiced in Ethiopia until the 21st century AD.

The **Kingdom of Abyssinia** was founded in the 13th century AD and, transformed in the 20th AD into the Ethiopian Empire, lasted until 1974 (the monarchy was abolished by the Derg military regime). It was founded by the kings of the Solomonid dynasty, who, claiming descent from King Solomon of the Bible, would rule in an unbroken line throughout the state's long history.

With the rise of Islam, there was the great march from the Arabian Peninsula north of Abyssinia to West Africa, and a portion of the population was Islamized.

Later in the early 20th century Abyssinia took its present name **Ethiopia** from the ancient **Greek Homeric "Aethiops"** (people whose appearance is burnt by sun).

The combination of its rich Christian heritage, the worship of its emperors and the geographical obstacles presented to invaders meant that **Ethiopia would be one of only two African states never formally colonised by a European power.**

GREEKS AND ABYSSINIA / ETHIOPIA

The contacts between the Greeks and the Abyssinians / Ethiopians goes back to **Homeric** times. There are references in Herodotus to peoples with Semitic features but sunburnt in appearance (Aethiops).

Soldiers of Alexander the Great arrived in Ethiopia. The port where they landed was called **ADULIS** (from the Greek word Adouloto = free). After **TEN DAYS** (from the Greek words Dekameres) of wandering they managed to find a suitable place to set up their camp and built the city that is still called **DEKAMERE** today. The two cities are located in today's Eritrea.

Several Greek words are used in **Amharic**. The seat of the kingdom of **AXUM** is said to be derived from the Greek word AXIOMATOUCHOS. As well as other words: **EMETIE** (H MITHR = mother), **ABATIE** (O PATER = father), **MENGIST** (from the Greek word MEGISTOS = great), **MENELIK** (MENELAOS), **JASU** (JASON), **GARI** (from the Greek word KARO = cart), **TOR** (from the Greek word DORI = spear), etc.

Christianization and the conversion of the **Kingdom of Axum** into a Christian Kingdom, as an official religion, was carried out by two Greek missionary brothers, **Frumenius and Edesius**, in the 4th century AD. Leaving behind many monuments, coins and inscriptions with Greek writing.



ENΔΥΒΙC BACIΛEΥC
ENDYBIS BASILEUS (King)

ΑΞΟΜΙΤΩ ΒΙΨΙΔΑΧΥ
AXOMITO (of Axum) BICIDAHY

In the 4th century AD, **Frumentius** who descended from Tyre, as the tutor of the Crown Prince **Ezana**, taught his pupil and the Royal Court, Greek letters and Christianity. After the

death of King **ElaAminda**, Ezana ascended the throne, who in 325 AD designated the Christian Orthodox Religion as the official religion of the

State of Axum. The Byzantine Emperor Constantius congratulated the first Christian King of Axum in a letter written in Greek. Frumentius, in collaboration with other Greeks, translated



the Bible and other ecclesiastical texts from Greek into the Ethiopian ancient ecclesiastical language Ge'ez. Greek words such as: Lord Mercy (kyrie eleison) , Amen (amin), Deacon (diakonos), Mystery (mystirio), Throne (thronos), Devil (diavolos) and many others are found in ecclesiastical texts. **St. Frumentios** in 328 AD became

the first bishop of Abyssinia and took the name **Abuna Salama** (Father of Peace). His memory is celebrated by the Coptic church on December 18. **By the Greek Orthodox Church on 30 November.** By the Roman Catholic Church on 27 October. **And by the Ethiopian church on August 1.**

The church of the Hellenic Community of Addis Ababa is dedicated to St. Frumentios. Addis Ababa is the seat of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Axum which has in its jurisdiction in: Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia.

Greeks and Abyssinians/Ethiopians have been meeting since the first centuries AD and engaged in trade through the Red Sea. The annals of Emperor Claudius mention the presence of Greeks in Ethiopia. It is also known that the Ethiopian emperors used Greek trade representatives in cities such as Cairo, Jerusalem, Hormuz, etc. in modern times.

In the 18th century, during the reign of **lasou II**, Greeks from Smyrna in Asia Minor and from the islands of Rhodes, Milos and Chios arrived in Gondar (where the seat of the Kingdom had been moved). In 1755 a large group of Greeks set out from Cairo for the Indies, where other Greeks lived. But the monsoon had begun, so on reaching the port of Massawa, they were forced to interrupt their dangerous journey. The travelers went to the capital Gondar, where they were received by Emperor lasou II. Their education and skills were soon appreciated and the new arrivals took up high positions in the service of the Leader and the state.

After the Greek Independence Revolution of 1821, the most recent contacts between Greece and Abyssinia date back to 1830 when the first Greeks arrived in Abyssinia and began to live and work there. In total, the number of Greeks who lived/worked in Abyssinia/Ethiopia since then exceeded 8,000.

The fact that the number of Greeks who fled to Ethiopia after the fall of Constantinople was significant is confirmed by the fact that in Agame province there is a village called "Rumaoui" (Romioi = Greeks) which apparently owes this name to the fact that it was inhabited by Greeks.

The Greek Emperor **Yohannes** was a philhellene, to the point of believing that he was of Greek origin. In 1885, after an exchange of letters with King George I of Greece, the physician Dr. Nicholas Parisis arrived in Ethiopia, who, as the Ruler's attending physician, remained in the Palace for two years. The Emperor honored Nicholas Paris by giving him the title of RAS. He dressed him in the uniform of that rank and decorated him. On the day of the doctor's return to Greece, the Emperor gave him a private letter, addressed to King George I, saying: "the Greeks are our brothers. Only my brother, the invincible George, King of the Greeks, has the right to set foot in Abyssinia. My army and my people will welcome him with open arms and I will give him my sword. Tell him how much I love him and give him this letter of mine."

Doctor N. Parisis writes in the book of his memories: "Ambassador A. Mitsakis inspired Emperor John (Yohannes) with many civilizing ideas. I myself witnessed the beneficial results of these". In the same book he mentions that in Massawa the only foreigners he met were Greek merchants. Some had come from Sudan to save themselves from the rebel revolutionary Al Mahdi.

THE CATHEDRAL OF St. GEORGE IN ADDIS ABABA WAS DESIGNED, BUILT WITH THE PARTICIPATION ALSO OF GREEK ENGINEERS AND TECHNIANS. IN THIS CATHEDRAL THE CORONATION OF EMPERORS ZAUDITU AND HAILE SELASSIE I TOOK PLACE.



Yohannes was succeeded by **Menelik II**, who in 1887 moved his capital from **Gondar** to **Addis Ababa**. The new city began to be built. Greeks urged relatives and friends to leave their villages and come to work in Addis Ababa. Roads, churches, houses and larger buildings were built. Shops, cafes, bakeries, barbershops, bookshops, etc. were opened. Industries were created, the export and import Trade was developed. Doctors, Architects, Contractors and Craftsmen, Hotel owners, Engineers were all Greeks. Even the first

Ethiopian newspaper, "**Aimiro**" (**Diaspora**), was written and printed since 1908 by **Andreas Kavvadias**. In the Civil Service important positions were given to the Greeks.

In the 20th century, the Greek Community of A.A. built in the capital the Greek Church of St. Frumentios, the Metropolitan Mansion, the School and the Greek Athletic Union "Olympiacos". Great Benefactors donated to the Community the Retired People's Home, the new educational institutions (Kindergarten, Primary School, High School and English School). The Boarding School allowed children from the province and from other neighbouring African countries to attend the Greek Schools, with the possibility of continuing their higher studies in Greece or abroad.

Although the Ethiopian-Greek relationship is known to date back to B.C. times, in Ethiopia's modern history, the two countries began diplomatic relations in 1917 and the consular relationship evolved into diplomatic relations in 1935, the year Mussolini's Italy invaded the country.

Greek Communities developed in the country: in Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa, Dembi Dollo, Asmara (capital of present-day Eritrea), and in the neighbouring port-country of Djibouti.

The Greek Community of Addis Ababa-Ethiopia was founded in 1910. At that time a Primary School was started with donations from the Parishioners. The Greek-speaking mixed semi-gymnasium of the Community (the first 3 classes of the sixth grade high school) was opened in 1944. Its recognition by the Greek State was granted in 1947 by the R. Decree, Government Gazette 152/24-07-1947, Vol. A.

By the year 1950, all three upper grades were created and thus the semi-gymnasium became a full six grade Gymnasium, which was recognized as equal to the Gymnasiums of the Greek state by the R. Decree 5, Government Gazette 177/17-08-1950, vol. A. The "old" school was built under the presidency of Mr. George Kalogeropoulos and was located in the centre of the city. With a curriculum and teaching staff that came from the Ministry of Education of Greece.

The new Greek Community Schools were built under the presidency of Athanasios Michos on a plot of 33,000 square meters. The land belonged to an Armenian named Mena, who had Ethiopian citizenship. And according to the Ethiopian laws of the time, he could not sell to a foreign national without the special permission of Emperor Haile Selassie I. With the intervention of the president of the Community, Mr. Athanasios Michos and its treasurer, Mr. Alexandros Ganotakis, permission was granted by the Emperor to purchase the land in the name of the Greek Community of Addis Ababa. A fundraiser was held by the prosperous residents of Addis Ababa, which raised the money for the purchase of the land. The Great

Benefactors: Athanasios Mihos, Michael Zekkos and Nicholas Diamantas, whose names the school community buildings bear, undertook their construction.



In 1961 the Community completed the construction of three school buildings within the community's own land, the "Mihio High School", the "Zekio Elementary School" and the "Diamantio Kindergarten".

The Community Boarding School was also funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, when the late Evangelos Averoff was Foreign Minister, following the intervention of Athanasios Michos. In 1961, the building of the Community Boarding School, which at that time housed about 250 pupils, was completed.

The **Community Boarding School** is the largest in the African continent and its operating costs have been fully covered by the Community to date, without any financial support. To the young expatriate students the Community offers accommodation in the Community Boarding School for the duration of their studies in the Community Schools (primary, secondary and high schools), full board, clothing and lodging, and a full range of services, medical care.



In addition, the facilities of the Greek Athletic Union "Olympiacos" were built on part of the land, under the presidency and patronage of Mr. Ioannis Velissariou.



OLYMPIAKOS



THE ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING OF THE GREEK COMMUNITY IN A.A.

With the great exodus of the community, especially in 1975-76, with the establishment of the dictatorial military regime of Derg, the Greeks were forced to leave Ethiopia, losing their properties. The Greek Community of Addis Ababa and the schools, however, continued to function with the few remaining pupils.

At the same time, an English School Department was established, which implements the English curriculum of the University of Cambridge, which has recognized the Greek Community Schools as an official examination centre for the award of the international diplomas IGCSE, A/S and A-levels. The English School Department is attended by children of Greek origin, children of foreign diplomatic missions (Addis Ababa is the headquarters of the African Union) and Ethiopians. These pupils are taught both Greek and Greek history creating Philhellenes).



In 1997, the English School Department moved into the new building, a gift of the then President of the Greek Community of Addis Ababa, Mr. Constantinos Kalogeropoulos.

KALOGEROPOULIO

The Greek Community Schools Addis Ababa, are the largest and best organized and equipped Greek school complex in Africa. These schools were attended by Greeks and Cypriots residing in Ethiopia and the wider East African region. Greek Primary Schools and Holy Churches operated in the cities of Asmara, Keren, Dire Dawa, Djibouti.

The almost two-century-long coexistence and friendship between Greeks and Ethiopians in the modern period was exemplary. The two proud peoples met for thousands of years and established cooperative relations of mutual trust and respect, especially because the Greeks were not a colonial power.

The Greeks stood by Ethiopia at important historical moments in Ethiopia **when the independence of the country was at stake**. In **1896** during the Battle of **Adwa** - Italy's attempt to colonize Ethiopia - which was repulsed. (It is said that the Greeks advised Emperor Menelik II to use the same tactics used when they trapped the troops of the Ottoman Dramali at Dervenakia straits. Thus, in the straits between the mountain ranges at Adwa the superiorly equipped Italian army could be defeated). Also in **1935** with Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia when Greece took the lead in giving the exiled Haile Selassie I the opportunity to address the **League of Nations**.

Likewise the Ethiopians, they **were on the side of the Greeks**. We recall the significant assistance of 400 cattle offered by Ras Tafari (later Emperor Haile Selassie I) after the Asia Minor disaster (distributed in 1924 at Yusurom Square). Ras Tafari took care **for orphans of the Asia Minor disaster**. Later as Emperor Haile Selassie I brought **World War II orphans** from the islands of Ikaria, Chios, Samos, etc. and cared for them, housed them in the palace, educated them and taught them crafts.

THE MIAZIA 27 MONUMENT WHICH IS DEDICATED TO THE FALLEN DURING MUSOLINI'S INVASSION IN 1935, WAS ARTISTICALLY DESIGNED, AND BUILD ALSO BY GREEKS



Greeks participated in important developmental public works: the construction of historical monuments and important buildings, Banks, Hotels, Churches, the construction of the railway, etc.

In addition, the Greeks had made significant investments in the economy (coffee, mills, viticulture, textile industry, building materials, animal husbandry, etc.).

The **direct air link** between Addis Ababa and Athens began in the 1950s and continues till today, with some interruptions.

The Greeks were active in **providing aid** during the **drought and Great Famine** that struck Ethiopia again in the 1980s.

Relations that among other things continue to this day with the existence of a large Ethiopian community in Greece, the erection of a monument for Abyssinia Square in Athens, studies of Ethiopians in Greek Universities, the provision of scholarships for postgraduate studies in Greece with the support of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Axum, the special relations between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Greek Orthodox Church (provision of temples, studies of the Ethiopian clergy in Greece), cultural exchanges (performance of "Socrates barefoot" at the Odeon Herodes Atticus (under Acropolis), participation in the Ethiopian Film Festival), bilateral trade forums, etc.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

(proposal by the University Professor of Fine Arts
Anthony Michaelides)

A/ THE MONUMENT WITH THE RELIEF (in a flowerbed in Abyssinia Square)



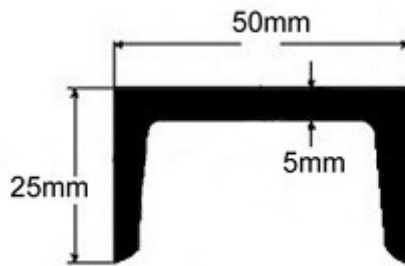
Detail of the Relief

Technical preconditions

The marking consists of the bronze relief, the white surface with the explanatory historical text and the supportive steel columns. The historical text is going to be translated in: Greek, English and Amharic languages. The final dimensions of the marking are: 2,20 m height, 0,80 cm wide and 0,10 cm depth.

- a) The relief is a cast bronze sculpture and it is presenting the face of Ras Tafari of Abyssinia and will be mounted on the upper left hand side of the white board next to the historical text. The dimensions of the cast are: (27X30X5) cm

- b) The white board is a marking surface which is water and weather proof (special outdoors marking surfaces) and the text will be printed directly on its surface. In the bottom of the white surface logos of the Athens Municipality, the Association of Greeks of Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Community in Greece and other sponsors will be placed. The dimensions of the board are: (70X80X2) cm
- c) The steel columns that support the board and the relief are four, two on the front and two on the back holding together between them the weight of both the relief and the board (detailed photos on the following pages). The dimensions of the supporting columns are: 0,50cm width, 0,25 depth and 0,5mm thickness (as shown in the technical plan below)



Detail of the Relief

In the following photos, (photo 1, 2 and 3) the columns will be shown in a different angle, mounted back to back, drilled through and screwed together with hexagonal screws with nuts (as shown in the photo and technical plan bellow), leaving a small 2cm gap between them that allows the white surface to slide in between and hold together the relief and the four columns as a whole solid construction.

In addition they are going to be coated with an anticorrosive paint which protects the metallic surface and it is used for the outdoors steel surfaces and products.

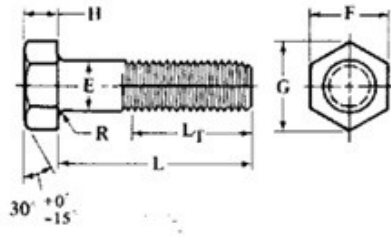


Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3 – SIDE VIEW

The project is going to be presented to professional sculptors and the best artistic proposal will be implemented. The whole project will be supervised by the Sculptor and University Professor of Fine Arts Mr. Anthony Michaelides, Vice President of the School of Architecture in the Democritus University in Thrace, as a contribution to the Association of Greeks of Ethiopia, Athens (as he had lived his school years there).



Detail of the Relief

B/ PLACE SIGNS

At the two entrances to the square from Ermou and Ifaistou street metallic Place signs with anti-corrosive paint, is suggested to be put, in a manner similar to Place signs put by the Municipality of Athens in different parts of Athens. These will be made by engraving by graphic artists with the same picture and text as in the Relief hereabove.



SAMPLE OF EMBLEMS (upper Left):



**LION OF
ABYSSINIA**



**ABYSSINIAN
SHIELD**

EMBLEMS IN THE LOWER PART OF THE SIGN BOARDS AND THE MONUMENT:



On a second row other smaller contributors will placed.

CHANGE OF ROAD SIGNS:



**(We suggest the change of the road signs with a correct English inscription:
ABISSYNIA SQ.)**

NOTES:

There is a proposal in conjunction with H.E. the President of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia to put a signboard in three languages dedicated to the Friendship of Ethiopia and Greece, in front of the Greek Orthodox church of **St. Frumentius in Piazza of Addis Ababa.**



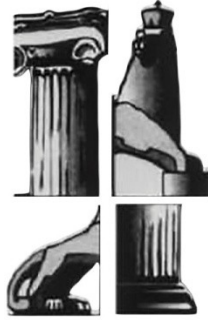
St. Frumentius

The Piazza, one of the oldest and most built-up parts of Addis Ababa, has many fascinating buildings constructed in the early twentieth century. The Greeks of Addis Ababa had many shops there.

The Greek Orthodox Church, located on the left side of Adwa Avenue, is one of those distinctive buildings that stand as a monument to the city's once thriving Greek community. The church was designed by Mr. Balano.

When the church was built in 1935, Greek residents contributed significantly to its construction. The land was secured by the imperial family at the request of a prominent figure of the time, Dr. Iakovos Zervos, who was a personal physician and confidant of Emperor Haile Selassie I.

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THE ASSOCIATION OF GREEKS OF ETHIOPIA (S.E.A.)

The Association of Greeks of Ethiopia, which was founded in 1975, is today the cultural expatriate body that represents the largest organized part of the community that found itself outside Ethiopia with the great exodus of 1975-76. With regular members and friends: in Greece and corresponding members and friends: in Ethiopia, other African countries, Australia, Arab countries, France, Holland, Switzerland and other European countries, USA, Canada.

About 600 families are in contact with the S.E.A. (about 2,000-2,200 people) which is close to the approximately 2,300-2,500 people who were in the Greek community in Ethiopia in the early 1970s.