Adigrat,
The Land of Hospitality.

Picture taken from you tube @ beats loop.

Written By: Luel Gebremedhin (USA), October 20, 2017.

Email:  ager.yilma@yahoo.com
I was in Ethiopia from beginning of September 2017 and made back home a week ago. My family and I traveled to the State of Tigray by land to make family visit. On my way to the region, I have seen quite significant developments. To name some; Construction of roads, hotels, buildings, and housing are growing particularly in the capital city of region. The roads I have travelled from Addis Abeba to the state of Tigray are relatively smoothed and maintained regardless of their size. It is also too dark to drive on the road at night time. It would have been safer to drive on the road, if the road has been surfaced a two-way fold wider marked by proper range with pole lighting system. I had fair opportunity to observe a few cities in the region during my visitation. I stopped by the city of Wukro my way to the city of Adigrat from Mekele to celebrate Ethiopian “Meskel” of 2010 [2017 in none Ethiopian calendar]. This young city took my breath and attention away when I made it there. The city of Wukro distances approximately 45 km (28 miles) north of Mekele city and 71 km (44 miles) away south of Adigrat city. I spent sometimes in Wukro looking around its development, taking in fresh air, and enjoy eating handmade best “Kolo” of the land. It is quite amazing to see how the city is lifting. The city is growing significantly. The shining down town stigmatizes the eyes of many travelers in and out the town. Hotels, various banks, shopping centers, and building constructions graced and dressed beauty to city at large. However, there are challenges need to be engaged and addressed. These issues such as power outrage, poor internet access, insufficient pure water supply, and lack of clean and maintain sanitation make the public frustrate on consistent base. Wukro will be the cleanest, developed, and attractive golden city of the state of Tigray soon if it is continued as good as seen presently. The hard work of the people of Wukro, the mayor office, and the Wukro diaspora and business people of the soil deserve deep appreciation and admiration for the progress they are making to make Wukro developed and great city.

I made Adigrat at the eve of” Meskel.” The city was shining and preparing to celebrate the event. Thousands of People from different world were gathered in the city to commemorate and mark the colorful holiday. Blessed to observe the symbolic and historic Africa’s largest Cross Tower erected at the foothill north side of the city with its 22-meter-long and 7 tones Wight. The generosity and hospitality of the people of Adigrat remark the hearts and minds of guests arrive
Adigrat is the home of Queen of Sheba (Makeda), the notable Olympic gold medal winning long distance runner honorable Miruts Yifter, and Paleoanthropologist Professor Yohannes Haile Selassie. Debredamo monastery and the largest and heaviest cross tower are also historic assets of Adigrat. The city of Adigrat, the most strategic and second populous city of Tigray regional state survives with no local or International Airport. Adigrat, the heart city of Agame, locates about 192 km away from South Eastern Eritrea city of Mendefera and is a delicate gateway to the red sea. According to some notable evidences, the city was an importance trade and commerce center during the administration of Ras Sabagadis in around 1818 but declined after his death of 1831 and totally collapsed in 1842. Adigrat was the key base during the Italian Ethiopian war of 1895 and the second war of both nations of 1935. After severe defeat at the battle of Adwa, general Antonio Baldissera was retreated and fortified at this very strategic place which is Adigrat. For the record, Adigrat was the first city to be liberated from the feudal administration of the country in 1943 by the brave indigenous Woyane rebellion. Also, this beautiful and lovely city was ranked one of the first-class township by 1958.

Beles (Cactus pear), mess, made of white honey, and Tihlo, prepared from barely flour symbolize the Agame region so special and lovable. The friendly and favorable Weather of the city of Adigrat also an ingredient to the resident and visitors like me. I stayed in the city for some time before and after the holiday of “Meskel” to observe more about the developments and services in and surrounding. There are some headways to mention such as the University of Adigrat, Industrial college, Addis pharmaceutical, two- three private colleges, and a public library but in general the developmental aspect and horizon of the city is in shamble no matter which way it is looked. I have witnessed to see such good progressive changes like banking services, hotels, small private businesses, and
transportation. However, such activities could not have perused me to the highest perception I was thinking about the city before I made there. It sounds to me that the city falls behind in terms of expansion of infrastructure, housing, construction, pure water supply, sanitation, reforestation, and pulling more local and foreign investors to the city. The history and modernization of the city shall be maintained and advanced in a noteworthy way of development. The business environment of the city is moving well in such a contained way and pays the heights tax to the regional government. The regional administration of the state of Tigray and the local office of the city of Adigrat shall encourage and subside investors to come and invest in this most preferable city for investment.

I have had a chance to talk to some ordinary, business people, government and self-employed, and some young unemployed resident of the city and surrounding what they think about the city they live for. Almost everyone I met agreed how the Ethiopia-Eritrea war of 1998–2000 affected the socio-economic status of the city of Adigrat in some degree. I was convinced by the analyses of the public I have engaged during my visit. It is very true that the war between the two neighbor countries demolished completely the trade and business mobility between the two boarders. Zalambessa used to be the gateway connect long time business partners of the two cities. It is my high and dare recommendation at this point of time that “No peace, no war” is not the best solution for both nations. If I can, I can suggest that a “win-win solution” and peace can be more closeable than the old policy and strategy towards the state of Eritrea for good and many reasons.

The next factor I like to raise is that the population of the city increased by close to 52% which is about 2.5% average annual growth from 1994 to 2015 according to the Central Statistical Agency of the nation. And so that makes the land to be the second largest city of the region. The question comes to my mind is that how prepare is the city administration to accommodate such population
growth in terms of job opportunities and public safety. I have some concerns on this matter. The economy growth of the city may not satisfy the growth of the population unless the city administration and the regional administration find a fine way of policy module that works well to the people of Adigrat. I need to give my input this way that Adigrat deserves to get open local and international Airport to sustain its development, historic, and early modernization of trade and commerce at large. If I would have been asked, I could have suggested a name too. We can name the Airport as “Queen of Sheba Airport” or “Miruts Yifter Airport” or “Adigrat Airport.”

The final stake I must say is that to make the city tourism destination, all historical momentums such as the Monastery of Debredamo, the holy cross erected a mile and half away from the city, reforestation, and other related origins must be preserved well at the highest level of attention. Let make them accessible, suitable, and attractive by spending little effort. For instance, make the surrounding area where the holy cross placed tourist destination by designing and crafting an art works, building guest houses around, and opening creation and research center within the compound of the holy cross and setting reasonable entrance fee to get in visit and do research activities. The same applies to the rest of historic assets the city enjoys in and surrounding areas.

Sources:

2. Hailesilassie, Asmeret (11 August 2013) “beles comes to town”