

# **MESKEL IN ADIGRAT SIMPLY EXUBERANT**

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Meskel has always been colorfully celebrated in all Ethiopian cities, towns and villages every year. Meskel is one of the most bright festival in Ethiopia and it's history goes back to many years back. Meskel festival is therefore not a recent phenomenon. It has a long time proud history and tradition.

Meskel has a religious base and background associated with Christianity and the Ethiopian orthodox Tewahdo denomination. In fact, it has been an Ethiopian orthodox Tewahdo major religious holiday. This time around however, Meskel is beyond religious holiday; it has further transcended itself to include social, economic, touristic and more people to people transactions and more benefits to the areas and peoples that celebrate this historic holiday.

Meskel has become a traditional festival where thousands of people get together every year and enjoy not only religious festivity but also social festivity as well. As a result, people enjoy variety of artistic and musical both modern and traditional ones during this great holiday. This phenomenon has been colorfully demonstrated every year with vigor and tenacity in the city of Adigrat, Tigray in a rather special way.

Adigrat is well known for its traditional hospitality with its trademark history of Religious tolerance like no other place. Adigrat is proud of its hospitable, hardworking and generous people. Adigrat also enjoys clean water, temperate weather very clean surrounded by gorgeous mountains, full of trees, decorated flowers with nicely put cobble stones around the city and clean air. Although not enough, the hotels and restaurants and cafes are very clean and comfortable for gusts and visitors. Very important rather a true trademark of the city if Adugrat is

it's world famous local food "TEHLO" and famous local drink "MESS". Those brand-a-la-Adigrat styles are one and only and are present only in Adigrat: other places of such kind are simply a copy and now, Adigrat possesses the longest and largest cross in Africa another symbol to the city.. This original is in nowhere else but only in Adigrat. Almost every resident of Adigrat eats this blended healthy Tehlo and drinks the yellow made of pure honey not mixed with anything else simply pure Mess almost every occasion. So do all visitors and guests alike because they too know the importance of this healthy food Tehlo and healthy drink Mess.

This year, Adigrat was decorated from corner to corner in order to receive its gusts who come from different parts of the world and this time around, they came from North America, Europe, Australia and the Middle East as well to celebrate this important holiday and to visit their family, friends and their birth places as well. It is unthinkable to find hotel or guest house rooms right away unless booked way in advance during Meskel holiday in Adigrat I was lucky enough to find one because I come to Adigrat almost every year and book my room way in advance so I was very happy to find one indeed.

During the eve of Meskel, Adigrat was decorated with flowers, colorful signs and signals, shinning lights. The city was full of people and there were modern and traditional music case shows with known artists putting musical extravaganza to the delight of audiences who come to Adigrat from different parts of the world and everyone was dancing and singing mainly holding the famous "Berele" filled with the local during "Mess". Everyone was happy, no disturbance, no loss of anything; simply enjoyable and entertaining night. The eve was simply splendid. A little late the same night, there followed an extravaganza of firework for almost half an hour to the excitement of the people. Adigrat looked like the city of New York with that

lightening and shinning colorful fire works for a moment. Then the date of Meskel arrived the next morning and as early as six A.M and thousands headed to the very historic wolwalo stadium to celebrate “DAMERA. The lightening of Damera this religious ceremony was attended by the Ethiopian Patriarch and in the presence of the Tigray President.

Damera celebration was a true demonstration of the history and foundation of the true cross. At the end of the ceremony, the lightening of the Damera was held and thousands of spectators enjoyed this truly historic holiday. The ceremony ended with the Adigrat city administration’s invitation of the famous Tehlo and Mess to the public at large within the stadium. I cannot forget the splendid Tehol and Berelle show case presented to the public during the invitation ceremony. It has to be a world record show case in that regard. What a wonderful show case! It was a true sigh and trademark of the city of Adigrat. Way to go Adigrat!

Meskel festival in Adigrat has now become bigger and larger than the usual religious festival. It has become almost a carnival like those countries that benefit from carnival. Brazil, Jamaica and the Caribbean, South Africa, Rwanda is amongst those that benefit from carnival. Meskel Adigrat is becoming a festival that enhance people to people connection, a tourist attraction, a festival that enhances social and economic benefit; therefore, it must be further enhanced, encouraged, enlarged and expanded.

The people of Adigrat are known for their hard work, patience, tolerance especially religious tolerance. These have been their trademark. Christians and Moslems have lived in Adigrat for generations in peace and harmony. They take pride of that and have continued with that tradition. They also take pride of the hospitality and kindness towards their guests and visitors. They did it again this time around

during Meskel festival to the delight of their gussets and they always want their guests to come every year and they promise to receive them with open arms and with their traditional trademark as always. So they are saying come back! Adigrat is your home! You are always welcome! To your surprise, Meskel festival in Adigrat is organized by both Christians and Moslems joining hands in order to make it successful. What a religious tolerance! What a people! Keep it up! This noble tradition has continued and must be preserved for the next generation.

Meskel Adigrat is growing every year. It is expanding; it is becoming more and more like carnival without leaving its religious base and foundation. More and more people are coming every year and the city is gaining benefits every year. This is good for the city of Adigrat and good for its people; so, it should be encouraged.

Generally Meskel in Adigrat is growing and expanding every year. Likewise, the participants, guests and visitors who come to celebrate from within the country and abroad with their family friends and love ones are increasing every year. What is truly amazing is that Christians and Moslems side by side celebrate this grand festival together as one family making Meskel truly social and cultural way beyond religious festival; a binding and unifying factor, a sign of tolerance, friendship love and respect to each others identity. Adigrat kept this rich culture because Adigrat's respected and wise elders such as Ato Hagos Kortee have been teaching the young generation about their rich culture and tradition.

Ato Hagos and his children have done more than their share to promote this rich tradition; therefore, they deserve our respect and admiration for their very valuable contribution in all aspects in that regard. I wish Ato Hagos and his family good health and long life. Ato Hagos is more than ninety years old but he is going very

strong and I hope he will continue to do the good job he always does to promote Meskel and to keep and preserve this incredibly rich tradition.

Here are some thoughts that may be added during the planning for Meskel Celebration.

- Investors should be encouraged to build more hotels and guest houses to accommodate increasing visitors and guests that come to Adigrat.
- Residents with more rooms in their houses should be encouraged to freely host or rent their rooms to visiting guests; a win-win situation to both.
- The festival should include international conference, workshops etc. focusing developmental endeavors within the city of Adigrat. Adigrat University. The Agazi Association and the Adigrat Administration may take the lead in that regard.
- More and more sporting events should be included to those already in place to put more color to the event.
- Diaspora Ethiopians and foreigners (tourists and investors) should be encouraged to come every year to celebrate this Grad Festival and invest in Adigrat.
- Ethiopians from every corner should be invited to see and enjoy Meskel in Adigrat

