

Monkeys Raid Trucks

Part IV and Final

A couple of weeks ago, four of my friends and I had had the pleasure of visiting places of interest all over the Debarwa sub zone for the purpose of documenting the region's natural resources with photographs and text. Fortunately, every spot in the sub zone is endowed with tales, secrets, and an attraction worth visiting. On our way driving back to the capital Asmara, however, on a clear late afternoon, on the road that snakes up the Menguda National Park, an extraordinary thing happened to us.

The story begins just like this: Half way down the road, one of my friends spotted a herd of monkeys flying from a cliff down the road just above us. Then in an attempt to take photograph of the herd, we speedily drove our way up the zigzag road to where we could get parking for our pickup truck. After a couple of minutes or so we came face-to-face with the herd. Some stood in the shadow the cliff cast the sunset, and nearly a dozen others, babies and adults roamed in the middle of the road. "That is the best time to take photographs," our photographer signaled. We all nodded our heads together and hence our driver stopped the truck by the right edge of the road. In no time, one enormous head monkey stood at the front of the herd and stepped towards us as if to ask a 'Pass Card'.

The incident caught our photographer's eyes, and he unlocked the car door, and started walking out for some shoots. The head monkey -- big, monster looking -- at first walked peacefully towards us, shuddering his neck and shoulder, as if to shake hands. Suddenly, however, when it saw the photographer walking towards it, it changed its face, immensely furious, as if preparing itself to fight. Looking at the situation of the head monkey, the photographer froze for a moment, but then again he immediately ran back to the pickup breathing a deep sigh. Suddenly the head monkey made a thunder of noise, ran towards us, jumped on the front shield of our truck, and inflicted a couple of blows on our front windshield stabbing our faces. In less than a minute, half a dozen of others climbed on the back thereby causing an avalanche of noise on our heads. It was only when a couple of them tried to jump in through the window on the side of our driver that we took the courage to cry loud, "Go, go, go." The head monkey dropped off in a slapdash fashion, whereas the other monkeys declined to discharge themselves until they had finished inspecting our things on the back of our pickup. Fearing another attack, our driver swiftly drove up until he disappeared from their sight. But that would not be the end.

From the first incident that happened to us, about half a kilometer we would meet another band of monkeys that had prohibited a man from riding a bike down to Debarwa. But then again we would not stop, though, they accompanied us up until the end of the national park. From then on our team's mood was relaxed. After a deep sigh the team maintained a dialogue. In no time, monkey jokes started rolling from my teammates. "What really are the monkeys inspecting?" A friend asked. "Whether our truck had carried logs or not," joked another friend. "Perhaps they are looking for the man whom we found cutting trees yesterday at the dam of Amadr, I added another joke. "If that is the case, that man is the most wanted one by the monkeys," the first friend says. "That man is the fugitive and hence he must be reported to the monkeys' head office." The dialogue subsided only when all of us erupted in laughter by the last speaker. It was really funny and horny. On the one hand the dialogue sounds hilarious for it is full of humors, on the other hand, one may say it is horny for it heralds a strong message: the life of wild animals is closely linked to trees-- no trees no wildlife; many trees, a diverse wildlife. The monkey story, therefore, reminded me of something I should talk more about Debarwa sub zone. The Debarwa subzone, according to the head of agriculture and wildlife in the region, is famous in the preservation of wildlife. It has reserved more than 4000 hectares of land as a national park, out of which the 1300-hectare of land is permanently reserved as a national park, whereas the 2127 hectares is temporarily reserved. The thick forest of Aba Metae monastery is one of the havens permanently reserved as a national park; hence it has attracted a spectrum of wildlife.

The Abune Enderias monastery is another haven for wildlife that has remained untouched for centuries. Other areas such as: Azayih, Elba, Takita, Mt. Mogos, Shiketi, and Zinieto are among the wildlife rich areas reserved as national parks. Moreover, the Debarwa sub zone is gifted with diverse wildlife. The region is known for tigers, hyenas, foxes, monkeys, rabbits, and a variety of colorful birds. Tigers are rarely seen in the caves of the monasteries. The hyenas and foxes are common throughout the region, barking and growling during the night even from the backyard of the town of Debarewa. Rabbits and falcons are equally common in the region. The sub zone has also registered a success in reforestation, and water and soil conservation. Villages and individuals known for planting trees, and earth conservation lay here in the region. Adi Selait, the exemplary village that received an award from the Ministry of Agriculture for the conservation of land, is from this sub zone.

The people of the village are known for hard working, and the wise use of land resources. Moreover, it is rich in vegetables, and serials. Exemplary farmers who harvest a large area of land two times a year are among the citizens of the Debarwa subzone. Abeba Hailemichael, 45, a mother of eight, has been listed as the top exemplary women by the Ministry of Agriculture for her dedication and ability in bees and animal breeding, and gardening. Abeba, convinced with the idea of, "hard work is the solution for a problem," harvests vegetables, cereals, honey and milk products throughout the year. Additionally, the exemplary man, known to have been awarded by H.E. President Isaias Afwerki is from the sub zone. Mr. Gebrichael Gebremeskel, who received an award of Toyota Hilux and a cash of half a million Nakfa for his hard working is the pride of the subzone. He is the farmer who changes the desert into paradise, the rocks into

Debarwa: The City of Ancient 'Sea Lords'

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soil, and the mountain into a farm field. In short, the Debarwa sub zone is identified as the center for the country's tales, secrets, and legends. It is rich in natural resources and history; famous for abundant wildlife and national parks. The land is naturally gifted with a panoramic landscape and natural attractions—big mountains, deep gorges, dense forests, and glamorous ancient monasteries. And more than anything else, it is the region settled by a proud people working industriously to realize the country's prominent.