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British Geological Survey

TECHNICAL REPORT

Hydrogeology Series

Technical Report WD/95/9R

**Workshop on Geochemistry Applied to
Water Resource Issues in Africa:
Report on a visit to Ethiopia
27 January to 3 February 1995**

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This report was prepared for the
Overseas Development Administration

Bibliographic Reference

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A visit was made to Ethiopia in connection with the organisation of a workshop on geochemistry applied to water resource issues in Africa. Meetings with co-organisers (the Ethiopian Institute of Geological Surveys) and main participant sponsor (British Council) were held, and a visit paid to the probable meeting venue.

It was decided that the workshop should be held during the week 25-29 September 1995 at Sodere, a secluded spa resort in the Rift Valley, with a mid-session excursion to examine water resource problems in the Metahara area. The Ghion hotel in Addis Ababa, while much less ideal as a venue, would serve as a reserve in the event of unforeseen problems at Sodere. The Ghion would also be a suitable assembly point for the participants when they arrived in Ethiopia.

Future priorities were to book accommodation and transport (EIGS) and to send out a First Circular to prospective participants (BGS).

1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The task of TDR Project 12FW (ODA Project D00123) is to arrange and carry out an interactive workshop meeting on geochemistry applied to water resource issues in sub-Saharan Africa. Given that a fundamental aim of this workshop is to foster better communications between African geochemists, the three BGS team members are intended to be facilitators and advisers as much as instructors. Presentation and discussion of case studies from all involved in the workshop will form a major part of the proceedings, but practical matters ranging from field measurements to a framework for future cooperation will also be covered.

The present report describes a reconnaissance visit made by W G Darling to Ethiopia to liaise with BGS's workshop partners, the Ethiopian Institute of Geological Surveys (EIGS), to find a suitable venue for the meeting, and to visit the British Council (BC), which will be supporting the majority of African participants.

2. ITINERARY

27 January	Travel overnight to Addis Ababa
28 January	Meeting with Ato Berhanu Gizaw (EIGS counterpart) on workshop structure
29 January	Further meeting with Ato B Gizaw on workshop details, followed by inspection of possible reserve venues in Addis Ababa
30 January	Travel to Sodere with Ato B Gizaw to inspect most likely venue, the Filwoha Spa complex. View facilities and discuss with spa management
31 January	Travel to Awash National Park to devise route for mid-session field excursion. Return to Sodere
1 February	Further survey of facilities at Sodere and discussions with management. Return to Addis Ababa
2 February	Meeting with Ato Ketema Tadesse, Chief Geologist EIGS, to discuss details of EIGS support for the workshop. Meeting with Dr Robert Monro, Assistant Director BC, to classify the extent of BC support for participants. View facilities at the Ghion hotel as a possible reserve venue
3 February	Return to UK

3. PROGRESS

3.1 Timing

While EIGS would have preferred a 'winter' workshop, i.e. around July, the BGS team members had prior commitments which effectively ruled this out as an option. Their next 'window', in late September, was therefore chosen. This was not entirely ideal from the EIGS standpoint because it would be the start of the new field season, and also certain previously-identified workshop participants might be travelling abroad for courses. However, in this eventuality other EIGS staff would be able to take their places.

Dr Monro of the BC pointed out that Sunday was the day when the greatest number of flights from other parts of Africa arrived in Addis Ababa, and that the workshop should be timed in order to minimise participants' waiting time. It was therefore decided that the workshop should take place from Monday to Friday, most likely dates being 25-29 September.

3.2 Location

While both the author and his EIGS counterpart had previously visited Sodere and found the living accommodation adequate, neither had been there since the conference facilities were built and a visit was deemed necessary to investigate these and to discuss with the management the practical arrangements that could be made for a meeting of the size proposed (max 30 people in total).

The conference facilities are comprised of a hall on the top level, with bar and meeting areas on the middle level and a restaurant on the lower level. The hall, which can seat up to 150 people, had good presentational facilities, including an overhead projector (though not a slide projector, which would have to be borrowed from the BC or EIGS). The management said that desks could be moved and curtains or screens erected to give a more suitable ambience for the anticipated number of people. The only minor problem was that the hall could not be significantly darkened, and slide projection might therefore not be ideal. However, for the relatively small meeting involved this was not a major obstacle.

Recreational facilities at Sodere are centred on its geological position at the foot of a fault scarp where hot springs issue. Two thermal swimming pools and open-air 'showers' exist, together with paths around the estate and up to the summit of the steep ridge behind the complex. The existence of natural springs in and around the estate would make it a useful venue for carrying out the intended 'hands-on experience' part of the workshop.

By contrast, two hotel venues inspected in the Addis Ababa area were somewhat claustrophobic and would not be suitable for a five-day meeting. A third, the Ghion, had a suite of large conference halls and spacious grounds but is a busy hotel and would be more attuned to large conferences. It would however be a suitable venue for assembling the workshop participants in Addis Ababa prior to

travelling to Sodere.

3.3 Mid-session field excursion

Two options for this were examined: the Lakes area to the south, and the Awash National Park to the north. The lakes option, though undoubtedly interesting from a geochemical standpoint, would have involved some 5-6 hours travelling (not including stops) over less-than-ideal roads and was therefore ruled out. The Awash National Park option was accordingly explored on the ground. The road from Nazret northwards (Fig. 1) is of good quality and a coach would be able to make good time on it. Suitable stops to look at geology and hydrogeology exist along this road. The Metahara area on the edge of the National Park is interesting in terms of both hydrogeology and water quality, with rising water levels and a high fluoride problem.

The National Park itself is centred round Fantale, a dormant volcano. The Park is of hydrological interest, marking the point in the Rift Valley where the River Awash begins to cut down towards its base level, resulting in some spectacular falls and a gorge beyond. The Park also has some warm springs, but unfortunately these would not be accessible to a coach.

3.4 The EIGS

A meeting with Ato Ketema Tadesse, Director EIGS, was held to resolve the details of support to the workshop. He was happy to provide the use of a Land Cruiser to assist with marshalling the participants in Addis Ababa and to be present throughout the workshop in case of emergency etc. EIGS could also provide bulk photocopying of abstracts etc if given sufficient notice (min 15 days), and had slide projectors available. For EIGS participants a *per diem* of 32 Birr (approx \$5) would be available.

On non-workshop matters, Ato Ketema was presented with two copies of the AGID Mineral Resources book, to which one of his staff had contributed a paper, and a letter from Dr Reedman (BGS). He reiterated a point previously made to Dr Macfarlane (BGS) during the latter's visit in April 1994, that EIGS would welcome advice on how to approach aid donors.

Following this, a meeting was held with Ato Negussie Mekuria, Acting Head of the EIGS Geothermal Project, and Ato Gebretsadik Eshete, who was assigned to work with Ato Berhanu on organisation of the workshop, but who has frequently been away on other work. Because of training courses abroad and reorganisations taking place periodically in EIGS, attendance at the workshop of both these geochemists was in doubt, though others could take their place. Any 'surplus' places up to the thirty booked at Sodere would be offered to other Ethiopian institutions with an interest in water quality, providing they could pay the costs.

3.5 The British Council

Dr Robert Monro explained the way in which BC funding from individual countries would be accessed by an 'authority to charge' arrangement. He also explained why a few BC offices had turned down his request for assistance, and promised to remind the few others which had failed to reply yet. In addition, he made a useful point about the timing of the workshop (3.1).

Dr Monro advised that the workshop would need opening and closing ceremonies, with persons of suitable rank and provenance. Certificates of attendance would also be a good idea, and the BC could provide these (adorned with the logos of BC, ODA, EIGS and BGS) together with folders, paper and pens.

If the organisers came up with further participant names requiring support, it would be useful if this could be done before the end of March.

From a purely organisational viewpoint, he was happy to include a 32 Birr *per diem* in each BC-supported participant's budget to match the EIGS allowance. He also made the point that US dollars were almost impossible to obtain in Addis Ababa and that the BGS team should bring sufficient to cover the airport tax (currently \$10) of the non-Ethiopian participants as a contingency.

3.6 British Embassy

Mr Denis Carter, in post during Dr Macfarlane's visit, had been replaced as Commercial Secretary with responsibility for aid matters by Mr John Hawks. During the present visit he was away, and his deputy Mr David Hill (whose main responsibilities were in Somaliland) about to depart for the field. No meeting therefore proved possible, but a letter had been sent prior to the visit outlining the workshop and its aims in order to keep the Embassy informed.

4. FUTURE WORK

Top priorities following the visit are the costing and booking of accommodation and transport (EIGS), and the preparation and dispatch of a 'first circular' to prospective participants (BGS with approval of content from EIGS). These tasks should be accomplished by the end of February.

Medium-term priorities are consideration of the opening and closing ceremonies (EIGS-BC) and the content of the workshop program (BGS-EIGS). To a large extent the latter would depend on the subjects addressed by the participants' abstracts, and would not take final shape until the summer.

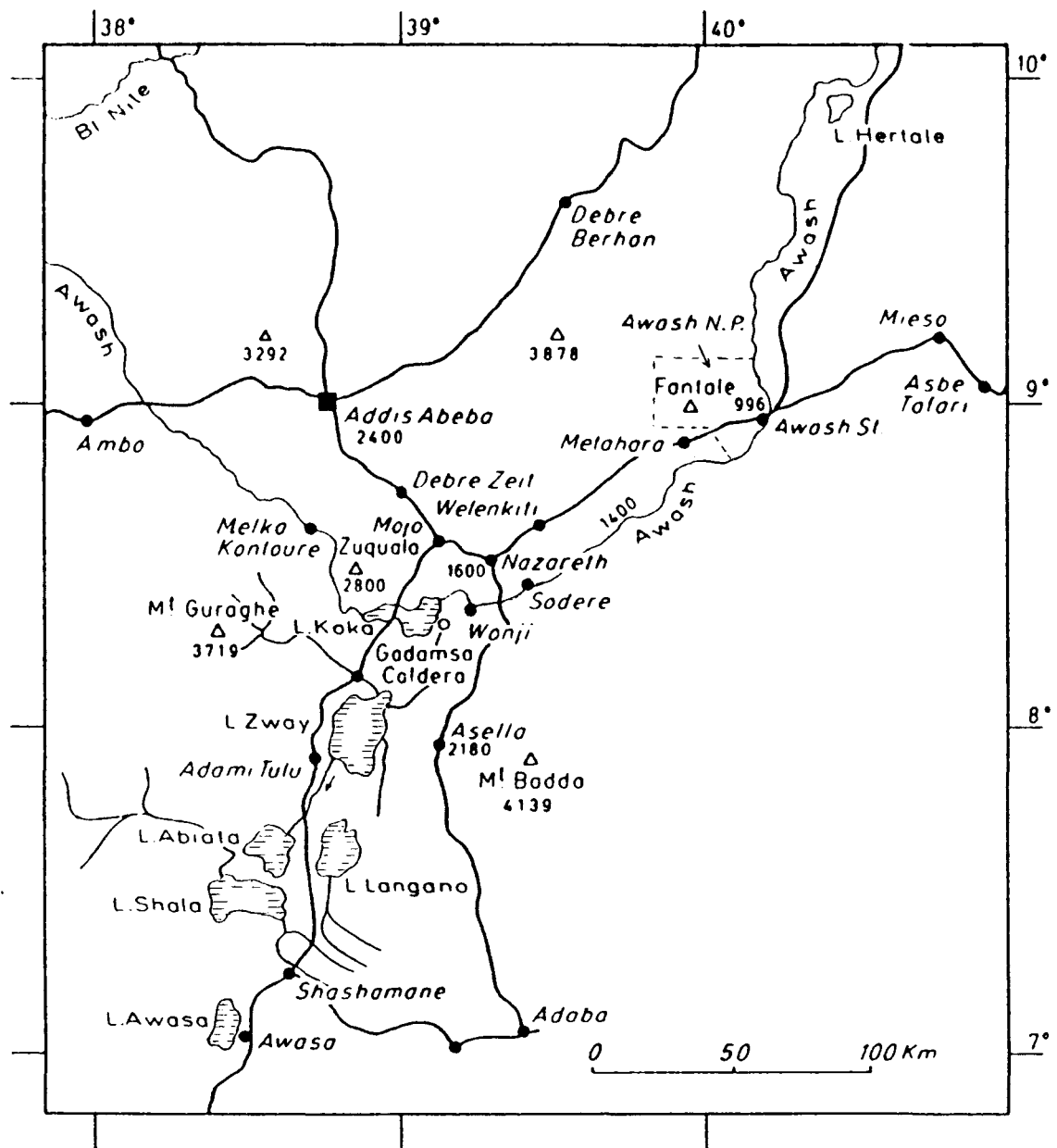


Fig. 1 Map showing the position of Sodere and other locations mentioned in the text.