

## To a lost master and friend

*I must tell you this story ...*

Professor Berhanu was a fantastic storyteller. He knew everything about Ethiopia's past. He had met everyone. His scholarly erudition was enhanced by a profound understanding of people and their whereabouts. His deep acquaintance with languages made him grasp gold beyond wax, meaning beyond appearance, truth beyond pretence.

I remember a meeting of the group he had set up to put the final touch to his French – Amharic dictionary. He would listen to every suggestion patiently, with an amused wink in his eyes. But the way he mastered nuances both in Amharic and French was unbeatable.

He epitomized the dialogue of nations and cultures. What impressed me most in his beautiful *History of Ethiopia* was the way he emphasized the contribution of Oromo kingdoms to the formation of Ethiopian unity. He was quintessentially Ethiopian. He was also so deeply, so touchingly, so proudly French and European.

He was attached to democracy and good governance. He contributed to several observation missions for the African Union. He was taking part in the mission in Zimbabwe when death struck. He was a man of words. But he was also a man of action. His wonderful sense of humour made him consider all things with the necessary distance. But it did not preclude passion nor commitment.

He remained discrete about his sufferings. He looked solid as a rock. For us, he still stands.

Stéphane Gompertz  
French Ambassador to Ethiopia