

THE GONDARIAN WELCOME



An Exploration of Traditional Hospitality and Living History

Photographer:
Habtamu Maru
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Company: Mayet
Pictures

Project Framework:
Official Selection
Portfolio – Cortona
On The Move 2026

Location: Gondar,
Ethiopia



The Gondarian Welcome

Photographer: Habtamu Maru Andargew

Brand/Studio: Mayet Pictures

In a world increasingly defined by transient interactions, The Gondarian Welcome serves as a visual testament to the enduring, sacred art of Ethiopian hospitality. Set against the historic and architectural backdrop of Gondar, this documentary series captures an intimate journey of cultural immersion, tracking the subtle transformation of a traveler from an outsider at the threshold to a keeper of living history. For me, this journey is deeply personal; as a child of Gondar, this story is the very fabric of my own identity. I chose to document these rituals not as an outside observer, but as a son of this soil, driven by a profound responsibility to preserve the unhurried warmth and devotion of our heritage. The narrative unfolds through deliberate environmental portraiture and precise detail framing, moving from the quiet, dimly lit sanctuary of the domestic hearth to the expansive stone monuments of the kings. Through intimate cultural rituals—the meditative preparation of coffee, the humbling act of washing a guest's feet, and the communal sharing of the Gursha—the series honors the profound devotion embedded in everyday tradition. Documenting and preserving these traditions matters immensely today; in a rapidly modernizing, fast-paced world where human connections are becoming fleeting, these photographs serve as a critical reminder of who we are. As the journey shifts outward into the bustling marketplace and the historic castle grounds, the physical gifting and draping of the iconic, red-bordered Jano cloth symbolizes a deeper energetic transfer. It marks the moment the traveler is protected by, and draped in, the very heritage of the city. Utilizing a cinematic color palette and structured editorial pacing, The Gondarian Welcome explores the space where human connection meets historical legacy, declaring that Gondar's truest living history is found not just in the ancient stone walls of its castles, but in the sacred hospitality kept alive within our homes.

MAYET PICTURES

PORTFOLIO OF PHOTOGRAPHY & DIGITAL RETOUCHING

BY HABTAMU MARU ANDARGEW



CHAPTER I: THE CALM BEFORE ARRIVAL

Preparing the Welcome

In Gondarian tradition, hospitality begins long before the guest arrives. The home is prepared, the coffee is arranged, and the welcome is anticipated in quiet reflection.



CHAPTER II: THE RITUAL OF HUMILITY

Receiving the Guest

A guest is welcomed not only with words, but through acts of service that honor their journey.



THE COMMUNION & THE GURSHA

Sharing the Table

In Ethiopia, a meal is a communion. Food is prepared with devotion and presented with pride, welcoming the traveler to share not just a table, but a piece of home.

THE STREETS OF THE KINGS

Walking the City



THE GIFT OF HERITAGE

Receiving the Jano

Hospitality extends far beyond the walls of the home. Hand-in-hand, host and guest step out into the bustling heart of Gondar, where the traveler is gifted the iconic, red-bordered Jano cloth—a symbol of protection and shared history.



KEEPER OF LIVING HISTORY

Belonging

Standing beneath the stone balconies of kings, the journey concludes. The traveler, now draped in the heritage of the city, leaves not as a stranger, but as a keeper of Gondar's living history.



HABTAMU MARU ANDARGEW

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