

MONDOFOTO

Italian in the linguistic landscape of Asmara (Eritrea)

Photos and notes by Moreno Vergari



















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Description of the signs:

	Italian	Tigrinya ¹	other languages on the signs
Fig. 1	PASTICCERIA GIARDINO	ፓስቲቸሪያ ጃርዲኖ [pasticčäriya ġardino]	
Fig. 2	DENTISTA	ሓኪም ሰኒ [ḥakim sənni]	Arabic
Fig. 3	ARROTINO	መስሐል ካራን መቐስን [mäšəhal karran mäqäsən]	—
Fig. 4	ELETTRICISTA	ኤለትሪቺስታ [ˈelättričista]	
Fig. 5	RIVELLINI (trademark)	ሪቨሊኒ [Rivällini]	English
Fig. 6	BAR TRE STELLE	ባር ሰለስተ ኮቕብ [bar sälästä koqob]	English (“Bar”)
Fig. 7	SESEN PASTICCERIA	ሰሰን ቤት መቐር መግቢ [sesen bet muqur mäḡbi]	

¹ The transliteration of Tigrinya is based on the system used in the Encyclopaedia Aethiopica. The pronunciation of geminated consonants changes from person to person and, consequently, the transcription used here is not always exact.

Fig. 8	PENSIONE STELLA	ኮኸብ መዕረፍ አጋይሽ [kokob mä'räf 'agayəš]	Arabic
Fig. 9	PENSIONE PISA	መዕረፍ አጋይሽ ፒዛ [mä'räf 'agayəš Piza]	
Fig. 10	RISTORANTE SAN GIORGIO	ቤት መግቢ ቅ. ጊዮርጊስ [bet mägbi Q ² . Giyorgis]	Arabic
Fig. 11	CAVALLO ROSSO RESTAURANT	ቤት መግቢ ካቫሎ ሮሶ [bet mägbi kavallo rosso]	English (“Restaurant”)
Fig. 12	LA GELATERIA	ላ ጀላተርያ [la ġälattärya]	
Fig. 13	BIELLA ³ ASMARA CAFE	ቤላ አስመራ ካፈ [bela 'Asmära kaffä]	English (“Cafe”) ⁴
Fig. 14	CASA DEL FORMAGGIO	ቤት መሸጣ ፎርማጃ [bet mäšätta formaġġo]	
Fig. 15	PIZZERIA ERITREA	ፒሰሪያ ኤርትራ [pissäriya 'Erətra]	Arabic
Fig. 16	PIZZERIA NAPOLI	ፒሰሪያ ኖፖሊ [pissäriya Napoli]	
Fig. 17	FOTO OTTICA BINI	ፎቶ መነጻር ዓይኒ ቢኒ [foto mänäššär 'ayni Bini]	
Fig. 18	FARMACIA CENTRALE	ፋርማሲ ሰንትራል [farmasi säntral]	English (on the window) ⁵
Fig. 19	AUTOSCUOLA JET	ት/ምዝዋር ማኪና ጀት [t ⁶ /məzwar makina ġät]	
Fig. 20	LA FERRAMENTA	ላ፡ ፌራ[...] ⁷ ንታ [la ferra[...]nta]	

² The initial ቅ. [q.] is an abbreviation of ቅዱስ [qəddus] ‘saint, holy’.

³ The word “Biella” is an incorrect spelling of the Italian word “Bella” (= beautiful), probably due to the common practice of transcribing the letter /e/ of the 5th order of the Tigrinya alphabet as /ie/.

⁴ Or from Italian *caffè* ‘coffee’, used also a synonym of ‘bar’ (but normally not selling alcohol).

⁵ The Tigrinya transcription reflects English “Central Pharmacy”, not Italian “Farmacia Centrale”.

⁶ The ት [t] is an abbreviation of ትምህርት [təmhərti] ‘school’, thus ትምህርት/ምዝዋር [təmhərti/məzwar] ‘driving school’.

⁷ In the store sign the letter መ [mä] had fallen off.