

# CHRISTIE'S

MEDIA ALERT | GENEVA  
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## PATEK PHILIPPE *THE HAILE SELASSIE – REFERENCE 2497*

Patek Philippe. An 18K gold perpetual calendar wristwatch with sweep centre seconds, moon phases, black luminous military-style dial, luminous Alpha hands, engraved case back, formerly the property of His Majesty, King of Kings, Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia. Signed Patek Philippe, Genève, ref. 2497, movement no. 888'058, case no. 679'792, manufactured in 1954

**Geneva** – Christie's international watch department will offer on 15 May in Geneva **The Haile Selassie – reference 2497** by Patek Philippe. The ownership of this watch was contested in November 2015 and as a result was withdrawn from the sale and subsequently the object of a legal title dispute. This dispute was resolved in late December 2016. The original consignor possesses all rights to offer the watch at auction this May. Christie's is looking forward to presenting this unique timepiece once again to the world of watch collectors in a month's time.

*"It is without doubt one of the most captivating and important horological discoveries in recent years. The watch unites exceptional rarity, stunning looks, the excitement of being a previously unknown iteration of the landmark reference 2497, and to be of distinguished provenances. Furthermore, it is the one and only known example of this reference to bear a type of military-style black dial with luminous Arabic numerals and luminous Alpha hands, all absolutely unrestored and in original superb condition,"* commented Thomas Perazzi, Head of Christie's Watches Geneva.



According to Christie's research, it was commissioned by Ing. Federico Bazzi to be presented as a gift to Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie. Mr. Bazzi was an entrepreneur and pilot based in Asmara, Eritrea (which formed a federation with Ethiopia in 1952 and was fully annexed to Ethiopia in 1961). Among the pioneers of Italian aviation, Mr. Bazzi was President of the R.U.N.A (Reale Unione Nazionale Aeronautica - National Royal Aeronautic Union) in Asmara. It would appear that Mr. Bazzi presented the watch to Haile Selassie on his official visit to Switzerland in November 1954, a month after the confirmed delivery of the watch by Patek Philippe.

Years later, the Emperor himself presented the timepiece as a gift to an eminent African personality, whose descendant has now consigned it for sale. The Department of Ethiopian Studies of Addis Ababa University have confirmed that the Emperor used to make gifts of watches to high profile acquaintances. In fact this is a relatively common habit among Middle-Eastern and African royalty chiefly exemplified by the well-known Omani, U.A.E and Saudi Arabian special order timepieces.

### **HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE**

Born Tafari Makonnen Woldemikael on 23 July 1892, he was the son of Ras Makonnen Woldemikael Gudessa, the Governor of Harar, and Yeshimebet Ali Abba Jifar, daughter of the ruler of the Wollo Province. In common with all rulers of Ethiopia, his lineage can traditionally be traced to the first ruler of Ethiopia, Menelik I, offspring of biblical King Solomon and Makeda, Queen of Sheba. Reflecting this, his full title in office was officially "By the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, King of Kings of Ethiopia, Elect of God".



The back of the case of ref 2497 engraved with the monogram of His Majesty Haile Selassie

The last part of his office saw him struggle to further modernize the country and to bring more social balance between the impoverished rural class and the wealthy aristocracy. Obviously, such measures were opposed by the ruling class. On 23 November 1974, taking advantage of the condition the country was left in by a devastating famine combined with the oil crisis of 1973, the Emperor was deposed. He died on 27 August 1975.

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*\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and are reported net of applicable fees.*

*Images available on request*

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