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Wenig, Steffen

In kaiserlichem Auftrag: die Deutsche Aksum-Expedition 1906 unter Enno Littmann.

der Reihe / of the series

Forschungen zur Archäologie außereuropäischer Kulturen; Bd. 3,2

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34780/dc6r-c63g>

Herausgebende Institution / Publisher:
Deutsches Archäologisches Institut

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David W. Phillipson

An evaluation of the archaeological and ethnographic work of the 1906 Deutsche Aksum-Expedition at Aksum and Yeha

The work of Dr Enno Littmann's 1906 *Deutsche Aksum-Expedition* (DAE), as published in 1913, has occupied a unique place in the archaeological and ethnographic historiography of northern Ethiopia and adjacent parts of Eritrea for almost one hundred years. Only rarely has the quality and impact of its research and recording been subjected to critical evaluation (but see Monneret de Villard 1938: v-x; Phillipson 1998). The present paper attempts to remedy this deficiency, with particular reference to the Expedition's work at Aksum and Yeha. It will focus both on what the fieldwork and publication (Littmann *et al.* 1913) achieved and on what they did not even attempt.

The DAE must, of course, be viewed in the context of its own time. It operated from a European base, *via* the Italian colony of Eritrea, in a region barely touched by western intellectual traditions. Of the principal German professional members of the Expedition, Enno Littmann, Daniel Krencker and Theodor von Lüpke, the only one with any prior first-hand knowledge or experience of the region was Littmann himself, whose expertise focused on Semitic linguistics; at Aksum, he concentrated his research efforts on studying inscriptions. Krencker and von Lüpke were both primarily architects, with drafting and photographic expertise respectively. At Aksum, Krencker paid particular attention to the archaeological monuments. Notably, he also maintained and expanded his Ethiopian interests in later years, when he acted as supervisor for Hermann Dabbert's study of the Lalibela rock-hewn churches, which resulted in a thesis presented for the degree of *Doktor-Ingenieur* at the *Technische Hochschule*, Berlin, in 1937 (Dabbert 1938).

Although the work of the DAE has contributed greatly to our understanding of Aksum's archaeological monuments, its limitations should not be ignored. It is clear that excavation was carried out on a substantial scale, but this was aimed almost exclusively as an aid to the planning of buildings, rather than to elucidate the ages or functions of the monuments. Portable artefacts were preserved and selectively recorded, but hardly ever was attention paid to their precise provenance in relation to stratigraphy or associated structures. Indeed, the extent of supervision available over a substantial and inexperienced workforce would probably have prevented such detailed recording of the excavations, even if it had been deemed desirable. Matters such as subsistence economy, settlement distributions and detailed chronology, all of which are major foci of modern archaeological excavation, were simply not addressed. These criticisms are, of course, applicable to most archaeological endeavours of the early twentieth century, and should not be held specifically against the methods or the achievements of the DAE.

A number of Italians from Eritrea were employed by the DAE in supervisory capacities, presumably because of their Tigrinya abilities, but their contributions are hardly ever mentioned either in the published report or in Littmann's day-book (Voigt 2006). No attempt was made – or, apparently, even considered – to involve Ethiopian or Eritrean personnel other than as unskilled labourers. Although this now seems strange and reprehensible, it was fully in keeping with the contemporary practice of European researchers in other parts of the world. Despite the Expedition members' interpretations having an inevitable linguistic and architectural emphasis, based almost solely

on comparisons with non-African regions, it is greatly to their credit that they observed and recorded much ethnographic material, even though their ability to comprehend it was somewhat limited.

This background helps us to understand the factors which have restricted use and proper appreciation of the DAE volumes. Firstly, they were published in German very shortly before the First World War, an event which impeded international distribution of the report and during which a number of copies may have been destroyed. Even now, German is a language that few Ethiopians and Eritreans can readily understand. Its free use as a second language in Europe was significantly reduced by the 1914 outbreak of hostilities and subsequent developments. Not only are the original DAE volumes now rare and expensive, for more than eighty years no significant part of them was translated into any other language (Phillipson 1997), nor were they reprinted in German until 2006 (Littmann *et al.* 2006). Indeed, until the 1990s, the survival and whereabouts of the Expedition's archive at the *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin* seems to have been virtually unknown to Ethiopianists, who largely restricted themselves to reproducing a limited repertoire of the published illustrations (*e. g.* Kobishchanov 1979). This lack of access had unfortunate consequences, as will be discussed below.

A further matter that requires comment is the relationship between the Expedition members and the people of Aksum. The DAE reached Aksum through Italian-controlled Eritrea, and its penetration of Menelik's Ethiopia was restricted to the northernmost strip where Aksum, Adwa, Yeha and Debra Damo are located. References to more southerly regions are few, and limited to information available in earlier publications. Knowledge of Lalibela, for example, was largely taken from Raffray's illustrated work of 1882. At Aksum, it seems that the DAE was warmly received by the Governor, Dejazmatch Gebre Sellassie, no doubt stimulated by the cordial relationship established with the latter a short time previously by their compatriots Felix and Friedrich Rosen, who had travelled to Aksum *via* Addis Ababa with the support of the Ethiopian Emperor Menelik II (Rosen 1907: especially, for Aksum, 466–79). The Rosens' role in preparing the ground for the DAE in both Ethiopia and Germany has recently been emphasised (Daum 2005, 2006).

On the other hand, there is no evidence that the Expedition members made any attempt to explain their work to the population at large. As a result, relations with priests in particular appear to have been at times exceptionally strained (*cf.* Ziegler 2005: 336–7), despite numerous attempts to establish some measure of co-operation on the part of the Dejazmatch, whose office as Governor had temporarily subsumed the ecclesiastical authority usually exercised by the Neburid. These problems are noted more comprehensively in Littmann's day-book (*e. g.* entry for 15 March) than in the Expedition's published report. Although the late Dejazmatch Zewde Gebre Sellassie, the Governor's son born some years after the DAE's visit to Aksum, who kindly discussed this matter with me in 2002, was unaware that any difficulties were encountered, the day-book strongly implies that the Expedition's departure from Aksum on 7 April was somewhat precipitate, and that a longer stay had formerly been anticipated. Littmann's day-book entry for 10 March implies that the Expedition may originally have intended to stay until May; financial problems notified on 31 March may have contributed to the decision to leave early.

The DAE fieldwork placed great emphasis on the meticulous recording of extant monuments, especially those of stone. It has often been said that the Expedition's greatest contribution to knowledge of ancient Aksum was their recording of monuments no longer extant, but this does not do justice to the DAE achievement. The plans and scale-drawings of individual monuments which Krencker produced are wonderfully precise and accurate, although some of them suffer from inadequately distinguishing between features definitely observed and those hypothetically reconstructed. The location-plans have proved to be far more precise than their rough sketch-like presentation might suggest. Approximately 1000 photographs were taken by von Lüpke, often under difficult conditions; the majority of the negatives survive and are of significantly better quality than the much smaller number of reproductions in the 1913 publication would imply. These photographs provide exceptionally fine records not only of the sites and monuments seen in 1906, but also of their urban and rural situations and of the people amongst whom the Expedition worked. These points may best be demonstrated by citing a few examples.

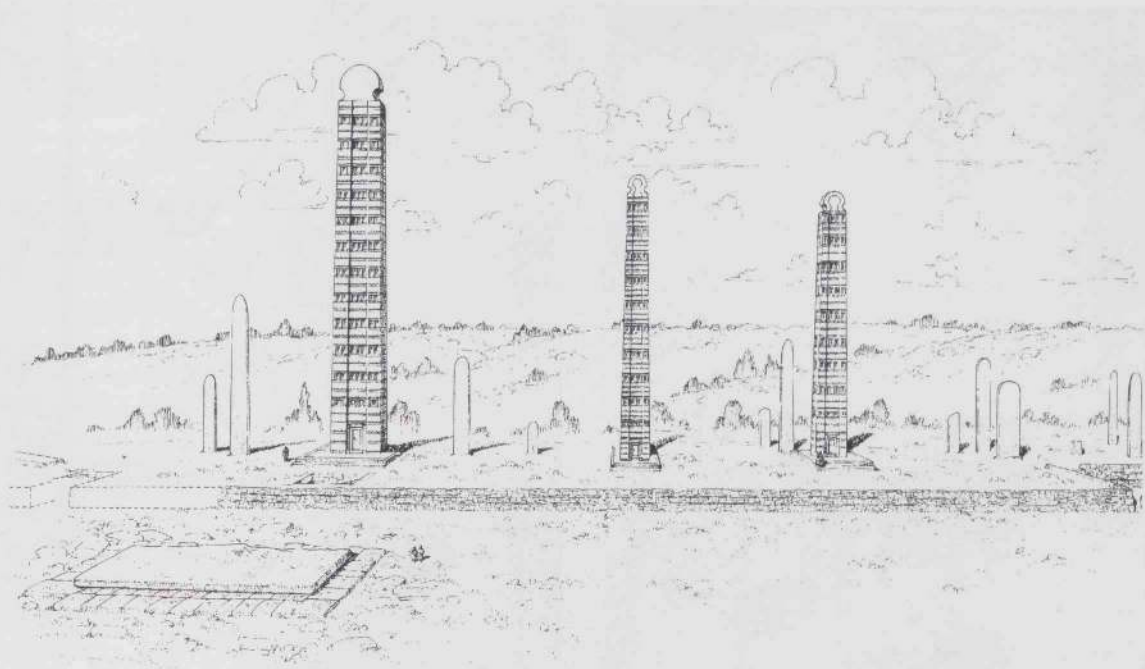


Fig. 1 A reconstruction of how the central stela area of ancient Aksum would have appeared, had the erection of the largest stela – on the left – been successful in the mid-fourth century. The third-largest stela, on the right, still stands at Aksum. Stela 2, in the centre, fell and broke many hundreds of years ago; the fragments were taken to Italy in 1937 but in 2005 were returned to Aksum.

THE STELAE

Although Littmann and his colleagues were fully aware of Aksum's wider significance, they paid particular attention to the series of great stelae, particularly those carved in representation of multi-storeyed buildings (Fig. 1). It is strange that their publication gives little indication that they sought to establish the purpose for which these remarkable monuments had originally been erected, or to ascertain their age – although they assumed, on grounds not explicitly stated, that they were pre-Christian.

The stela to the understanding of which the DAE records have most particularly contributed is the second-largest, which they designated Stela 2. Locally-maintained oral traditions and archaeological excavations conducted in 1993–7 (Phillipson 2000: 141–56) both indicate that the stela was intentionally felled many centuries ago, when it broke into several pieces. It was in this state that it was recorded by the DAE and from which it was removed by order of Mussolini in 1937 during the Italian occupation of Ethiopia, transported to Italy and re-erected in Rome. After prolonged negotiation it was returned to Ethiopia in 2005.



Fig. 2 The basal section of Stela 2 at Aksum, fallen and broken, photographed by T. von Lüpke of the DAE in 1906 (photo DAE 236 = MBA 2225.48). This image (Phillipson 1997: fig. 45) was not published in the Expedition's 1913 report.

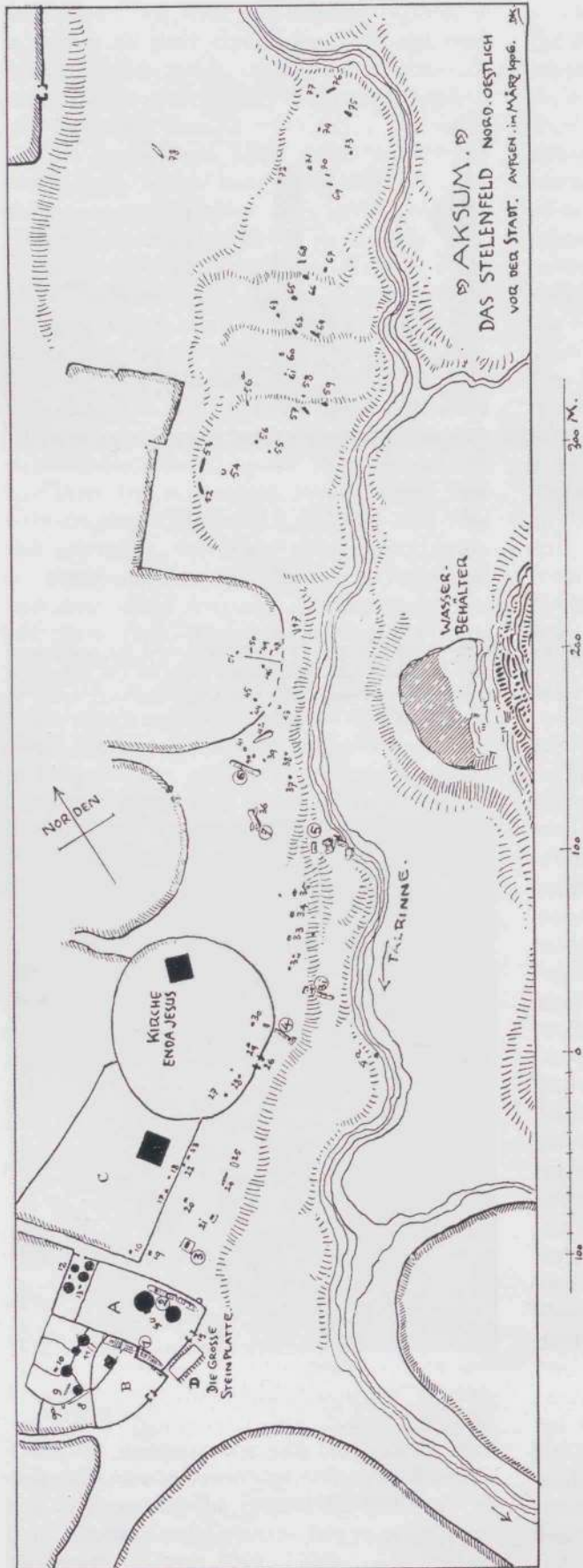


Fig. 3 The DAE's sketch-plan of the principal stelae at Aksum, showing the 1906 position of the Stela-2 sections (Littmann *et al.* 1913, 2: Abb. 8).

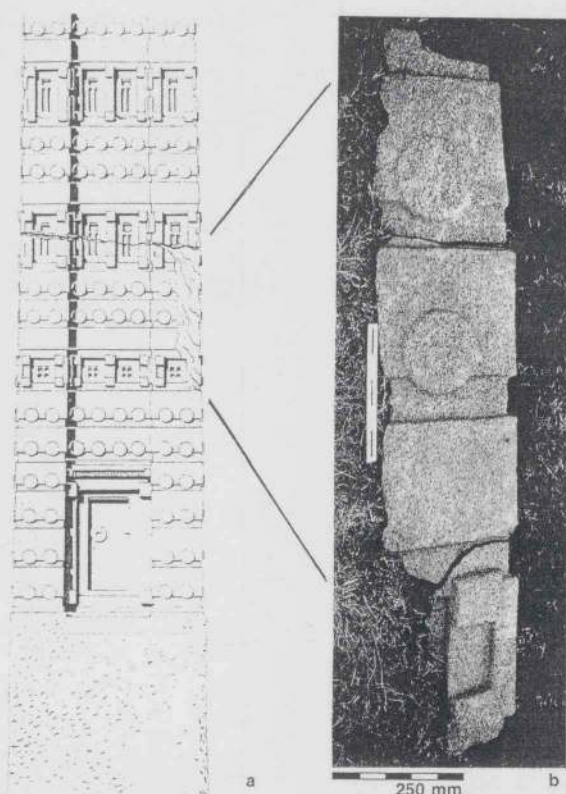


Fig. 4 Part of the DAE drawing of Stela 2, showing the scar where a splinter had become detached (also visible in Fig. 2), together with the missing splinter excavated in 1997 (from Phillipson 2000: fig. 124).

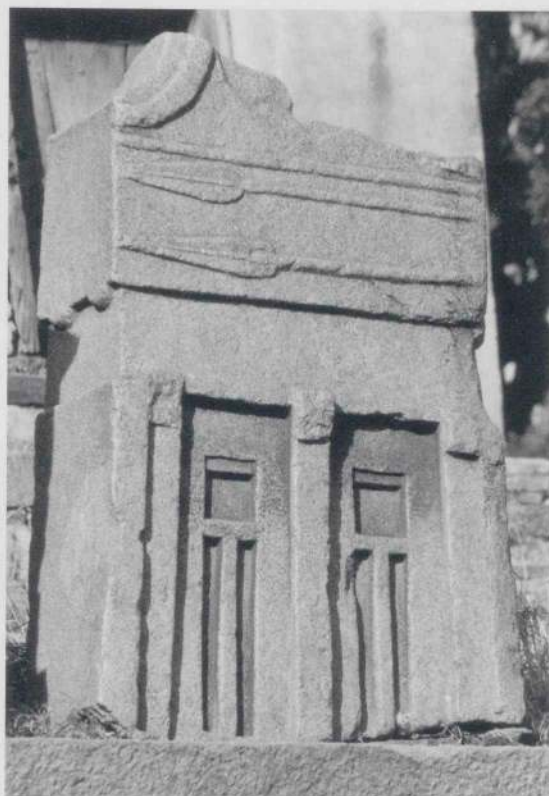


Fig. 5 The 'Stela of the Lances', photographed in 1994 (photo D. W. P.).

During the campaigns for the return of Stela 2 from Rome, it was not infrequently stated in Ethiopia that this monument had been standing until demolished and broken by the Italians charged with its removal, despite the fact that the DAE (Littmann *et al.* 1913, 2: 22–3, Abb. 42; see also Fig. 2) had published photographs and descriptions of its fallen state more than four decades previously.

Krencker's general plans showing these monuments' positions relative to each other and to other features, despite looking like rough sketches, are exceptionally reliable. This was demonstrated in 1993–4 when I used Krencker's sketch-plan of the central stelae area at Aksum as a basis for positioning excavations designed to locate the original site of Stela 2. Ignoring the rudimentary appearance and small size of the published plan (Littmann *et al.* 1913, 2: Abb. 8, here Fig. 3), I took detailed measurements from it and calculated their true values from Krencker's scale. When these were triangulated on the ground relative to Stelae

1 and 3, the former position of Stela 2's base could be plotted. Excavation, supervised by my colleague Jenny Jones, revealed remains of the socket in which the stela had formerly stood, within 2 m of the position calculated on the basis of Krencker's sketch (Phillipson 2000: 139–41). It is highly regrettable that the remains of the socket were subsequently destroyed during works undertaken, without archaeological supervision, in preparation for the stela's contemplated re-erection.

Stela 2 has provided an additional example of Krencker's accuracy. His detailed drawing reconstructing the then-supine and broken monument shows the scar left by a large splinter, 1.7 m long, which had become detached from what had formerly been its northwestern corner at the level of the two lowest sets of windows. During excavations at the Stela-2 site supervised by Martin Watts in 1997 (in Phillipson 2000: 141–56, especially fig. 124, here Fig. 4), the missing splinter was found, broken into three pieces, its configuration matching very

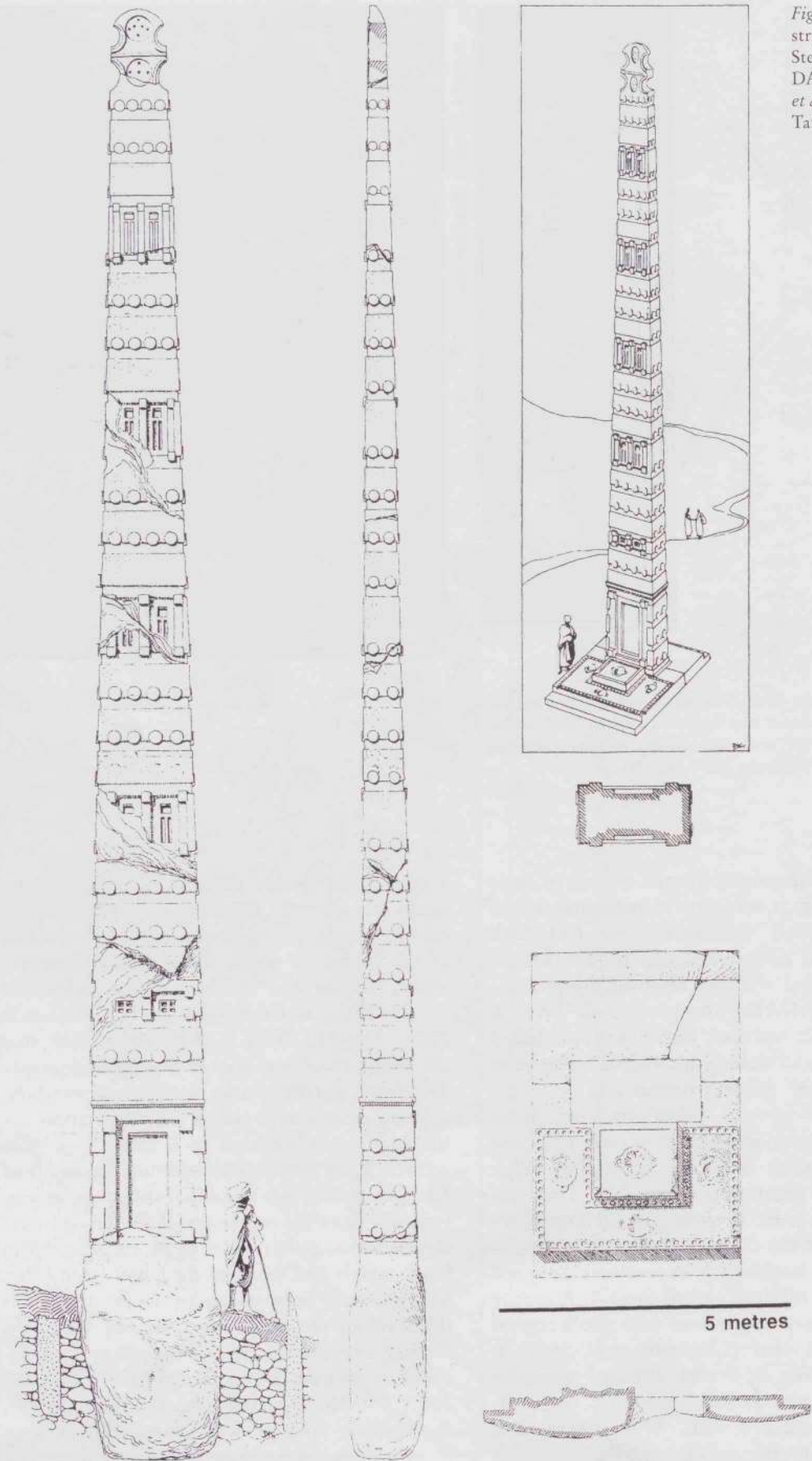
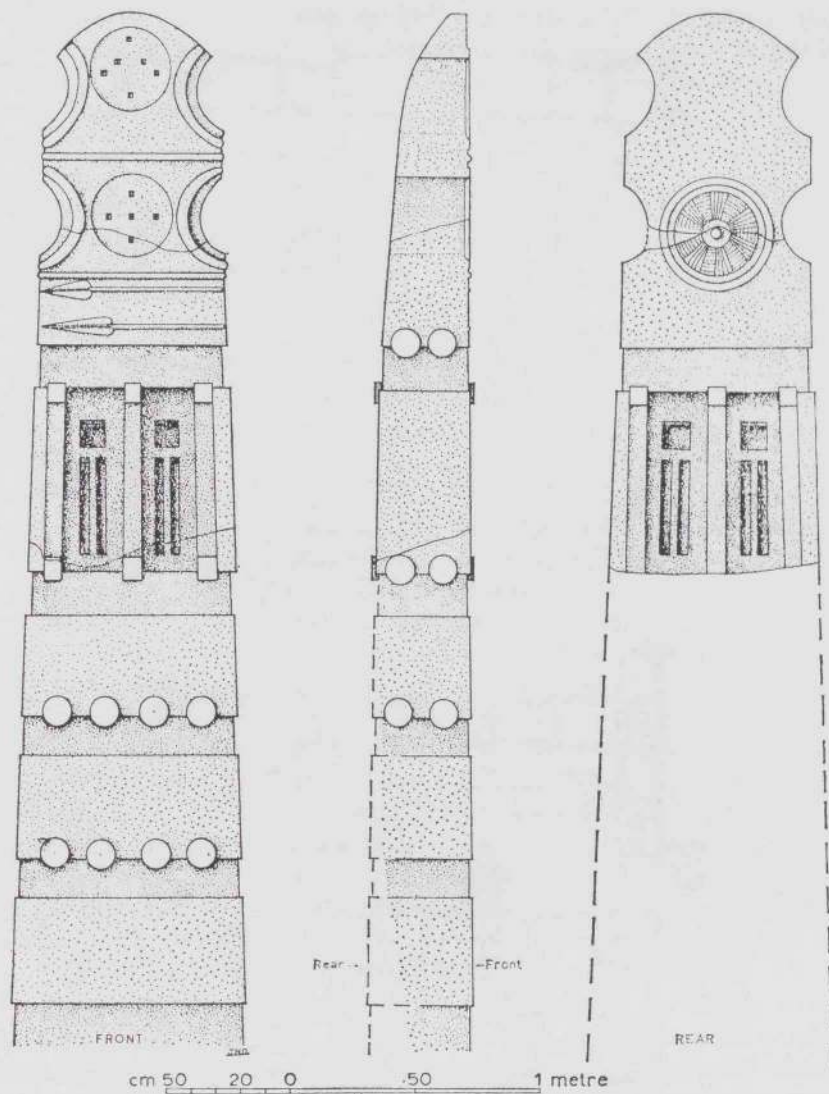


Fig. 6a Reconstructions of Stela 4, by the DAE (Littmann *et al.* 1913, 2: Taf. iii);

Fig. 6b Reconstructions of Stela 4, with the 'Stela of the Lances' correctly incorporated (after Chittick 1974: fig. 3).



closely that of the scar drawn by Krencker but no longer visible on the stela itself because of patching inserted when the looted pieces were re-assembled in Rome.

In recording the monuments as seen, the DAE rapidly produced numerous results of remarkable accuracy. They were not, of course, infallible. Krencker recorded the remains of Stela 4, lying just outside the gateway of Enda Yesus church, and correctly noted that another fragment, exposed nearby (Littmann *et al.* 1913, 2: Abb. 26), had formed the apex of this same stela. The apex was subsequently removed during the Italian occupation and placed at the east end of the Ezana Garden, where it is still preserved. The DAE do not appear to have seen the so-called 'Stela of the Lances', a fragment successively recorded throughout the

nineteenth century by Salt (in Valentia 1809, 3: 97), Lefebvre (1845-51, 3: 431) and Bent (1893: 192-3) as set into a pavement within the Cathedral Precinct. Now (Fig. 5), it rests on a wall immediately north of the ancient steps to the west of the Old Cathedral, but one of von Lüpke's photographs (Littmann *et al.* 1913, 2: Abb. 219) indicates that it was not in this position in 1906. It had, however, been moved to its present location by 1956 (Doresse 1956a: 47, 55-6; *idem* 1959: 65, 68). Although the DAE reproduced Lefebvre's drawing of this fragment (Littmann *et al.* 1913, 2: Abb. 53), they were unaware that it fits both to the apex and to the main part of Stela 4; this was first recognised by Monneret de Villard (1938: 38; see also Chittick 1974: 162-3; Plant 1985: 215). A drawing of the stela, based on

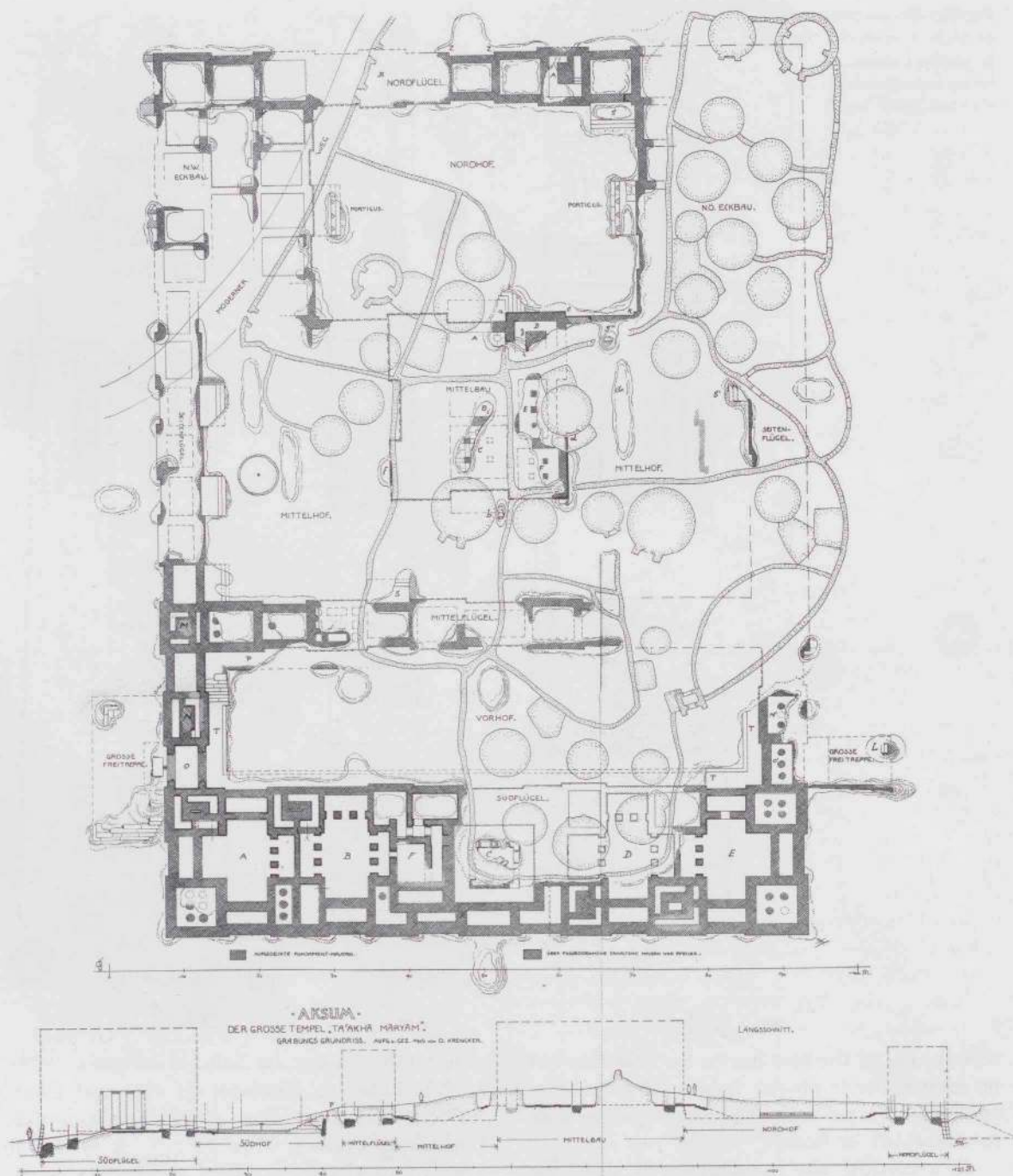


Fig. 7 The DAE's plan of Ta'akha Maryam (Littmann *et al.* 1913, 2: Taf. xix).

Plant's discovery, is presented here (Figs. 6a, b) in comparison with Krencker's version (Littmann *et al.* 1913, 2: Taf. vii).

The third-largest storeyed stela has remained upright ever since it was first erected in, as we now know, the late third or early fourth century A.D. Although there is no indication

that it was taken for such a purpose, a photograph published by the DAE (Littmann *et al.* 1913, 2: Abb. 40) provided valuable proof in the 1990s that the lean of this stela had not increased since 1906 (Phillipson / Hobbs 1996). Indeed, it seems likely that the monolith was never precisely vertical – a conclusion that is in

accord with recent suggestions as to how the stelae may originally have been erected (Phillipson D. W. & L. in Phillipson 2000: 252–4).

It should be noted here that Krencker's reconstruction-drawings of the largest stela, Stela 1 (Littmann *et al.* 1913, 2: Abb. 40, Taf. x), suggest details of its design for which no primary evidence is or was available. The apex is shown with a crescent-and-disc symbol, apparently rock-carved, but this part of the monument was shattered when the stela fell, apparently while being erected (Phillipson 2000: 222, 252–4). Similarly, no trace has ever been found of its baseplates and it is likely that none was ever fitted, that shown in the DAE drawing being modelled on one belonging to a different stela.

ÉLITE BUILDINGS

At both Aksum and Yeha, excavation by the DAE was effectively restricted to clearance designed to expose more fully monuments which were already partly visible; it was an adjunct to the preparation of plans rather than an attempt to obtain information about the use, purpose, associations or age of the sites concerned. This is most clearly seen in the case of large complexes of buildings at Aksum which the DAE designated 'palaces' – a term that has been adopted by most subsequent commentators but which in fact implies an unjustified assumption as to these buildings' original function. As argued elsewhere (Phillipson 2009), the less-specific designation 'élite buildings' is to be preferred until such time as their purpose or purposes can be firmly established. The DAE plans of these complexes are nonetheless of great value as records of sites now partly destroyed by subsequent developments or obscured by more recent buildings.

The wholly exceptional site of Ta'akha Maryam, for example, was cleared and comprehensively planned by the DAE (Littmann *et al.* 1913, 2: Taf. xix, here Fig. 7); much of it was intentionally destroyed by road-making operations during the Italian occupation, and the DAE plan is the sole record of what formerly existed. Selective excavations at Enda Sem'on by Chittick (Munro-Hay 1989: 121–42), curtailed at the time of the 1974 revolution, and at Dungur in 1970 by Anfray (still unpublished) are the only ones so far undertaken within the Aksum urban area which could have provided information about the chronology and

original function of these 'élite buildings'. Full archaeological investigation at what is left of Ta'akha Maryam is a task for the future.

TOMBS

The limited aims of the fieldwork undertaken by the DAE, noted above, had the result that tombs featured relatively little in the resultant publication. The so-called 'Tomb of Menelik' had been noted a short while previously by Rosen, who apparently encouraged clearance; it was further investigated by the DAE, but little useful information was forthcoming (Littmann *et al.* 1913, 2: 134–6). Examination of the feature traditionally designated the 'Tomb of Ityopis' was likewise inconclusive; in neither case could it be concluded that the monument concerned had actually served as a tomb.

On the other hand, the Expedition undertook valuable and extensive research at Enda Kaleb near Aksum. Two built underground tombs, whose presence had been recorded as long ago as the sixteenth century but which had subsequently become largely refilled with debris, were cleared and comprehensively recorded, as was the bipartite superstructure which had been erected over them. These structures and their interpretation have been discussed in detail elsewhere (Phillipson 2009: 40–2, 63–4); here it should be noted that the DAE's work at the site resulted in plans and photographs (e. g. Fig. 8) which provide an invaluable record of its appearance before the twentieth century's numerous ill-documented restorations and removals of architectural fragments.

CHURCHES

As noted above, the Expedition members experienced repeated difficulties in their relations with Ethiopian priests. It is thus not surprising that their records relating to churches are not always as precise and comprehensive as those attained elsewhere. So long as these limitations are kept in mind, however, the records have lasting value. This is particularly true in the case of their plan of the Maryam TSION Cathedral compound at Aksum (Littmann *et al.* 1913, 3: Taf. vi), which remains the best available record of several buildings demolished during or before the major redevelopments that accompanied the erection of the New Cathedral c. 1960.



Fig. 8 Enda Kaleb, Aksum, photographed from the southwest by T. von Lüpke during the DAE's 1906 excavations (photo DAE 445 = MBA 2234.10). The central western steps of the superstructure are in the foreground, with the entrance to the northern tomb – attributed to King Kaleb – in front of the third figure from the left. The stack of finely dressed masonry seen at the far left still survives, but is now adjoined by reconstructed walling. The fine stepped pillar-base beside the central courtyard has disappeared. This image (Phillipson 1997: fig. 94) was not published in the Expedition's 1913 report; it permits evaluation of the many changes that took place at this site during the twentieth century.

The Church of the Four Animals (*Arba'atu Ensessa*) at the time of the DAE visit was a circular thatched-roof structure, some 16.5 m in diameter, located immediately west of the Maryam Tsion Cathedral compound (Littmann *et al.* 1913, 3: Abb. 175, 210). It stood in its own walled enclosure, with a two-storey gatehouse leading directly from the street on its west side. The expedition members briefly described the church with several photographs (*ibid.*: 60–1, Abb. 36, 176–7), although they were not permitted to enter and their plan of

the interior features was presumably based on verbal accounts from others. The old circular church is also clearly visible in a photograph taken from the air in the early 1950s (Doresse 1956a: 45; *idem* 1959: 72).

The DAE record is of particular value since the church was radically remodelled in 1962 and replaced with a rectangular structure extending 19.25 m west-east by 13.6 m. Its square *maqdas* appears, however, to have been retained from the earlier round church. Beneath the *maqdas* are two rock-cut shaft-tombs which may be of

Aksumite age (Anfray 1965: 5). Retention of the *maqdas*, or its replacement in precisely the same position, is also attested at Debra Berhan Sellassie, Gondar, where a circular church was replaced by a rectangular one at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Annequin 1976; di Salvo 1999: fig. 65). The gatehouse at the Church of the Four Animals was also replaced in the course of the twentieth century (Phillipson 2003: fig. 51).

The age of the round church of the Four Animals recorded by the DAE remains uncertain. Anfray (*loc. cit.*) noted a local tradition that it had been erected by a grandson of the Emperor Fasilidas, which would imply a date c. 1700. While such an age appears plausible for the building seen in 1906, the history of the site itself remains unclear. A much earlier Church of the Four Animals, located on the southeastern outskirts of Aksum, was recorded in the *Mashafa Aksum* (so-called *Liber Axumae*, Conti Rossini 1909–10), and its remains – apparently of Late Aksumite date – have recently been excavated by Tekle Hagos (2008). It remains to be ascertained whether and, if so, at what date the *tobot* of the Four Animals was transferred from the southeastern site to that of the modern church.

A particular difficulty which the Expedition members encountered, and which has been shared by most subsequent foreign visitors, relates to the sanctuaries of churches, *i. e.* the eastern parts of rectangular buildings and the central areas of circular ones, to which only priests are allowed access. Unfortunately, Krencker's drawings did not always clearly differentiate between observed and interpolated details which he had not actually seen. This was a particular problem in that the DAE personnel were not admitted to the eastern half of Maryam TSION Cathedral, and their plan shows this area as divided into three sections by two long straight walls extending from west to east. This is incorrect and misleading, as may be seen by comparing the DAE plan (Littmann *et al.* 1913, 3: Taf. vi) with that produced by Michael Mallinson and Alastair Jackson who, with the present writer, were admitted to parts of this area – but not, of course, the main sanctuary itself – in 1994 (Phillipson 1995: fig. 41). Admittedly, close examination of Krencker's published plan shows that these presumed walls are differentiated from those actually observed and surveyed, but their hypothetical nature was not emphasised. As a result, the incorrect plan has continued to be

reproduced (*e. g.* di Salvo 1999: fig. 69) as if it were a factual record, a later and somewhat more accurate plan made c. 1925 (Kametz 1950 – kindly pointed out to me by the late Derek Matthews) being ignored.

TOWN AND COUNTRYSIDE

Although the ethnographic records of the DAE have lasting value, they are largely restricted to tangible materials: buildings and portable artefacts including clothing. The processes by which such items were produced or acquired do not appear to have received much attention.

The Ta'akha Maryam site, noted above, serves to introduce another aspect of our lasting debt to the DAE, but one that has received comparatively little comment. This plan (Fig. 7, above) and those of other 'élite buildings' meticulously record the outline positions of the round houses which stood on these sites in 1906. At that time, as the DAE photographs also make clear, the Aksum urban area was largely occupied by two-storeyed round houses with thatched roofs and walls of undressed stone, grouped in walled compounds and joined by narrow curvilinear lanes. The overall layout of the town is admirably depicted in von Lüpke's map (Littmann *et al.* 1913, 1: Abb. 29) and photographs (*e. g.* Fig. 9). During the Italian occupation, its principal areas were largely swept away and replaced with the series of radiating straight streets which largely survives today (Monneret de Villard 1938: tav. 2; Munro-Hay 1989: fig. 2. 2). The DAE plans and photographs of Aksum are a rare and important record of a largely indigenous Ethiopian town at the beginning of the twentieth century. They also provide exceptional views of the surrounding countryside showing, for example, that the denuded landscape so characteristic of the later twentieth century was no recent phenomenon. Von Lüpke's portraits of Ethiopians from all walks of life also comprise an invaluable historical record.

YEHA

On occasion, the DAE's thoroughness resulted in their recording material which was tangential to their own interests and, indeed, of which they appear not to have fully appreciated the significance. At Yeha, for example, in addition to recording the remains of the 'pre-Aksumite'



Fig. 9 A view of Aksum town, looking southwards from the slopes of Beta Giyorgis hill, with the central stela area in the middle-distance, photographed by T. von Lüpke of the DAE in 1906 (photo DAE 114 = MBA 222.20). This image (Phillipson 1997: fig. 4) was not published in the Expedition's 1913 report.

Great Temple (Robin / de Maigret 1998; also the paper by de Maigret in this volume), they also made brief mention of the additions to that building associated with its subsequent use as a church (see also Bent 1893: 136–40). These additions were neither investigated nor described in any detail; in the southeast corner of the Temple, a depression that the DAE assumed to be a grave was excavated some fifty years later by Doresse (1956b) and shown to be a finely preserved baptistery of early type. Doresse's research was the first to be undertaken at Yeha after the visit of the DAE, but by this time the principal Christian additions to the temple had been swept away without

further record. The DAE's plan (Littmann *et al.* 1913, 2: Abb. 167) and hitherto unpublished photographs (Fig. 10) are thus of exceptional interest and importance. They show a westward extension of the main temple building, with of much smaller rougher masonry but incorporating at least one inscribed fragment presumably derived from the earlier structure, extending over part of the area occupied by the former portico. There was also a small rectangular building within the temple, which may have served as the sanctuary of a church into which the whole temple had been converted, or as a small church on its own. Comparison of its two-roomed plan with the few recorded ex-



Fig. 10 A previously unpublished DAE photograph by T. von Lüpke (photo DAE 385 = MBA 252.09), showing the interior of the Great Temple at Yeha as seen from the east. In the foreground may be seen the roofless remains of the inner building erected when the Temple was re-used as a Christian church. In the background, beyond the Temple wall, may be discerned part of the western extension built at the same time on the site of the former portico.

amples of central sanctuaries within Ethiopian rectangular churches lends modest support to the latter interpretation (Phillipson 2009: 37), but the age of these additions cannot now be ascertained. When examined by the DAE, this inner building was no longer roofed, but its walls apparently still stood to approximately their original height. The fact that they incorporated a string course just below their roof-level suggests that the roof of the temple was no longer extant at the time the inner building was erected.

Elsewhere at Yeha, the DAE paid brief attention to the second early temple-like structure known as Grat Be'al Gebri, subsequently investigated in much greater detail by Anfray (1997). They also provided the principal extant record of the old church which formerly stood some 30 m north of the Great Temple, replaced

shortly before the visit of Doresse (1956a: 61; *idem* 1959: 70), who secured the preservation of the original wooden arch to the sanctuary that had been recorded *in situ* by the DAE (Littmann *et al.* 1913, 3: Abb. 209).

Yeha provides an excellent example of the lasting reputation of the DAE work and the problems to which this can give rise. A recent guidebook to Ethiopia includes a plan of Yeha (Hildemann / Fitzenreiter 1999: 367) based – without acknowledgement – on that published by the DAE (Littmann *et al.* 1913, 2: Abb. 162). Although intended to guide the modern visitor, the 1999 plan is dominated by features that were demolished approximately half a century prior to its publication, includes assumptions by Krencker now known to have been erroneous, and omits several important elements which are now dominant.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The DAE is often credited with having laid the foundation for all subsequent archaeological work at Aksum. In some ways, this claim is justified, but it is important not to exaggerate the expedition's contribution, and to note what it did not do as well as what it did. Recording was restricted to the visible monuments. Excavation was limited to exposing parts of these monuments that were obscured, in order that more complete plans could be made. Artefacts recovered in the course of these operations were recorded without reference to their precise provenance or stratigraphic context. No attempt was made through excavation to obtain information relative to the age or function of the monuments. The methodologies for such investigations were not yet developed; inscriptions and ancient writings – predominantly non-Ethiopian – provided a basic chronology, but there was no known way in which this could be integrated in any detailed manner with the monuments or excavated materials.

Where the DAE set an example which few of their successors have been able to emulate is in the prompt and comprehensive publication of their results. By contrast, the extensive destruction and removal of ancient remains that took place during the Italian occupation went largely unrecorded, despite the efforts of Monneret de Villard (1938). Excavations at Aksum by the French-led Ethiopian Institute of Archaeology in the 1950s and 1960s resulted in some prompt and very useful preliminary accounts (e.g. de Contenson 1963) but no definitive reports; effectively no detailed information is yet available concerning the important excavations conducted four decades ago at Dungur. More recently, numerous attempts at restoration have been made, most notably at Enda Kaleb and Dungur, but in the absence of adequate records it is now very difficult to distinguish the original from the replacement.

Archaeology still has a very great deal to reveal about ancient Aksum. No-one taking part in that endeavour can fail to appreciate his or her debt to the firm foundation laid by the Deutsche Aksum-Expedition. Like all good archaeologists the Expedition members have left both answers and questions. Indeed, their meticulous records sometimes permit their successors to answer questions not even posed in 1906.

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