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Jacke Phillips

## Aksumite archaeology at Aksum, and in Ethiopia and Eritrea: the legacy of the DAE

In order to realise the overwhelming importance of the Deutsche Aksum-Expedition in the development of Aksumite<sup>1</sup> archaeology, one need only grasp the essential point that, until quite recently, archaeological exploration in northern Ethiopia and modern Eritrea could be divided into three very clearly defined phases: before the DAE, the DAE, and after the DAE. It was that simple. Now, and only since the 1990s, could a fourth phase be added, following the 1974 revolution and nearly two decades (1974–1992) of civil war and *Derg* government that had effectively negated any possibility of fieldwork during that period<sup>2</sup>.

### PHASES 1–2, BEFORE THE DAE AND CONTEMPORARY WITH IT

The Deutsche Aksum-Expedition could be said to begin late in the evening of 29 December 1905, when the *Amerigo Vespucci* arrived from Aden at the Eritrean port of Massawa, the successor port of ancient Adulis, and Enno Littmann went aboard to greet the three members of his team who had travelled on the ship. Adulis itself, just a little south of Massawa, was the venue for the region's first deliberately planned excavations, by soldier-engineers of Lord Napier's punitive expedition against the Emperor Tewodoros in 1868. Here, Capt. William W. Goodfellow discovered the foundations of a church with other structural ruins below, and exposed some architectural fragments, metal objects, an imported amphora and other pottery fragments, and an Aksumite coin (Markham 1869: 155 n. 1; Munro-Hay 1989b)<sup>3</sup>. Other investigations elsewhere were conducted at a very small and amateur level in what is now the separate country of Eritrea. An unidentified Italian officer dug a few

trenches at Matara in 1903, but kept no record of his work. Cdt Garelli, another officer, dug at Tokonda in 1900–1904, finding a cruciform building with twelve pillars. Numerous surveys also were conducted in the region, although not archaeological in purpose. Some surveyors, such as Giotto Dainelli and Olinto Marinelli (1912) nonetheless did record any ancient remains they came across. Virtually no further excavation was conducted elsewhere in the region until the arrival of the DAE, whose accomplishments are described more fully in this centenary volume. Nonetheless, by the time Littmann had returned to Germany on the first of June 1906, many of the principal ancient sites in the region could at least be located on regional maps that had been produced

<sup>1</sup> The term preferred in Eritrea is 'Adulite'.

<sup>2</sup> Extensive historical overviews of archaeological work conducted before the civil war (Michels 1979; Munro-Hay 1989a: 27–31; see also Anfray 1990: 87–91; Munro-Hay 1991: 25–29 for shorter overviews) and a detailed topographical bibliography of sites recorded in Ethiopia (Godet 1977) and Eritrea (Godet 1980–1982) were published during that period, and the reader is directed to these publications for more detailed discussion and references than are recorded here. See Phillipson (this volume) for a detailed assessment of the DAE expedition.

<sup>3</sup> Many travellers and others passed through the region before Napier's expedition, and had recorded the existence of archaeological ruins and small artefacts. Many are discussed by Searight (2006) and elsewhere in this volume. The most notable for the archaeological record is the survey in 1840 by two Frenchmen, Vignaud and Petit, who located three 'temples' on their map of the ancient site of Adulis (Lefebvre 1850: 437–439, Pl. II, Fig. 191, 335) as part of a much larger exploratory survey of the region. Napier's work however appears to have been the first actual excavation, although Henry Salt did clear the base of the 'Ezana Inscription' at Aksum to more fully record its trilingual text in 1805.

since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>4</sup>. The DAE had, in fact, a surprising large number of scholarly contemporaries in their pursuit of ancient remains, albeit mostly working in Eritrea. Abele Piva (1907) exposed some Aksumite ruins at Aratu northwest of Asmara in 1905–early 1906, working virtually at the same time as the DAE. Adulis again was the focus of further excavation work in 1906, when two separate expeditions worked on the site. The first, under Richard Sundström (1907), was limited to the northern area of the site, where he exposed a large rectangular building he called the ‘palace of Adulis’ in January 1906. The second, very shortly afterwards under Roberto Paribeni (1907) in 1907, explored two similar but smaller structures, one a basilica church and another below it that he named the ‘altar of the sun’, and also found some ‘ordinary’ housing. Then archaeological exploration appears to have virtually ceased altogether.

#### PHASE 3, AFTER THE DAE

Another 30 years passed before any excavation was resumed. During the 1937–1941 Italian occupation of Ethiopia, Mussolini personally ordered the Italian army to remove ‘Stela 2’ at Aksum itself in 1937 and transport it to Rome; this was supervised by Ugo Monneret de Villard<sup>5</sup>. The Italian military also revised the town plan, straightening many streets and creating others where none had existed before. One new road, today the main thoroughfare between Adwa and Indasellassie cut through the town, ploughing straight through the middle of the Ta’akha Maryam palace previously investigated by the DAE. Monneret de Villard (1938) also recorded as much as possible of military disturbance and topographical features here and elsewhere during the occupation. Salvatore Puglisi (1941; 1946), also under military control, made several deep trenches at Aksum in 1939 and recorded for the first time a stratigraphical sequence of Aksumite and earlier occupation. That same year, Bruno Cossar (1945) excavated a Pre-Aksumite cemetery at Seleklaka some 30 kilometres farther west of Aksum.

It was not until after the war and restoration of the Ethiopian government, in 1952, that the Ethiopian Institute of Archaeology (EIA) was established and investigation within the region resumed. The Institute, consisting of Ethiopian nationals allied with a professional French mission from the Centre National de la

Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) based in Addis Ababa, conducted archaeological investigations throughout northern Ethiopia and what is now Eritrea, as well as elsewhere in Ethiopia for over two decades. More importantly, the Institute founded the journal *Annales d’Éthiopie* to disseminate its results. The first issue was published in 1955, with the results of EIA excavations at Mekelle and Aksum, as well as research on texts, artefacts and other records of the Ethiopian past. The journal continued to appear biannually, although occasionally tri- or quadrannually, until 1990<sup>6</sup>. Academic collaboration was extremely fruitful, with numerous excavation projects conducted over many years and their finds exhibited and stored in the National Museum in Addis Ababa (Leclant 1961–1962). Most work was conducted at sites or monuments originally recorded and published by the DAE in 1913, including at Aksum (1954–1974), Matara (1959–1965), Yeha (1960, 1971–1973) and Adulis (1961–1962). A number of regional surveys served to identify further sites that filled the large gaps between these major excavations, especially in the areas surrounding the larger modern towns of Mekelle (Asmassou 1955) and Adigrat (Leclant and Miquel 1959). Other sites not initially noted by the DAE were recorded in the areas around major known sites, Aksum and Matara in particular, during their excavation, and still more were noted near major roads. The EIA excavated a few of these new sites, including Haoulti-Melazo (1955–1956, 1958–1959) and Wuchate Golo (1958) near Aksum, and Addi Gelamo (1954) near Mekelle, whilst knowledge of the others’ locations at least helped to place the major known sites within a wider landscape setting. At Aksum, several EIA archaeologists excavated near the old church of Maryam Tsion (Francis Anfray, Henri de Contenson) and the main stelae field around the largest stelae and the Nefas Mawcha in the

<sup>4</sup> The speed of Littmann’s publication of his expedition is admirable. Within seven months of their return to Germany, he and Krencker already had produced a preliminary account of their fieldwork, the *Vorbericht* (Littmann / Krencker 1906). The four-volume *Deutsche Aksum-Expedition* (1913) soon superseded that preliminary report, which is now little known.

<sup>5</sup> The 1994 excavations at this spot intriguingly revealed vast quantities of broken Italian beer bottles that had been deposited in the fill of the resulting hole.

<sup>6</sup> See also below for its revival in 2000.

centre of town (de Contenson, Jean Doresse, Jean Leclant, P. Pironin), as well as the so-called 'tomb of Basen' and its immediate area (Doresse) at the eastern edge of town, and at 'Addi Guatiya (de Contenson) to the north and Dungur (Anfray) west of the town. All excavations exposed tombs and graves, except the so-called 'Palace of the Queen of Sheba' at Dungur and two superimposed possibly 'palatial' buildings near Maryam Tsion. All excavations were published only in preliminary form in the *Annales d'Éthiopie*; full reports never materialised.

In 1942, Anthony Arkell (then Commissioner for Archaeology for the Sudan Government) and Major J. S. Last (then Political Officer at Agordat) collected surface material at four localities within Agordat in western Eritrea, whilst Arkell also excavated a disturbed trench at one of them, Kokan. The results have achieved importance in large measure because theirs was the only archaeological work conducted over this western region for a considerable length of time afterwards and the finds were well published by Arkell in 1954.

The Italians had not forgotten Ethiopia after their army withdrew from the country in 1941. Vincenzo Franchini began recording rock art in both Eritrea and Ethiopia by the early 1950s, and continued to do so for some two decades. He also conducted an archaeological survey in the Eritrean region of Senafe, north of Adigrat in 1953, published by Lanfranco Ricci (1953). Ricci conducted his own archaeological survey here (Ricci 1955–1958) and in the Agamè region south of Adigrat in 1960. In 1974, he excavated two structures first noted by the DAE as *Ruinen* E and F on Bieta Giyorgis hill at Aksum (Ricci 1974; 1976), and also at Seglamien, some nine kilometres southwest of here (Ricci 1976; Ricci and Fatovich 1984–1986). The first, fully excavated, structure on Bieta Giyorgis was identified as two superimposed basilican churches, whilst the other building lower down the hillside remains incompletely excavated and still unidentified. Guiseppi Tringali, an amateur living in Asmara, conducted his own survey of the Asmara region over the 1950s–1960s, finally publishing a large number of sites (Tringali 1965). The Italians generally published in the *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*.

The early 1970s saw a considerable expansion of work at Aksum, not only by the EIA and the Italians, but also the British and Americans with their goal- and problem-oriented exca-

vation foci arising from 'New Archaeology' trends of the 1960s. The British returned to Aksum in 1972, over a century after Napier's expedition and 30 years after Arkell, this time with a fully professional team of archaeologists. Neville Chittick began three seasons of exploration (1972–1974) in and around the town that effectively further pursued sites initially located by the DAE and sometimes earlier investigated by the EIA, although they also recorded and explored others not known previously. Chittick's excavations focussed on standing monuments, cemeteries and tombs in and around the town. He concentrated his work in Stelae Park, where he investigated around the many stelae and discovered several large shaft tombs as well as other tombs he called the 'Mausoleum', the 'Tomb of the Brick Arches', the 'East Tomb' and the 'Tomb of the False Door'; of these, only the last was fully excavated. Elsewhere, he further investigated many monuments first noted by the DAE, including the numerous other stelae of the Northern stelae field east of Stelae Park and in the Gudit stela field to the west near the Dungur palace, as well as the 'Tombs of Kaleb and Gebre Meskal' beyond 'Addi Guatiya to the north. He exposed small 'snapshots' of several further palaces and other buildings (or possibly further exposures of the same palaces and buildings) located beneath Malake Aksum<sup>7</sup>, where the DAE had already found and traced several in the immediate area. David Phillipson (1977), under project auspices, also investigated much earlier occupation at the Gobedra rock shelter just west of the town. A preliminary report of the excavations was published (Chittick 1974) and his supplement (Chittick 1976) presented for the first time a series of radiocarbon dates for the region's archaeology. The final report (Munro-Hay 1989a), published after Chittick's death in 1984, was only the second thorough and detailed documentation of work conducted in the region to be published, the first being the DAE in 1913. The considerable difference between the final volume and the earlier preliminary report underlines the importance attached by

<sup>7</sup> Malake Aksum ('old Aksum') basically comprises the town to the extent shown in the DAE map (Krencker 1913: Pl. 1). The existing buildings within Malake Aksum have all been recorded in detail by students of the Department of Architecture, Addis Ababa University.

later researchers to the detailed comprehensive nature of the final version, one sadly lacking for other excavations.

Americans first arrived in the early 1970s to conduct two separate survey projects. The first, by Karl Butzer in 1971 and 1973, essentially was a pioneering environmental impact study relating the development of Aksum to changes in the landscape within which it is located (Butzer 1981), a problem-oriented research focus that has since developed enormously. A team led by Joseph Michels in 1974 conducted an extensive and systematic settlement pattern survey of the area between Yeha and Aksum. Michels presented his work initially in summary form (Michels 1979: 22–27, and elsewhere). His final report and its important survey data, the basis for his interpretation, was only published recently (Michels 2005) but, sadly, without illustrating the pottery development on which his phasing is based.

Only beginning in the 1970s was material excavated at Aksum or elsewhere in northern Ethiopia and Eritrea *not* transported to the National Museum in Addis Ababa, but instead was retained by a regional museum nearest to which it was found. A small archaeological museum was constructed for this purpose on Church property near the modern cathedral of Maryam TSION. Here, in four rooms, until 2007 was displayed a large quantity of material recovered by Ricci in 1974 at Bieta Giyorgis and Seglamien and, especially, by Chittick in and around Aksum in 1972–1974. Except for some further material found or recovered accidentally, confiscated by the court, or donated to the museum by their discoverers or owners over the years since, the museum galleries had essentially remained as Richard Wilding had arranged them in 1974 before Chittick's departure and in 1975<sup>8</sup>.

#### THE 1974–1992 INTERREGNUM

The onset of internal strife that heralded the revolution, civil war, and *Derg* government in the spring of 1974 forced Chittick, Michels and Ricci to depart leaving their work incomplete. Ricci left his excavation on Bieta Giyorgis unfinished, as did Chittick in several places but most importantly the three large tombs in Stelae Park that he had barely begun. The only work conducted in the area during the *Derg* years was the unpublished excavations of Richard Wilding and Eric Godet, for the

University of Addis Ababa in 1975, at Aksum on the site of the future Yeha Hotel at the northern end of Mai Qoho. Nonetheless earlier excavations, surveys and finds continued to be published during those years, mostly in the various proceedings of the bi- or triannual International Conferences of Ethiopian Studies, and in journals such as *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, the *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* and *Annales d'Éthiopie*<sup>9</sup>. The publication in 1979 of an English edition of Kobishchanov's (1966) monumental study made accessible to non-Russian scholars his complete reassessment and dissection of Aksum as a city, civilisation and empire, based entirely on ancient sources and modern publications (especially the DAE). Several other analyses of Aksumite civilisation appeared by Anfray (1990) and Munro-Hay (1991), basically general summings-up of fieldwork to 1974 and subsequent library research, all essentially bringing the DAE up to date rather than superseding it. Other singular studies appeared, including one of Tigray architecture (Plant 1985) on the basis of direct personal recording, and another comparing the stratigraphy of Aksum and Adulis (Negussie 1993) solely on the basis of published information. A few major monuments nonetheless continued to be located, the most important being a stela bearing a trilingual 'Ezana Inscription' nearly duplicating that copied by Salt in 1805, which was uncovered accidentally just north of the town in 1981 (Bernand 1982).

#### PHASE 4, AFTER THE *DERG*

Ironically, it was the heightened political situation near the end of the *Derg* period that forced the *Annales d'Éthiopie* to temporarily cease publication for an entire decade between volumes 15 (1990) and 16 (2000), when it was revived as an annual joint publication of the successors of the original EIA, the *Centre Français des Études Éthiopiennes* and the 'Center (now Authority) for Research

<sup>8</sup> Information in 2007 courtesy David Phillipson and the museum's long-serving guard, Ato Gebre Medhin Berhane. The latter also informs me that it was Ras Mengesha Segoum who had the building constructed for the purpose.

<sup>9</sup> Further, individual, preliminary reports of pre-war excavation and survey are listed in the bibliographies of later publications cited below.

and Conservation of the Cultural Heritage' (CRCCH, now ARCCH) within the Ethiopian Ministry of Culture. It was precisely during this decade that northern Ethiopia again was open to fieldwork, and almost immediately fieldwork was reactivated, with several long-term problem-oriented projects at Aksum and smaller projects elsewhere.

First to return was an Italian-American team in the spring of 1993, co-directed by Rodolfo Fattovich (who had worked with Anfray and Ricci in the 1970s) and Kathryn Bard<sup>10</sup>. They continued on the *amba* of Bieta Giyorgis north of Aksum town, where Ricci had worked earlier, although they did not continue excavation of his unfinished building. Their main interest lay in the question of how the Aksumite state had been formed and developed. Over nine seasons (1993–2002), they excavated an extensive cemetery at Ona Enda Aboi Zague (OAZ) beginning in the late Pre-Aksumite period, as well as a dense urban settlement at Ona Negast (ON) first noted in Michels' survey that included élite as well as ordinary housing. Other, smaller excavations exposed similar and other structures at other locations over the plateau, one a possible ceremonial centre. The stelae (one a unique double-stela), graves, rock-cut tombs and their associated stone platforms at OAZ included a monumental funerary complex of Early Aksumite date. Careful excavation in the various habitation sites provided excellent overlapping stratification that indicate continuous use of the plateau from about 800 B.C. (Pre-Aksumite) through Post-Aksumite times. Excavated material formed the basis for further, detailed specialist micromorphological, petrographical, technological, palaeobotanical and palaeozoological interpretations of the sites. Over the later seasons, they also conducted a series of detailed surveys and maps of the plateau (Fattovich *et al.* 2000) for related, problem-oriented specialist studies. These archaeobotanical, ethnoarchaeological, hydrological, land use and landscape history, topographical and geological studies, amongst others, have resulted in a detailed knowledge of the plateau and its exploitation through time. Annual preliminary reports discussing all these investigations have been regularly published in *Nyame Akuma* (40 [1993]–58 [2002]), *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici* (35 [1993]–N.S. II [2003]); and elsewhere. Their final report (Bard and Fattovich in press) is imminent, and will amplify and supersede the preliminary reports.

On completion of their fieldwork on Bieta Giyorgis, they transferred excavations to a series of now-rural sites within the hinterland of Aksum proper; these remain ongoing but preliminary reports have not been published. Their detailed survey and mapping of the Aksum hinterland, initiated during excavations on Bieta Giyorgis, has produced considerable new insights into the urban-rural relationships of the region. Initial assessments (see Bard 1997; Fattovich *et al.* 2000) and some specific research (L. Phillipson and Sulas 2005; L. Phillipson 2006) have already been published, and several theses are currently in progress by their students. We await the far more detailed final results of subsequent fieldwork and research continuing along the lines of their earlier Bieta Giyorgis work, when this subsequent project is published.

Almost immediately after the arrival of the Italian-American team, a British team directed by David Phillipson (who had worked with Chittick in the 1970s) arrived in autumn 1993 for a five-year (1993–1997) project with two specific goals: first, completing work on Chittick's unfinished tombs and second, to investigate the economic and agricultural bases for Aksum's rise to power by concentrating on its non-élite areas, structures and population<sup>11</sup>. In one aspect, at least, the two concurrent projects pursued different but clearly related goals, whilst working in different areas in and around Aksum. Over several seasons, the 'Mausoleum' and 'Tomb of the Brick Arches' were cleared to the point where their histories could be understood, but part of each were left unexcavated and sealed for future investigation. The 'East Tomb', however, proved unsafe to work at that time, and likewise was sealed for potential clearance by future excavators. The original location of ST 2, then still in Rome, was ascertained by test-trenching, and a developmental history of the cemetery itself, specifically focussing on the relationships between the 'Mausoleum', ST 1 and the 'Nefas Mawcha' and less specifically between the stelae

<sup>10</sup> The team also included Michael di Blasi, who had participated in Michels 1974 survey.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Harlow and Douglas Hobbs, who had participated in Chittick's excavations, returned to continue their interrupted 1974 work. Hobbs correlated and updated his 1974 plans with the 1993 fieldwork results, and Harlow was able to complete his 1974 excavation of the 'Mausoleum'.

and the tombs, and the tombs and later use of the area, was investigated in some detail.

Whilst completion of Chittick's project continued, the British team also turned to their problem-oriented investigations. Excavations were initiated in terraced fields outside the modern town at Kidane Mehret ('D' site), between the 'new' Ezana inscription and 'Addi Guatiya, either side of the modern road leading to the 'Tomb of Kaleb and Gebre Meskal'. Here was exposed the corner of another 'élite structure' surrounded by more 'ordinary' architecture of 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. date, all superimposed after a long period of abandonment over substantial Pre-Aksumite walls of 8<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Further walls of both periods physically separate from the superimposed buildings and each other also were cleared elsewhere in the fields. The nature of these buildings and the material found within strongly suggested a combination of non-élite food production and processing in the later period, whilst the earlier was more domestic in outlook. Specialist retrieval and examination of botanical and zoological remains identified the contemporary animal life and crops grown, and stored or consumed within the buildings. Detailed collection and examination demonstrated that both ground and flaked stone tools were not only used but also produced even in the later period by the inhabitants, even though both bronze and iron were available to them. Detailed stratigraphic recording, aided by radiocarbon dates from organic remains and the recovery of coins in specific contexts within specific phases, allowed for a chronological development to be traced and dated (within limits) through multiple phases of site use. Phillipson also was able to excavate within Malake Aksum ('K' site), where further substantial but non-élite architecture was exposed to as deep as four metres below the modern surface without reaching a floor. At this site too was found considerable evidence for an industrial activity area away from this architecture, including the working of copper-based metals, glass, ivory, horn and bone, and bead manufacture, mainly though crucible fragments and waste pieces. The four quarries west of town at Gobedra hill also were surveyed and examined, at least one likely to have been the ultimate source of the granitic rock for the main stelae, and its probable route to Stelae Park was traced. In addition, earlier habitation was examined both through foot survey beyond the town and

excavation of two rock shelters, Anqer Ba'ati (Finneran 2000a) and Be'ati Nebait (Finneran 2000b) that considerably expanded the picture presented by the Gobedra rock shelter (see also Finneran 1998). Several annual preliminary excavation reports and analyses appeared in various journals, all later supplemented and superseded by the final detailed report published only a few years after fieldwork ended (D. W. Phillipson 2000)<sup>12</sup>.

The Germans returned to Aksum with an interdisciplinary research project directed by Marlies Wendowski and Helmut Ziegert ongoing bi-annually since 2000. This project, incorporating 'holistic' archaeological fieldwork, examined new sites and reinvestigated known sites throughout the town and its hinterland. Three new 'palace' remains were located between the DAE's Enda Mikael building in Malake Aksum and the lower hillslope of Bieta Giyorgis to its north, to be added to those already published by the DAE, Puglisi, Munro-Hay and D. W. Phillipson in the old town, as well as a further six 'palaces' north and west of the 'Tomb of Kaleb and Gebre Meskal'. They uncovered in this same general area a 'king's grave' surmounted by a later church and baptisterium (part of a monastery?) and still later a Christian cemetery immediately around it, this entire stratified sequence ending not later than c. 600 A.D. when the immediate area was abandoned. They also found evidence for copper quarrying and processing at Berik Audi, the site of the best-preserved 'palace' beyond the town. To date, only preliminary reports of these excavations have been published (Wendowski *et al.* 2001; Ziegert 2001; 2006; Wendowski / Ziegert 2003; 2006), and again the final reports with detailed data are eagerly awaited.

Further investigations and excavations by Tekle Hagos in and around the Aksum area have further clarified or expanded known sites (e.g., Tekle 2001), although not all have yet been published. Political negotiations for the impending return to Aksum of the Rome stela (Stela 2) activated further investigation of the limited area of Stelae Park already identified by Phillipson's team as being its original

<sup>12</sup> Phillipson (1997) also published an English translation, with commentary, of the DAE's work at Aksum (only). His Chapter 10 discusses their work in light of subsequent research.

location. This was excavated initially in 1997 (Phillipson 2000: I.139–156), and the trench further enlarged by Tekle the following year, in preparation for the re-erection of the stela following its return in spring 2005 to national celebration. The stela was re-oriented in its original location in 2008.

Beyond Aksum and its hinterland, the French have returned to excavate at Yeha (Robin / de Maigret 1998), and small excavations have been conducted at Hiritay near Semama by Ato Gebre Kidan Wolde Hawariat in 1994 (Phillips 2005: 10), at Mai Adrasha near Indasellassie in 2003 (Phillips *et al.* 2004) and, in Eritrea, at Emba Deho near Asmara (Schmidt *et al.* 2008), Kokan (Brandt *et al.* 2008)<sup>13</sup> and elsewhere. Other sites have been found accidentally, such as a tomb at Da'erika (Phillipson 2000: 455, Fig. 402), and their finds brought to the nearest museum (Phillips 2005). Multidisciplinary surveys have been conducted in the areas around Gula Makeda near Adigrat (D'Andrea *et al.* 1997; Harrower / D'Andrea 2006), Adwa (Machado *et al.* 1998), Indasellassie and Semama (Finneran *et al.* 2003; Finneran / Phillips 2003; 2005) and more expansively (Bard 1997) in northern Ethiopia, and in Eritrea around Adi Qeyeh (Curtis / Libsekal 1999), Asmara (Schmidt / Curtis 2001), Qohaito (Wenig / Curtis 2008; see also Wenig 2006), Adulis (Daniel *et al.* 2004; Yohannes *et al.* 2005; Peacock / Blue 2007, Blue *et al.* 2008) and Dahlak Kebir island (Insoll 1997). All (except Adulis) as yet are published only as preliminary reports. Additionally, the chance discovery of an ancient shipwreck off the Eritrean coast led to survey and partial excavation of its surviving remains, mostly its cargo of Roman amphorae (Pederson 1995–1996; 2000). Slowly, and despite another, albeit shorter interruption in accessibility due to further conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1998–2000, the region and its importance to the world around it is becoming better understood both archaeologically and historically. Exemplifying this increased understanding is the recent publication of two volumes: a compendium of recent research in Eritrea (Schmidt *et al.* 2008) and an extensive overview of the region's archaeology, assessing both old and new investigations in the light of recent scholarship (Finneran 2006).

In 2005, the Ethiopian government initiated a two-year pilot project to integrate the conservation and management of its cultural heritage at Aksum<sup>14</sup> and other locations of historical importance. This was achieved through site

planning and conservation of its archaeological remains and historical buildings, as well as upgrading site and museum facilities and integrating them into a coherent presentation for tourists and visitors. The project included in its mandate the development of an entirely new and expanded archaeological museum at Aksum, constructed on land immediately behind Stelae Park and integrating the historically important house of *Dejazmatch* Gebre Sellassie<sup>15</sup>, which was restored for inclusion in the museum development<sup>16</sup>. As preparation for these upgrades and conservation, Tekle Hagos directed a series of small exploratory test excavations at the new museum site and other locations in and around Aksum as required, which have yielded a wealth of new archaeological information about the ancient town and its cemeteries although they await publication. The new museum exhibit now presents a coherent story of Aksum's past to about 700 A.D.<sup>17</sup>, incorporating important up-to-date research and new finds excavated since the early 1990s impossible to accommodate in the old museum building.

This last paragraph highlights an aspect of this paper only briefly and indirectly addressed in all the above. Since the 1974–1992 conflict, the professional Ethiopian and Eritrean staff in Addis Ababa and Asmara, as well as their provincial and municipal counterparts, play a vital role in the development of archaeological fieldwork and research, as had the EIA's

<sup>13</sup> The material from Arkell's 1942 investigations at Agordat, held in Khartoum, also recently has been restudied in detail and re-interpreted; see Alemseged *et al.* 2007.

<sup>14</sup> Aksum is a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site.

<sup>15</sup> This is the same *Dejazmatch* Gebre Sellassie whose hospitality and protection was enjoyed by the DAE at Aksum in 1906. The existing house, however, was constructed in the 1940s.

<sup>16</sup> The old museum building is to be demolished and replaced by a museum devoted to Church treasures, under the auspices of the Orthodox Church.

<sup>17</sup> A planned Phase II expansion to the museum will extend the story of Aksum from the end of the Empire to the present day. Archaeological research and fieldwork into the post-Aksumite period in both Ethiopia and Eritrea is a sadly neglected field, although historical, art historical and ethnographic researches have long been scholarly endeavours – also emphasised on the DAE expedition. See Hirsch / Fauvelle-Aymar 2001 for a proposed agenda for the possibility of archaeological research into the post-Aksumite period.



Ethiopian staff from 1952. They have participated in every excavation and every survey, contributing their knowledge and experience to the outcome of every foreign as well as every national fieldwork project. They are not the only Ethiopians and Eritreans to do so: the

considerable contributions of veritable armies of workmen and other locally hired excavation labour over the past century usually have been acknowledged only in footnotes, but without them our present state of knowledge would be very much the poorer.

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