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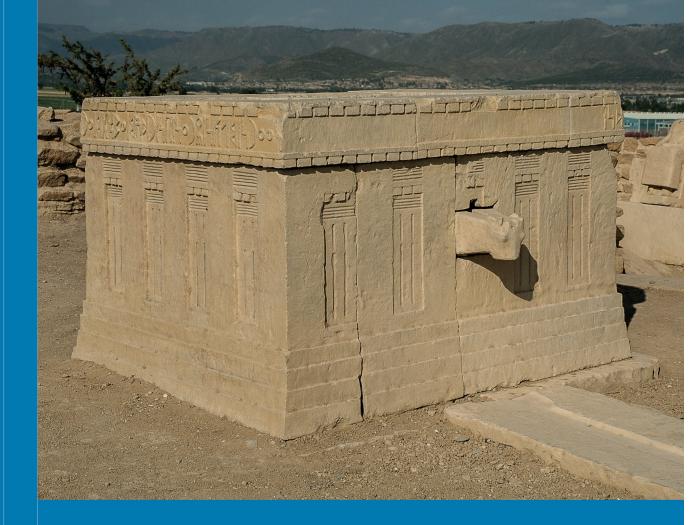
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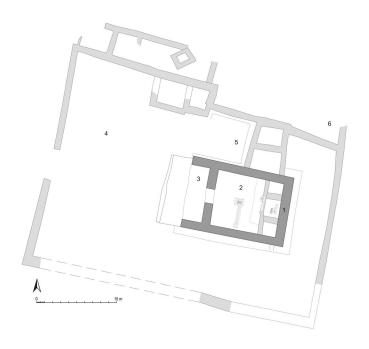




THE ALMAQAH TEMPLE OF WUKRO IN TIGRAI / ETHIOPIA

Pawel Wolf, Ulrike Nowotnick & Saskia Büchner





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SCHEMATIC PLAN OF THE ALMAQAH TEMPLE PRECINCT

- 1 Sanctuaries
- 2 Main room with libation altar
- 3 Portico and stairs
- 4 Forecourt
- 5 Subsiady courts and rooms
- 6 Find spot with deposit of votive objects'



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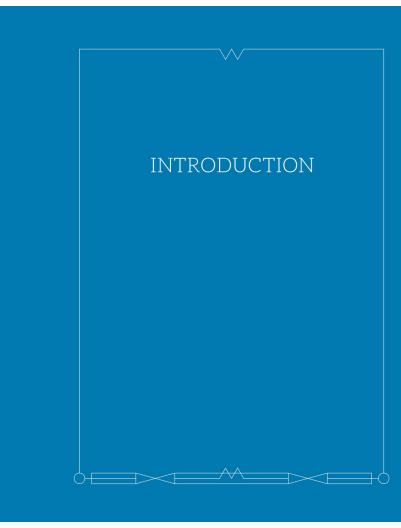






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The region of Addi Akaweh with the hamlet of Meqaber Ga'ewa and the site of the Almaqah temple is centrally situated in the valley of Wukro.

The temple precinct of the archaeological site of Megaber Ga'ewa near the town of Wukro in Tigrai was erected in the 8th century BC for the Sabaean moon god Almagah and represents one of the most ancient architectural monuments known in Ethiopia. Its well preserved cult inventory, such as its libation altar with a royal dedication text, a seated female votive statue, architectural blocks and limestone incense burners. had been sculptured by Sabaean masons to an outstanding artistic quality and with excellent craftsmanship. These objects and their Sabaean inscriptions can be dated to the so-called 'Ethio-Sabaean Period' of the first half of the last millennium BC, when significant South Arabian cultural innova-

tions such as literary language, monumental architecture and fine arts blended with African traditions in the Northern Horn. forming the cultural foundations of the Aksumite Empire and consequently today's culture of northern Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Archaeological evidence for this synergy of cultures still remains limited to a few sites in the highlands of northern Tigrai and Eritrea such as Hawelti, Melazzo, Addi Galamo, Matara, Kaskase and in particular Yeha, which is considered to be the political and ceremonial centre for an assumed larger polity called Damat, Compared to these well-known sites. the Almagah sanctuary of Wukro is a relatively 'new' discovery.



The Great Temple in Yeha.

Three limestone incense burners with roval Sabaean inscriptions were already found in the last century about 7 km southwest of Wukro near the villages of Addi Akaweh and Abuna Gerima, In December 2007 rescue ex-







Limestone incense burners with royal dedication texts found in the region around Addi Akaweh and stored in the church of Abuna Gerima.

cavations under the auspices of the Culture and Tourism Bureau of Tigrai revealed further cult objects of clearly Sabaean style a short distance away from Abuna Gerima, next to the hamlet of Megaber Ga'ewa - amongst them a perfectly preserved libation altar and a seated female votive statue. Excavations at this site by our joint Ethiopian-German cooperation project led in 2008 to the discovery of the Almagah temple and its subsequent archaeological documentation in the following years. It is today the most southern sacral centre known of Damat and its archaeological exploration highlights the economic, political and religious network of that polity, providing new evidence of the association between the Arabian and the African cultures in the last millennium BC.



Excavations in the Almagah temple of Wukro in 2009.

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THE TEMPLE OF ALMAQAH



THE TEMPLE

Located on the edge of a limestone plateau, the sanctuary must have represented an impressive landscape marker overlooking the surrounding plains. The western half of its rectangular shaped precinct of 35 x 26 m formed a forecourt with a centrally situated main gate. Subsidiary rooms were arranged along the northern side of the court. Further rooms and open yards were located between the elevated shrine and the precinct walls – a basic concept comparable to South Arabian sacral compounds, for example the Baran temple of Almaqah in Marib.

Beside the large temple of Yeha and the Almaqah shrine of Melazzo-Gobochela, a site near Aksum, our temple is the third Almaqah temple discovered in the Tigrean highlands. It was a single-roomed shrine of 13 x 9 m with a slightly elevated main room, featuring a tripartite sanctuary and a libation altar. Stretching over the entire width of its western façade, a broad flight of steps lead up to a portico, which might have had four wooden supports. The temple was very likely covered with a roof of slate tiles, supported by four wooden posts, the limestone bases of which have been found set into the floor of its main room. According to the large distance between them, however, the roof probably did not cover the complete shrine but left the libation altar open to the sky.

The plateau of Meqaber Ga'ewa with the Almaqah temple under its new protection shelter overlooking the surrounding plains and the village of Abuna Gerima.



The excavated Almagah temple in 2012.

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View into the Almaqah temple. At the left side of its reconstructed stairs a trench was left open to show the predecessor building.



The temple's main room with the libation altar and the sanctuary. The four larger stone slabs in the floor around the altar probably served as bases for wooden roof supports.

These principal structural elements, in particular the precinct's western orientation, the rectangular, symmetrical layout and the axial arrangement of the main components of altar and sanctuary, are common in the Sabaean sacral architecture around Marib and Sirwah and are known from the neighbouring Minean and Tihamah regions. However, there are also differences. While the walls of larger Sabaean temples, like for example in Yeha, were faced with perfectly carved limestone blocks, the walls of the Wukro temple, being up to 100 cm thick, were constructed in just very roughly dressed stones set in clay mortar and probably furnished with earthen plaster – resembling rather a construction technique of indigenous settlement dwellings.

THE CONSTRUCTION HISTORY OF THE TEMPLE

The Almaqah temple was not the first building at the site. Beneath we discovered the ruins of an earlier structure of monumental character. As is indicated in the dedication text of the Almaqah temple's libation altar it was very likely a sacral building as well. Its very strong walls, clearly differing from the orientation of the later temple, were constructed of small reddish limestone slabs. It predates the Almaqah temple by at least a century and had already been completely destroyed by the time the temple was erected on its ruins in the 8th century BC.

After the construction of the temple's outer walls, the portico and the stairs were added and its substructure was filled up with stone debris to raise the inner floor level. Finally, the main room was furnished with a trampled mud floor and the tripartite sanctuary as well as the libation altar were installed. Sometime between the 8th and the 5th century BC, the former wooden roof supports were replaced by four large pillars of limestone slabs. During the 4th to 3rd centuries BC the temple underwent a final modification. Two longitudinal walls intersected its



predecessor (probably 9th cent. BC)



1st phase (8th cent. BC)



2nd phase (8th - 5th cent. BC)



3rd phase (4th - 3rd cent. BC)

THE TEMPLE OF ALMAQAH 17





The walls of the Almaqah temple were erected on top of the diagonally running walls of its predecessor building. The temple's substructure was filled up with stones to elevate the main room.

main room forming three aisles. They carried most likely a peristyle of wooden posts for the support of a new roof. The central aisle was paved with stone slabs, which suggests that this room and the libation altar remained open to the sky.



The third building stage of the temple with the walls intersecting the temple into three isles and covering parts of the altar. The central isle was paved with stone slabs.

THE TEMPLE OF ALMAQAH 19

THE ALTAR

A strong South Arabian influence is clearly evident in the well preserved cult inventory. Like in Saba, the offering of liquids was undoubtedly a central feature of the local Almaqah cult and thus a large libation altar of excellent craftsmanship dominated

the temple's centre. Notwithstanding all the temple's modifications, it has been preserved throughout its lifetime – until today. It consists of perfectly dressed blocks, skilfulyassembled with remarkable precision. Its side panels are decorated with a façade of



View of the libation altar with its drain and basin.



The libation altar from southeast. The upper bull's head spout was found cut off.

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The bull's head spout at the southern face of the altar.



The altar with the initial part of the dedication text.

'false windows' resting on four steps. The altar is covered by blocks carrying a royal dedication text framed by a dental frieze. A shallow square depression on top of the altar served as the actual offering spot. A closer look reveals cut marks in it, indicating that animals might have been offered in this place. Rectangular recesses next to the depression served possibly for the attachment of sculptures or a metal structure. The offered liquid - perhaps blood of slaughtered animals - was conducted through a spout in the shape of a bull's head onto an offering tablet inside the altar. Another bull's head spout protruding from the altar's southern face led the liquid down to a two metre long monolithic limestone drain in the floor where it was finally collected in a concave basin at the end of the drain.

Based on our documentation, the production technology of the altar has been reconstructed: its parts were probably sculptured in a nearby quarry, transported to the temple and installed there. Each of the 12 altar pieces was made separately and assembled with great precision, to within a matter of millimetres, with the help of mason's marks. The recovery of a charcoal sample inside the altar dated the assembly of the altar to the 8th - 6th centuries BC.



The offering table inside the partially dismantled altar.



The libation altar from northeast with the main part of the dedication text.

THE ALTAR'S DEDICATION TEXT

The top blocks of the altar carry a royal inscription in Sabaean language. It implicitly refers to the preceding building and dedicates the rebuilding of the altar, and probably the entire shrine, to Almaqah. According to the translation of Norbert Nebes, it reads:

Wa'ran, the king, who downthrows (the enemies), son of Radi'um and Shakkatum, the companion, rebuilt (the altar) for Almaqah, when he was appointed the Lord of the temple of Almaqah in Yaha', on instruction of Attar and Almaqah and Dat Hamyim and Dat Ba'dan.

The inscription is historically significant in many respects. It was commissioned by a formerly unknown king called Wa'ran, son of Radi'um and his consort Shakhatum, on the occasion of his inauguration as master of the Almaqah temple of Yeha. The reference to Yeha represents the first known mention of its ancient name and confirms that Almaqah was worshiped in Yeha. Aside

from teaching us that Yeha was already referred to as such in antiquity, it is the first written evidence of its trans-regional sacral and political significance.

Most significant, however, is that the text highlights the relation of the royal principal to Northeast African cultural traditions. The king's designation as someone, who defeats the enemies, and especially the accentuation of female members of the royal family by the mention of the king's mother, confirmed by other contemporary inscriptions in Tigrai, does not originate in South Arabian culture. However, women played an important role in the neighbouring Kushite empire along the Middle Nile. Kushite kings based their rule on matrilineal claims and official effigies on sacral monuments depicted queens and the kings' mothers in prominent places.

Right page: The votive inscription of king Wa'ran, dedicating the shrine to Almaqah and referring to Yeha.



THE SANCTUARY ...

The central chamber of the tripartite sanctuary in the rear part of the temple was partially facedby perfectly dressed limestone masonry. Three ashlar blocks are still resting in their original location and a step indicates that the central chamber was elevated. The petrological analysis of the limestone shows that the blocks were made from local limestone. One of these perfectly worked blocks bears another Sabaean dedication text:

On instruction of the (king) Wa'ran, has Hayrhumu, the stonemason, from the clan Had'an, dedicated (this wall) to Almaqah.

Hayrhumu was the masons' master responsible for the stone furnishings. According to his clan's name, he stems from the central Yemenite highlands, which evidently demonstrates that the cult inventory was locally produced by Sabaean craftsmen.



The sanctuary of the temple.



Block with the dedication inscription of the stone mason Hayrhumu.



The betyl in the rear part of the sanctuary seen from the top.

... AND ITS BETYL CULT PLACE

The sanctuary chamber contains an arrangement of six naturally polished cobblestones. Very likely these represent a so-called baityl (al-anṣāb). Such betyl stones are not attested in Northeast Africa, but are known to have served in the worship of gods and idols in pre-Islamic Arabia. Although it cannot be ruled out that the betyl was installed during a later period, it is very likely that this or a similar arrangement was already part of the original sanctuary.

VOTIVE OFFERINGS ...

Besides hundreds of miniature vessels, a number of clay figurines of humans and animals were recovered from the temple precinct. Similar votive objects are known from other sites such as Hawelti and Matara and they are also attested on the Arabian side of the Red Sea.





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Fragments of human figurines with pointille decoration recovered in the temple precinct.

Their faces and limbs are only roughly indicated, being highly stylised, and the rather clumsily shaped bodies are sometimes covered in pointille decoration. An outstanding example is a figurine representing a woman cradling a baby in her arms and perhaps breastfeeding. Her face is rather abstract with thick lips, her left arm seems to cover the child, which is only implied by a small protruding foot. These figurines were probably dedicated to Almaqah to ensure the fertility and prosperity of men and livestock.



Figurine of a woman cradling a baby, recovered in a deposit of votive offerings in the north-eastern corner of the temple precinct.

Another tiny masterpiece was found in the debris north of the temple: a miniature shrine decorated with the Almaqah symbol of the moon crescent and disc, bearing the sculptured image of a female figure. In its execution, its iconographic elements and es-

pecially the incision on its side, it resembles the so-called 'throne dais' from Hawelti, indicating that this dais was made to keep a seated female statue as well.





Miniature shrine with a female figure and the moon symbol of Almaqah.

A statue representing a seated woman was found next to the central sanctuary, while its base was recovered within the sanctuary chamber. Besides its outstanding artistic quality, its striking stylistic similarity to another such statue from Addi Galamo is remarkable. Both are similar in size, shape and iconography, representing a woman wearing a long coat with rosette pattern. One might assume that the same workshop or sculptor has produced them both. The text on its base - asking for healthy offspring - is likewise identical to the inscription on the base of the statue from Addi Galamo. The only difference is that it mentions the god Almagah. It is not unlikely that the statues represented female members of the royal house, perhaps even the royal consorts.



Statue of a seated woman found next to the central sanctuary.







Statue of a seated woman found in Addi Galamo, now exhibited in the National Museum in Addis Ababa.

... AND INCENSE BURNING

Two large inscribed incense burner altars of limestone recovered in the central sanctuary chamber and the large number of biconical burners made of fired clay found in various parts of the precinct highlight the importance of incense burning in the rituals and ceremonies related to Almagah. Three exceptional burners have been found associated with ash and charcoal on the floor of the northern room of the tripartite sanctuary and likely mark this chamber as a central place for incense offering. While the tallest vessel is undecorated, the smaller one is nicely embellished with an incised décor of horizontal lines within a checker-board pattern. The third vessel is a four-legged rectangular box decorated with triangles and moulded bull's heads which resemble the spouts of the libation altar. Two copper-alloy implements found next to this place might also have been associated with incense offerings.



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Fragments of the two limestone incense burner altars found in and next to the central sanctuary chamber.





Two pottery incense burners recovered on the floor of the northern sanctuary chamber.



Rectangular pottery box found in the northern sanctuary chamber next to the pottery burners. It wags decorated with incised geometric motivs and moulded bull's heads.



These copper-alloy implements might have been associated with incense offerings.

A DEPOSIT OF VOTIVE OBJECTS

A remarkable assemblage of miniature vessels and votive objects was discovered in a room in the north-eastern corner of the precinct. It contained more than 270 miniature bowls, jars, incense burners and strainers. Their diverse shape and fabric indicate different origins. The assemblage can be compared to collections found at other sites in Tigrai and Eritrea, such as Hawelti, Matara, Yeha and Aksum. Some of the vessels also have very clear similarities with South Arabian examples. The packing of the assemblage and its almost complete state of preservation suggest purposeful curation of the temple's inventory of votive objects. Was it a place where people without access to the inner parts of the temple could sacrifice offerings, or was it simply a deposit for discharged votive inventory?

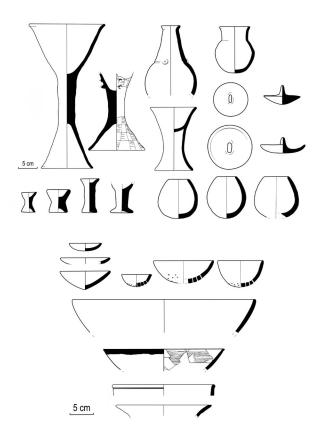








Incense burners, strainers and miniature vessels recovered from the deposit.



Various types and forms of ceramic vessels were recorded during the excavations in the temple precinct.

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THE POTTERY ASSEMBLAGE

The exceptionally large amount of vessels and potsherds in undisturbed convolutes allowed for the form reconstruction of no less than 500 cups, pots, bowls, small dishes, lids, strainers, jars and incense burners.



A red ware bottle with globular body and long cylindrical neck, probably from the second building period of the temple.

The majority of these were contemporary with the Almaqah sanctuary. They served in sacral ceremonies or were given as votive offerings. In contrast to the Sabaean-style cult inventory and the votive objects mentioned above, many of these vessels do not reflect South Arabian forms but represent African traditions. They were shaped by moulding and coiling techniques, a tradition which still prevails today in the region. The clays were tempered with inorganic and organic particles and most of the vessels were fired at low temperatures.



A lid recovered from the deposit of votive offerings.



Present day pottery making in Tigrai.

The colours of the fabrics range between bright red and light brown; a few grey and black wares are also present; typical examples of black-topped vessels are rather infrequent. The vessels are mostly untreated, but sometimes burnished or scraped, and were decorated with incised patterns such as grooves, wavy lines or triangles, and occasionally incorporated applications.



Red burnished, black-topped ware with incised geometric decoration motives on its inner side reminds pottery decoration of the middle Nile Valley.



Various surface treatments of the pottery recovered from the temple precinct.

According to the high geochemical variation of their fabrics, many of the vessels originate from different locations throughout the region or even from farther away. For example, a small group of wheel-made vessels with a

very specific pink fabric differs remarkably in its geochemical composition from all other wares. These vessels – bowls with a kind of rouletted decoration and so-called 'torpedo shaped' jars – might represent imports from much more distant regions. In particular, the 'torpedo shaped' jar forms are known from various sites in the Abyssinian highlands as well as from South Arabia, although the specific fabric of the Wukro specimen does not resemble the sand-tempered wares of the South Arabian ones.



A so-called 'torpedo shaped' jar recovered in the temple forecourt.



Undecorated biconical incense burner recovered in the deposit of votive offerings.



Jar fragments with flaring rim, scraped surface and incised decoration recovered during the TCB excavations in 2007.



Small pot with ridge-like application from the deposit of votive offerings.



Vessel fragment with burnished surface similar to the surface treatment of pottery from the middle Nile Valley.



Vessel fragment with moulded application.

SOUTH ARABIAN CULTURAL TRANSFER AND AFRICAN TRADITION





Ibex friezes like this one, which was secondary reused in the church Debre Mariam in Yeha, are typical motives in Sabaean architectural decoration.



Incense trees in the highlands of Tigrai.



Obsidian flakes found in Ziban Adi, near Meqaber Ga'ewa.

Until the mid of the last century it was generally assumed that the Abyssinian highlands were colonised by the migration of South Arabian tribes, which brought religious traditions, literary language, monumental architecture and fine arts from South Arabia to the highlands. But with the first more substantial excavations at sites such as Yeha. Hawelti and Matara in the 1960s, new hypotheses were developed. They implied the immigration of smaller groups of South Arabian and especially Sabaean merchants and craftsmen, the physical presence of whom is undisputable on the basis of the epigraphic evidence. The Sabaeans, who maintained during that time a huge trade network spanning the Arabian Peninsula and even beyond, were probably interested in trading items such as incense, gold, ivory and obsidian. Cultural innovations such as monumental architecture, sanctuaries, altars and furniture, sculptures and Sabaean inscriptions could therefore have been transferred by Sabaean masons and their work. As is often the case, more essential cultural achievements, like literary language and the observance of specific deities, might have spread by means of these population groups. The size and social structure of these groups, and how such migration processes took place, is still a matter of research and scholarly debate.

What, for example, happened in the Abyssinian highlands in the second millennium BC, before the development of the close contacts to Saba? The decoration and surface treatment of some of the pottery wares recovered at our sanctuary and elsewhere in the highlands, and cultural features like the accentuation of female society members, as illustrated by several Ethio-Sabaean inscriptions, including the royal dedication of Wukrol, link the highlands to a broader Northeast African cultural horizon.



Burnished, black-topped bowl fragments from the neighbouring site of Ziban Adi closely resemble pottery decoration styles of Nile Valley cultures, especially of the so-called C-Group and Kerma cultures in the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC.

The highlands were not devoid of population at the arrival of the Sabaeans. Recent archaeological research in Eritrea and in Tigrai has led to the development of new explanatory models based on excavations beyond those well-known sites of Yeha, Hawelti and Matara. Complex settlement structures of large stone-made dwellings and indigenous pottery and stone tool production – lacking any evidence of South Arabian cultural influence – suggest localised development of complex communities all over the country. Agriculture, pastoralism and regional trade contributed to their economic and cultural development.



Ploughing and other agricultural techniques today still resemble those of ancient times.



Salt trade caravans are still today crossing the region of Addi Akaweh and Megaber Ga'ewa.



The Great Temple of Yeha in 2008.



Statue of a seated woman found in Hawelti (now in the National Museum, Addis Ababa).

The votive inscription of our altar illustrates that the Ethio-Sabaean royal elite was equally familiar with South Arabian and African traditions. Perhaps it was even rooted in the latter? Archaeological evidence of Sabaean tradition in the highlands' cultural development is still confined to very few sites around Yeha-Aksum and Matara-Kaskase, and to their sanctuaries and palaces, such as the Almagah temples or the Grat Be'al Gebri in Yeha. In 2008, the Almagah sanctuary of Wukro was the first major discovery of such cultural evidence since half a century. It illustrates that this scarcity of evidence might, however, be due to the little archaeological research so far undertaken in the highlands. On the other hand, this scarcity could indicate that specific features of the South Arabian cultural influence were restricted to privileged social groups in these specific places. Their monumental temple buildings, effigies, altars and incense burners can also be seen as the cultural expression of indigenous elites, underlining their identity and hegemony with elements of a more complex neighbouring culture, with which they maintained close relations across the Red Sea.

There are striking analogies within the Kushite kingdom, which developed contemporaneously in the Middle Nile Valley. Centuries after a large part of the Middle Nile Valley was occupied by Egyptian pharaohs, the Kushite kings copied sacral architecture and fine arts of their Egyptian neighbours in a way that later historiographers, such as Herodotus, considered them as being more Egyptian than the Egyptians themselves. They involved Egyptian artisans and craftsmen in the construction and decoration of their temples, and the Kushite upper class



Unfinished representation of the Kushite king Tanwetamani (mid of 7th century BC) and hieroglyphic inscriptions in his tomb at El Kurru near Karima (Republic of the Sudan).

adopted cultural practices, such as Egyptian literary language, religion and funerary cult. This situation might be considered very similar to the Abyssinian highlands. Is such an analogy, however, contextually appropriate? While we have plenty of historical evidence for the Nile valley, we still lack such information for the Horn of Africa. Therefore, the new finds of Meqaber Ga'ewa can hopefully contribute to a better understanding of the history and social development of the Abyssinian highlands.

In addition, the Almaqah temple provides evidence for the adaptation of South

Arabian religion and culture by the local population. Its cult inventory, pottery, miniature vessels, figurines and idols are the material evidence of rites and ceremonies, which determined the everyday cult in the sanctuary. With the scent of incense, the donations of offerings and liquids, people asked for the favour of Almagah. In particular, the female figurines, the figurine in the miniature shrine, as well as the seated limestone statue, all emphasise a specific aspect of Almagah, which the votive inscription on the base of the latter clearly identifies: creation and fertility. Thus, the temple illustrates not only the building activities and the donations of an Ethio-Sabaean elite; it was used not only by socially elevated individuals, private donors and priests, but also by the local population who confronted Almagah with the same desire for fertility, prosperity and wealth.



Kushite royal statues dating to the first half of the last millennium BC found in Doukki Gel near Kerma (now in the Kerma Museum, Republic of the Sudan) closely resemble ancient Egyptian iconography.

CULTURAL HERITAGE PRESERVATION AND SITE MANAGEMENT



 ${
m T}$ he temple, its cult and its votive objects exhibit African as well as South Arabian traits within Ethiopia in a clear archaeological context. In addition, they permit the reconstruction of cult life in one of the most ancient Ethiopian sanctuaries. Their exceptional sculptural execution even surpasses comparable works from ancient Yemen, and their completeness and state of preservation are unique. Therefore, we decided to preserve the Almagah temple as an openair museum, while the libation altar, the cult inventory and a selection of artefacts were to be exhibited in the Wukro Museum. The intention was to preserve the temple precinct in its excavated state, illustrating the original construction stage of the 8th to 6th centuries BC and the historical depth of the site. This work was generously supported by the German Foreign Affairs.



Recording the walls of the temple in 2009.

The archaeological site of Megaber Ga'ewa protected by drystone walls, with the sheltered Almagah temple (front) and the finds' magazine (left) in 2012.

CONSERVATION WORK AT THE TEMPLE

The exposure of the temple by our excavations necessitated conservation measures such as the consolidation of its outer walls. The walls were documented in respect of their method of construction and state of preservation, followed by the removal of collapsed parts. Reconstruction was then carried out using the original building techniques with original stone material. As a result, all endangered temple walls are now consolidated up to their originally preserved height without any additions. During the conservation of the portico and the destroyed stairs in front of the temple, the entrance to the temple building had to be completely dismantled and documented.



The sheltered and conserved Almagah temple with reconstructed stairs in 2014.

Thereafter we re-assembled this part according to the original building structure of the 8th - 6th century BC. In addition, we incorporated wall remains of the predecessor building into the reconstruction of the stairs in order to illustrate the long history of the place.



Reconstruction of the stairs and portico in 2013.

REPLICATION OF THE TEMPLE'S LIBATION ALTAR AND CULT

INVENTORY

Another central task was to safeguard the temple's cult inventory to protect it from accidental or malicious damage and from environmental impact. We therefore relocated the limestone objects to the projects magazine so that they could be later exhibited in the Museum in Wukro. At the site, however, they were replaced by high-quality replicas to preserve the authenticity of the site and to make the reconstruction of its cult procedures perceptible to visitors. In a first step, a 3D scan of the temple and the cult objects, as well as a detailed graphic documentation of the libation altar, were carried out. The



Reconstruction of the temple stairs in 2013.



Reconstruction of the temple walls in 2009.

originals were then removed from the site. The individual parts were disassembled with great care, and samples of the stone, and from stone quarries around Megaber Ga'ewa, were taken for analysis in order to determine the origin of the limestone.



Section through the mould of the seated statue.

Conservators from the Berlin company Restaurierung am Oberbaum produced silicone moulds for the casting of the replicas in a mixture of gravel, sand, hydrated lime, cement and pigments. The replicas were finally assembled on the original find spots of the altar and the other cult inventory.



Dismantling and documenting the libation altar in 2011.



Preparation of the silicon moulds for the replica of the libation altar in 2011.



Reassembling the replica of the altar at its original place in 2011.



The original base of the statue (left) and its replica (right).



The replica of the libation altar at the original find spot in 2012.

PROTECTIVE SHELTER FOR THE ALMAQAH TEMPLE

In 2012 it became necessary to replace the temporary shelter built by the Culture and Tourism Bureau of Tigrai in 2007 with a new and larger shelter to protect the sanctuary against the annual rains. The new shelter, developed in cooperation with the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit in Mekelle and produced by the local company Wolday Building Constructor, is a cantilevered roof with a total size of 21 x 25 m, spanning almost the entire rear part of the sacral precinct, including the temple's portico and staircase as well as the side rooms to the north of the sanctuary without additional supporting elements, so as to disturb the archaeological surface as little as possible. Together with St. Mary's College in Wukro, approximately 100 trees were planted around the temple precinct, forming part of the sustainable long term protection of the ancient structures against wind and rain. Finally, a 'bird protection net' was installed under the shelter to prevent birds from accessing the roof.



Setting the roof beams of the shelter construction with the help of a truck crane in October 2012.



Preparing the foundations of the shelter construction.



Roofing the shelter.



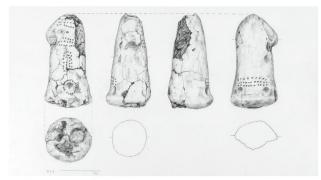
The shelter protects not only the temple but almost the entire rear part of the temple precinct.



The new temple shelter in November 2012.

CONSERVATION OF ARTEFACTS

Alongside the ongoing recording and documentation of pottery and artefacts by photography, drawings and description, the team of restorers from *Restaurierung am Oberbaum* also treated the most important finds from the Almaqah temple for conservation. This largely concerned pottery vessels of various size but also included the votive figurines, as well as stone, glass, bronze and ivory objects from neighbouring sites. The work included the cleaning and consolidation of these fragile artefacts. Many ceramics were assembled and partly supplemented. These artefacts are now permanently preserved and notable highlights are exhibited in the Museum of Wukro.



Drawing of a figurine with pointille decoration.



Conservation and documentation work in the finds' magazine.

Especially the fragile ceramics were often reconstructed from many single fragments.

















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SUPPORT THE WUKRO MUSEUM WITH "KÖNIGIN VON SABA" COFFEE

The traditional Bremen coffee roasting company Münchhausen offers excellent Ethiopian Arabic forest coffee under the brand "Königin von Saba".

The highest grade green coffee is produced by the Oromo Coffee Farmers Cooperative Union, which



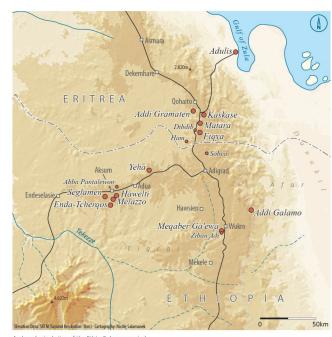
has many member cooperatives in the last Afromontane rainforests in Southern Ethiopia: Yayu Forest in Illubabor and Harenna Forest in Bale among others.

The "Königin von Saba" coffee is fair trade and bio. Higher incomes from forest coffee are a crucial incentive for the small holders to protect the coffee forests.

Münchhausen donates 2€ per kg "Königin von Saba" to sponsor the Wukro Museum.

More information and possibilities to order "Königin von Saba" coffee on the websites: www.muenchhausen-kaffee.de and www.museums-in-ethiopia.org





Archaeological sites of the Ethio-Sabaean period.

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