

*lala* (Arsi O) collective name for climbers e.g. *Cissus* sp.;

*laalaa* (O) lesson serving as a warning

HFE84 Lala, see Lahlaha

HFE94 Lala, see Rama

HFE26 Lalai Tsesera, see Lai Tsetsera

HDH77 Lale 09°41'/36°24' 1834 m 09/36 [Gz]

HD... Lalibela 08/38? [Pa]

According to Futuh al-Habasha there was in the 1500s one place Lalibela in Fetegar, not very far from the Zikwala mountain.

[R Pankhurst in AddisTribune 2003/11/03]

HEL27 **Lalibela** (Lalibala) Gz: 12°02'/39°02' 2428 m 12/39 [Gz Ha Gu x]

(ancient name Roha; early also known as Urvuar or Warwar)

(with famous rock churches & sub post office,  
centre -1970s-1980s- of Lasta awraja)

In 1940 the location was stated to be 12°05'03"/36°45'30",

by 1967 it had been measured as 12°01'30"/39°03'40" 2630 m.

Altitude stated as 2,423 m near EAL and Governor's offices would mean about 2,400 m in the church area, equivalent to the airport area in Addis Abeba.

Within a radius of 10 km there are at km

8E Asheten Maryam (Asceten Mariam) (rock-hewn church)

8E Geber Maderiya

8SE Mekena (Mechena) (mountain & sub-district)

3W Piyoliya (Piolia) (village)

8W Sorba Abbo (church)

8N Kankanit Mikael (cave church)

10NE Mekena (Makina): Medhane Alem (church built in cave)

?? Naakuto Laab (Nakutalapa, Naakutala'ab, Nekutoleab, Naacateleb)

(Na'akweto La'ab, Neakuto Leab) (cave church) 2263 m

Some of the above are specified separately below at the end of the collective text, together with the monoliths inside Lalibela in alphabetical order written as follows:

Adam's tomb

Adefa

Adriyot

church Abba Libanos

church Amanuel

church Dingil

church Gabriel

church Giyorgis

church Golgota

church Maryam

church Medhane Alem

church Merkuriyos

church Mesqel

church Mikael

church Rufael

church Silase

Iyesus cell

Kassa mausoleum

Naakuto Laab

Yordanos

The details have been combined from various sources specified in the main text.

Gabriel, Giyorgis, Maryam, Medhane Alem, Mikael are very common as church names all over Ethiopia, and most of the others also occur occasionally.

*Recommended road:* Turn west at Weldiya, after 43 km turn north at the village of Dilb,

after another 30 km you'll join up with the main road to Lalibela at Kulmesk, where you turn left.

[Camerapix 1995]

ancient

"In A.D. 1137 the royal power passed to an Agao family of Lasta called the Zagwa who founded their capital Roha in their own homeland. This change of dynasty marked a change of political power from the semitized Abyssinians who had inherited the Aksumite tradition to the more recently christianized Agao."

[Trimingham, Islam in Ethiopia, 1952 p 55]

The name Roha corresponds to the ancient name of Edessa in Syria, which became known in Ethiopia together with the introduction of Christianity.

*Emperor Lalibela as ruler:*

Lalibela was the most outstanding member of the Zagwe dynasty which ruled Ethiopia in the 1100s and 1200s. He was born in Roha, and his father of uncertain name was a nobleman or possibly even king. His half-brother Harbay was ruler, and Lalibela decided to become a hermit in the Tigre mountains to escape his persecutions. Lalibela is also said to have made the difficult pilgrimage to Jerusalem, then in the hands of the Crusaders. Harbay on the other hand tried to have contacts with the Pope in Rome. On his return to Ethiopia, Lalibela made a successful "march on Roha". Tradition holds that Harbay abdicated in favour of his half-brother. It seems likely that Lalibela had the support of the Ethiopian clergy, who were doubtless opposed to a Papal alliance. On ascending the throne in 1181 or 1182 Lalibela took the throne name of Gebre Meskel. He defended the frontiers of the Empire, which was at this time apparently composed of Eritrea, Tigre, Wello and northern Shewa.

Forced to deal with rebellious factions of Aksumites and certain Shewans, he made sure of the support of the monastery of Debre Libanos of Shimezana, west of Adigrat, conferring special privileges on its clergy in 1205. In the south, he took possession of the natural fortress of Amba Geshen in Amhara and founded a monastery there.

Lalibela tried to maintain good relations with Egypt and on occasion get an *abun* from there, such as Mikael of Fua who served in Ethiopia about 1205-1209.

Arabic sources state that Lalibela had two sons. The one named Yetbarek is believed to have been the last Zagwe ruler.

It is said that King Lalibela fell ill at the age of 70 and died on 22 June 1220.

According to some sources an Egyptian Christian refugee by name Sidi Mesqel was the principal architect and engineer of the rock churches. This was possibly in the early 1200s. It is claimed that Sidi Mesqel was buried in the Medhane Alem church.

[The dictionary of Ethiopian biography, A.A. 1975]

*Legends of Emperor Lalibela:*

Legend has it that one day his mother saw him lying happily in his cradle surrounded by a dense swarm of bees. Recalling a belief that animals could foretell the advent of important personages, she cried out: 'The bees know that his child will become King.' Accordingly she called her son Lalibela, which means 'the bee recognizes his sovereignty.'

Lalibela's older /half-/brother, Harbay, the incumbent monarch, was naturally disturbed and became jealous. As the years passed, he began to fear for the safety of his throne, and unsuccessfully tried to have his brother murdered. Persecutions continued for several years, culminating in a deadly potion that left the young prince in mortal sleep. During the three-day stupor, Lalibela was transported by angels to the first, second, and third heavens, where God ordered him to return to Roha and build churches. The Almighty, it is said, further told the prince how to design those churches, where to build them, and how to decorate them.

After Lalibela returned to mortal existence, Harbay, acting on instructions from the Lord, went to pay homage to him. The two brothers then rode together on the same mule to Roha, and Harbay abdicated in favour of his younger brother.

When Lalibela was crowned, he gathered masons, carpenters, tools, set down a scale of wages, and purchased the land needed for the building. The churches were built with great speed, because the angels continued the work at night."

[Camerapix 1995 p 111-112]

According to a manuscript copied by Achille Raffray in 1882, the churches were excavated in the following order - Maryam, Debre Sina (=Mikael), Golgota, Meskel, Medhane Alem, Dingil, Gabriel, Abba Libanos, Merkorios, Amanuel, Giyorgis. Legend says that they were built in 23 years.

[Simon 1885 p 321]

geol

The superficial impression of arid landscape around Lalibela seems to be due more to lack of moisture-preserving soil and vegetation than to basic lack of rain. Lalibela has not had any meteorological station but can be compared with those at Weldiya and Sekota. For the material in the churches one should in English language make a distinction between tufa (porous) and tuff (fairly compact):

*tufa*, a porous, concretionary, or compact form of calcium carbonate which is deposited from solution around springs;

*tuff*, a rock formed of compacted volcanic fragments, some of which can be distinguished by the naked eye. If the fragments are larger, then the rock grades into an agglomerate.

The restoration leader Angelini cites the following text /here translated from Italian/: "The Ethiopian high plateau in Wello province consists predominantly of volcanic rocks. There are variations between basalt, reddish andesitic tuffs /glassy or very finely crystalline/, and volcanic breccias /angular fragments embedded in a matrix/. The grains of the tuffs are of small dimensions, with diameters varying from 2 to 5-6 millimetres, but inside the tuffs it is easy to find volcanic projectiles of considerably larger measures. The deposits of this type, incoherent from the beginning, became modified and cemented by hydrothermal and diagenetic processes. Frequently the tuffs are altered at the surface and present a whitish incrustation, due to the solving and depositing actions of water in the last stages of the hydrothermal processes. The tuffs, which can be compact enough to be used as building material, are often much altered. The alteration is facilitated by the high porosity. -- The alteration can reach some metres in depth. Below the altered zone, the rock keeps its compactness, and cracks can mostly be attributed to processes of static readjustment."

Typical Lalibela tuff has a bulk density of about 1.85 g per cubic cm.

After restoration the wall surfaces in church groups became more "Lalibela-red" again, but with time they become covered with lichens and other microvegetation of brightly yellow and light-grey colours.

veget

*Vegetation* as seen in the late 1960s:

The general character seems somewhat arid. Concerning trees, the most venerable looking are old wild olives (*weyra*, *Olea africana*), mostly twisted and gnarled. None of this particular tree happens to grow near the Seven Olives Hotel. The tall pencil cedars (*t'id*, *Juniperus procera*) also look dignified. Some fifty of them of modest size climb the slope above Seven Olives Hotel. The locality is not at such high altitude that trees have any "beards" of hanging lichens. There are no *zigba* trees.

The *wanza* (*Cordia africana*) are not regarded as mountain trees but they are well developed at Lalibela, and with their dark leaves they give shade e.g. to a priest's school near the central square. The pepper tree (*k'onjo berbere*, *Schinus molle*) was imported, but long ago and mixes well with the olives around churches. Eucalyptus (*bahr zaf*) was introduced rather late, and although it grows a little everywhere it does not dominate any area. Of acacias (*grar*) and candelabra euphorbia (*k'welk'wal*) there are only single specimens. Even some true cactus (Indian figs, *Opuntia*) grow below the Giyorgis church. [B Lindahl 1968]

fauna

*Animals* inside the built-up areas: Brightly-coloured birds and lizards occur but not in great numbers. The birds seen are rather vultures or the black raven "which speaks only Amharic and says Aw to everything". Hornbills may be seen even in trees near the churches.

Unchained dogs are seen much less in Lalibela than in populated centres in general in Ethiopia, and cats practically not at all. /In contrast, a visitor saw many cats in Aksum and

was told that the priests keep them to reduce the occurrence of rats./ Riding animals are not seen much, except on market days, for the special reason that the place is regarded so holy that a good Christian is not supposed to approach Lalibela on mule back, but on foot. Pilgrimage is not a riding tour.

[B Lindahl 1968]

*The rock churches collectively:*

There are no contemporary documents preserved from the time of the Zagwe kings. Miniature paintings, of which the oldest from the 1300s, show mainly Byzantine influence (Syria, Mesopotamia, Armenia), so it is reasonable to assume similar influence for the churches.

They tried to build a New Jerusalem, with most names derived from there and which may explain why so much was concentrated in one locality. However, Solomon's Temple according to the Old Testament does not seem to have been a prototype which they have tried to reconstruct.

An estimate of excavation volumes gave as result that for three churches Maryam, Amanuel and Giyorgis it was over 107,000 cubic metres, that is to say five times the volume for Abu Simbel in Egypt.

Most of the churches are unlit, so tourist guides recommend to take a good torch.

The most regularly laid out churches in Lalibela do not deviate more than on an average 3.5 degrees from a north-south line, but as the magnetic and the geodetic north pole both lie in practically the same direction as seen from Lalibela, it cannot be deduced with a surveying instrument which method of orientation and setting-out that was used.

[B Lindahl]

The Christian tradition of placing the main entrance toward the west started in France in the 400s.

Lalibela lies far to the south of the original motherland of the Axumite style. The force of this ancient tradition was slightly attenuated here, and some mannerisms developed which the purist might regard as architecturally incorrect. For instance at Abba Libanos the capitals are not properly Axumite but a peculiar reduplicated type unknown outside Lalibela. A new attitude to the 'bracket-capital' can be observed in several churches. The original practice was to use a bracket or corbel only where actually needed to support an arch or lintel. In these Lalibela churches we find that a fourth bracket has been added, which has nothing to support. Logic has been sacrificed to symmetry.

[Buxton 1970 p 112-133]

Sometimes these sanctuaries are adorned on a large scale with figures in low relief, which is something quite exceptional in Ethiopian art. In accordance with Biblical precept, which is scrupulously followed, graven images are for the most part taboo.

[Doresse (1956)1959 p 96]

The rock churches are evidently shaped to be closely similar to built-up churches. Stone walls and the horizontal timbers are not (cannot) be decorated in Aksumite construction, only the parts of wood like windows, beams and arches which are mostly in the upper half of the building. It would have been particularly easy to decorate horizontal exterior wall bands in rock church technique, but this has been done only with simple narrow lines sometimes to divide the band into three strips, because there is no precedent for ornaments in such place in Aksumite architecture. Detailed monolithic shapes filling some windows would have hindered to use the windows for early entrance when excavating a church inside, so principles of reproducing traditional shape seem to have been much more important than adaptation to working methods.

[B Lindahl]

David Buxton has pointed out that Lalibela churches have many arches, instead of many cupolas in other rock churches. The historical development may have been that the arches *of stone* in the Mediterranean region were imitated *in wood* in the Aksumite culture and then imitated back to monolithic *stone* in Lalibela.

1200s Lalibela's contacts with Cairo seem to have left the Egyptians with an impression of great splendour. In the year 1200 he sent a first envoy to arrange for a successor to replace a

bishop who had just died. But Mikael II who was appointed and sent to Ethiopia was overcome with nostalgia and fled the country after five years in office. About the year 1209 a second envoy from Lalibela arrived in Cairo to secure the services of a more reliable member of the clergy. It was a magnificent delegation. What of the phenomenal creatures presented to the Sultan - a giraffe, an elephant, a lion, and a zebra!

The construction of the monolithic churches has been attributed to workmen from Jerusalem or Egypt, the Moslem persecutions having driven out numbers of Copts.

[J Dorsesse, Ethiopia (1956)1959 p 94-95]

1400s Its name was used in a European publication for the first time in Fra Mauro's map made in Venice 1457-59, written in the form 'Lalabeda'.

(A map by Waldseemüller dated 1516 "is a rather more awkward rendering of the known facts from Fra Mauro's World Map".)

1500s The Portuguese embassy which landed at the Red Sea shore in April 1520 passed Lalibela on their way to meet the Emperor at Debre Libanos. Francisco Alvares among them later wrote two chapters in his book about the rock-churches (omitting some of them). He was the first to tell something substantial in Europe about them. Alvares has Lalibela as the name of the king but not of the place and his name for the district is wrong.

[Beckingham & Huntingford]

Ahmed Grañ reached Lalibela around 1533, but the chronicle does not mention that they saw more than one church. Ahmed had a fire lit and ordered "let one of yours and one of ours enter there". Instead a nun threw herself into the fire and her face was burnt before they could pull her out. The soldiers obviously did some destroying and looting before leaving, but obviously they did not damage the rock-hewn churches themselves.

(Comment: As Futuh al-Habasha mentions only one rock church there is a question whether Ahmed actually saw one that was not in Lalibela itself. An answer to this can never be obtained.)

[7th Int Conf of Ethiopian Studies 1984 p 213]

The Portuguese Castanhoso says that he came to Lalibela in 1543, travelling from lake Tana. His descriptions are so brief that it is difficult to believe that he can have been the author of the plans in Ramusio, see below.

No other European is known to have visited Lalibela for some 320 years after this.

[Beckingham & Huntingford]

1550s G.B. Ramusio, Primo Volume delle Navigazioni et Viaggi (1550) fol. 228-232 contains an attempt to draw plans of most of the churches in Lalibela. They are reproduced in Beckingham & Huntingford, The Prester John .. vol. I pages 208, 210, 212, 214, 216, 220. The author of Ramusio's plans is not known, but it is certainly not Alvares. "The measurements given by Alvares and the scales of Ramusio's plans bear no relation to reality."

1700s Emperor Tekle Giyorgis (1779-1795) made Blattengeta Golja chief of the priests of Lalibela.

After Tekle Giyorgis had been seized and imprisoned for three years, he went to Lalibela when he was freed around 1792.

[7th Int Conf p 227-228]

1860s Gerhard Rohlfs arrived at Lalibela in early May 1868 after having accompanied the Napier expedition. He intended to go from Mekdela in direction Gondar but by mistake happened to come to Lalibela. He brought the news to there of the death of Emperor Tewodros II.

1880s Achille Raffray and Gabriel Simon studied the churches in Lalibela 26-29 September 1882 and made measured drawings. Memhir Meneberu was chief priest at the time. In what they published afterwards they differed much from each other in the interpretation of what they saw.

Raffray also examined manuscripts there. One page written in three languages according to Raffray contained a text by Sidi-Maskal, who seems to have been the architect or foreman of the builders. The text of this page is a deed of gift by King Lalibela to the monks who were to be attached to the churches, with sufficient land to maintain them.

One passage declares that Lalibela imported some four or five hundred workers from Jerusalem and Alexandria to work on his great design.

Raffray's memory and interpretation of the three-language page preserved at Medhane Alem church was almost totally incorrect according to Monti della Corte (1940). He used an expert A. Van Lantschoot in the Biblioteca Vaticana which resulted in the following explanations. Text one in Coptic (not Greek as Raffray said) is a short statement by Abuna Bartolomeo visiting during the reign of Dawit 1380-1409. Text two in Arabic is longer and is a charter confirming certain rights of the church. Text three in Ge'ez is written at least a century later and mentions the reign of Lebna Dengel 1508-1540. There is nothing of what Raffray tells about Sidi-Maskal and church builders from Egypt.

[A A Monti della Corte 1940]

(In a tourist pamphlet from ETO the error was even greater by naming *four* languages on the sheet.)

1889 Ethiopia in 1889 had a devastating famine caused by rinderpest. The origin of the epidemic seems to have been infected cattle from India unloaded at Massawa by the Italians as food for troops. The cattle disease was seen as "a scourge sent by God to punish Ethiopia for laxity of faith."

King Menilek and Queen Taytu (not crowned emperor and empress until November 1889) went to Lalibela to pray for the people. "Menilek's and Taytu's pilgrimage to ask God's mercy went unrewarded."

[C Prouty, Empress Taytu ..., 1986 p 63]

1890s According to Wylde the Lalibela market, held on Thursdays, was regarded as of medium size in the 1890s.

There was a trade route from Mota to Lalibela in the 1800s.

1910s The Deutsche Aksum-Expedition who thoroughly analysed Aksumite architecture also mention Lalibela, but they did not make a visit of their own to there.

1920s The young British female traveller Rosita Forbes Mc Rath arrived by caravan at Lalibela 8 March 1925 together with a photographer Jones. They escaped from there after 24 hours, having seen only four or five of the churches. Her printed descriptions are much based on earlier writers but also contain mistakes of her own.

[Monti della Corte]

The Norwegian Adventist missionaries G. Gudmundsen and P.M. Myhre visited Lalibela probably in the late 1920s. While they were eating their food at a small watercouse at some distance from Lalibela, a local chief with some soldiers came and asked them brusquely what they were doing and where they intended to go. Gudmundsen showed them three written permits successively one after the other ("experience had taught me not to fire all bullets in one shot"), but the chief could not read and he did not think that the permits were valid in the local area. The missionaries gave him a little money and then brushed to the side the guns and spears pointed at them ("you will not dare take the risk to harm foreign travellers") and continued on their way. The Lalibela churches they found imposing, but they did not publish any description of them.

[G Gudmundsen, 14 år bland ..., (orig. ed. Oslo) Sthlm 1936 p 138-141]

1930s Ras Kassa gave permission to S.I.M. to start a hospital near Lalibela.

The mission station was established in 1934, and before the Italian invasion it had a staff of four in the hospital and a primary school.

The American missionary Mrs Oglesby who took part in starting it was unfortunately killed while travelling, in Sudanese territory during an Italian air force attack on Kurmuk.

[Zervos 1936 et al]

Dr. Lambie of the S.I.M. administration visited in the early 1930s: "At long last we reached Lalibela, our destination. -- It was a delightful country, with charming people. Our presence at Lalibela was resented by the Ethiopian Coptic priests, who reside in great numbers there, but in later years much of their misunderstanding of us was removed by the patient, loving work of our missionaries, especially the dear Oglesbys, Nystroms, and Mr. Luckman, and Miss Blair."

- [T A Lambie, Boot and saddle .., USA 1943]
- 1934 The BV missionary Anna-Lena Jönsson (later married Röstin) was the first Swede - and the only one before the Italian occupation? - to visit Lalibela. She made a long caravan trip in mid-1934 and arrived at Lalibela after a wide loop to the east and north. She did not notice any large pilgrimage groups on the road to the Ethiopian Jerusalem. The head priest was Memhir Heruy, and he lived in a round two-storey stone house of the local type. His "reception hall" upstairs was beautiful and he gave short and concise orders about camping and everything and received the female foreign visitor in a friendly way. Heruy had recently come back from a visit to Addis Abeba, so he offered biscuits from the capital with the coffee. In the meantime there was a short court hearing during which a young man, who had been kept captive for three days, was ordered to take care of his aunt who was a leper (and both were offered *tej* after having received the sentence). Anna-Lena noticed that recent repairs in Bet Maryam were not very clever and that the work to reerect fallen piers on the outside of Medhane Alem had been left unfinished, with reinforcement bars jutting upwards. It would not have been allowed for a woman to see the man-sized holy relief sculptures inside Mikael-Golgota, but the Memhir told Anna-Lena exactly where they were and then "had a little errand to do" while Anna-Lena sneaked inside and saw them. The Memhir read to Anna-Lena from a large Ge'ez manuscript on the history of King Lalibela, but Anna-Lena had with her the history *Wazema* written by Blattengeta Heruy and printed in Amharic. Memhir Heruy had never seen that book, so the differences were discussed. The visitor found that practically no coins were used for trade in Lalibela, mainly as weights only. Many nuns carried small scales with which they could weigh goods exchanged against each other. The nuns were happy to acquire incense from Anna-Lena, but she on her side was happy to leave Lalibela which to her seemed to "smell of disease" evrywhere.
- [A L Röstin, Sthlm 1936 p 190-216]
- 1936 After giving a five-hour feast to his soldiers at the residence of the governor of Lasta, immediately after the Easter holidays, the Emperor arrived late in the evening on 11 April 1936 to Lalibela and stayed there for two days. [G L Steer 1936 p 330]
- "-- the Emperor disappeared, having gone on a pilgrimage to the shrines of Lalibela where he spent two days in prayer and meditation, much as Blatengueta Herouy was doing in Addis Ababa, but with this difference: that His Majesty's flight from reality assumed such proportions that his entourage, Ras Kassa in particular, were aghast at his conduct. By his tarrying at Lalibela, he allowed the Italians to occupy Dessie and Wore Ilu before he could get there. When he resumed his retreat toward the capital, he was forced to pursue a wildly circuitous route --"
- [J H Spencer, Ethiopia at bay, 1984 p 57-59]
- 1937 A post office at Lalibela had been foreseen by the Italian administration, but it was never opened by them.
- 1938 About 3,000 inhabitants. *Commissariato del Lásta*, telegraph, infirmary, *spaccio*. [Guida 1938]
- The Italians tried to keep lepers away from the pilgrims.
- 1939 An Italian archaeological expedition to Lasta in April-May 1939 was led by Prof. A.A. Monti della Corte, with E. Zacchia for surveying and artist L. Bianchi Barriviera who published engravings several times afterwards. Some old priests at that time still remembered Consul Raffray's visit in 1882.
- 1940s After the liberation the S.I.M. station was still closed in 1943. David Buxton in the 1940s: "The senior priest was a charming and venerable old monk, grey and full-bearded. He regretted the quiet retirement of Debra Libanos, where he had spent most of his life, and was sorely harassed by the innumerable petty disputes, in which he had to intervene, between the cantankerous young ecclesiastics as well as the

townspeople --"

1954 In the restoration which took place in 1954, a bituminous layer was applied to the external surfaces of Medhane Alem and Amanuel; this layer was then covered over with a red ochre wash.

Later it appeared that the bituminous layer was swelling and getting detached from the rock; after a few rainy seasons the red colour was also washed away.

[Unesco October 1978]

Irmgard Bidder, wife of the West German ambassador in Addis Abeba, together with three other Germans visited Lalibela in the mid-1950s and she afterwards published a richly illustrated book.

They travelled by mule caravan from Weldiya. From Kulmesk they were joined by the governor Dejazmach Brehane Maskal and his wife, so at times there were two hundred people in their party. At half a day's ride before reaching Lalibela they visited the monolithic church of Genete Maryam which is also described in Bidder's book. Before entering Lalibela itself they were met by a gathering of priests performing the ritual dancing for them. The governor's wife went to early mass and for her it was a purely religious visit so the foreigners kept unseen to her about sightseeing and photography.

[Bidder, Lalibela, 1958]

Bidder in her book published in several editions tries to analyze with the aid of history of ancient art, which brings her to far-fetched conclusions. She observes that some window openings and openings between pillars with an arch above are rather similar to the outline of the large Aksum stelae. Any direct connection?

[B Lindahl]

1956 ESIBT, the Ethio-Swedish Institute of Building Technology, in 22 July-4 August 1956 laid provisional roofs of corrugated sheets on the churches of Medhane Alem and Amanuel. It was made by teacher Thure Alvermark and two students, and a caravan from Weldiya carried in 800 roofing sheets. The whole work cost Eth\$ 7,715.

(These temporary roofs were kept for about ten years and were removed when restauration and impregnation was done in 1967-1968.)

Among bids for repair of churches in Lalibela opened at the Ministry of Public Works in June 1956, the contract was awarded to Sebastiano Console although his bid of Eth\$ 24,360 was not the lowest. Some "restoration work" seems to have taken place also in 1954-1955.

Ras Kassa Dargie died in 1956. Already before the Italian time a fairly large mausoleum for his family, above ground near the rock churches, was built and looked very foreign to the traditional culture of Lalibela. Ras Kassa and his sons were chiefs of Lasta and had residence in Lalibela.

1959 When the landing strip was ready, 28 Swedes resident in Ethiopia chartered a DC-3 and made a trip by air to Lalibela on 4-5 April 1959. Two Ethiopians Hirut and Naigzy from the Building College also took part.

A recommendation letter had been obtained from the Crown Prince as Governor-General, calling it a study trip for the college. On landing, it was found to be a three-hour walk from the airstrip to the town.

Camping by the Swedish group was permitted at an open field used during a visit by the Emperor, and a pavilion was still there from that occasion. (The Swedes ate a lot in their camp although it was in the middle of the Orthodox 55-day fasting period.)

A little earlier an American group had flown to Lalibela. Their schedule was to return on the same day, so they got only a couple of hours to see the churches. The chartered airplane of the Swedish group stayed overnight, but it had to be back at Addis Abeba by 6 pm on the following day, as there was still no equipment for night landings in the capital. Scheduled flights to Lalibela started in May 1959. On the first such tour there was no organized group, but possible Barbara Toy who in her book also mentions Thedia Barnes and another American. They obtained permission from the Governor of Lasta, Dejazmach Berhane Maskel Desta, who was in Addis Abeba at the time, and he sent with them from the capital the High Priest of Lalibela "to look after us". He was a young man and "more

amused than interested in our jaunt". The Governor lent them a tent. After landing at Lalibela "a large weighing machine was unloaded from the plane and placed in front of the shed with an air of ceremony. Now, without a doubt, the Lalibela airport was open!" Getachew, the airlines official, said that it was the first time he had ridden a mule.

[B Toy, In search of Sheba, London 1961 p 208-218]

On the second tour there was a group of Norwegian architects and engineers, also one Swede, one Dane with Burmese wife and two Americans, 17 tourists in all. The young High Priest of Lalibela also flew on the same plane, and his air ticket was paid for by the Norwegian group. The priest reciprocated with inviting to a meal and with permitting the group to set up their tents in his own compound for two nights, so the visit lasted Friday-Sunday.

[B Lindahl in letter]

Toy's group found that there was little to buy in the market. "Sometimes coins were used as weights on the tiny hand-scales, but more often, we were surprised to see, a tiny sample packet of Lux soap was used for this purpose."

1960 "Any visitor used to the 'museum cathedrals' of England, is struck by the number of pilgrims in Lalibela, and the fact that the churches are perpetually in use, and are a real part of the lives of the villagers, most of whom are in some way connected with them. When the author visited Beit Mariam -- in early 1960, a service was being conducted both inside and outside the church, under a great canopy. The priests held a procession past the deep water tanks cut in the rock and led the way around the courtyard of the church to the sound of chanting and drums, their multi-coloured robes and umbrellas making a splendid picture in the bright light of the early morning."

[R Greenfield, Ethiopia, London 1965 p 34-36]

1964 Ethiopian Christmas Day 7 January 1964 was celebrated with attendance of the Emperor and the Crown Prince and (according to Eth. Herald) by 6,000 members of the clergy.

1965 Otto Jäger as published 1965: There is no regular post service or phone or radio in Lalibela, and no hotel or guest house. Visitors have to bring their tents with them. [Jäger p 105]

EAL flight service to Lalibela as part of the 'Historic Route' for tourists was inaugurated on 4 February 1965 /but it did not operate during the rainy season?/

In the second half of 1965 *Committee for the Restoration and Preservation of the Churches of Lalibela* was formed, with Princess Ruth Desta as chairman and seven other important people as members. It was this committee which engaged Dr Sandro Angelini of the Archaeological Museum of Bergamo in Italy to make a first study visit 12-16 June 1966.

Memhir Afe Worq was chief priest in the mid-1960s.

1966 Large restoration works were started, paid for by the International Fund for Monuments of New York and directed by the Italian architect Sandro Angelini. Old people when questioned in 1966 thought that the existing cracks in the churches had not become worse in the last fifty years. (Some damages were described by Gabriel Simon already from his visit in 1882.) Earthquakes have never occurred. A few years earlier concrete, plaster and red paint had been put on without scientific guidance (especially on Medhane Alem) by Sebastiano Console with a contract from the Ministry of Public Works.

For the first restoration period, which started in late December 1966. there were six expatriate experts Angelini(male), Angelini(female), Bonorandi, Salvi, Arrigoni, Giudici all from Bergamo and an administrator Guy Boghossian recruited locally in Ethiopia. King Mosheshoe of Lesotho on a "private" visit to Ethiopia in November 1966 also made an excursion to Gondar and Lalibela.

1967 About 1,600 travellers visited Lalibela in 1967.

7 March 1967: "Much as I am enjoying Lalibela's churches, the atmosphere of the town depresses me. Until three years ago this was a remote mountain village, visited only by a few *faranjs* and by highlanders on pilgrimages to King Lalibela's tomb. Now Ethiopian Airlines provide a link with Addis six days a week, the Seven Olives Hotel provides a

reasonable imitation of Home Comforts, the local children form a corps of professional beggars and the taint of greed lies heavy on the air."

"The hotel is owned by Princess Ruth /Desta/, a younger sister of Leilt Aida and reputedly the Emperor's favourite grandchild. Since it was opened two and a half years ago it has been managed by an American ex-missionary /by Herbert and Della Hanson?/ who sports pious texts on the rear windows of his Land-Rover and took twenty-four hours to realize that I am not Mr Murphy. (He still wriggles all over with apologetic embarrassment every time we meet --) -- I'm paying 18/- for a cell (in the annexe) which is furnished only with twin beds and has a low tin roof, mud walls, a stone floor and a tiny unglazed window - anywhere else in the country a similar room would cost 3/-. However, the profits are spent on drought victims of Lasta and during recent years the regional ills would have been even worse but for the Seven Olives Hotel."

8 March: "Lalibela's houses look unusually attractive; many are circular, two-storeyed, stone buildings, with thatched roofs -- like most highlanders, these people are much less dour than they seem on first acquaintance. During my rambles today I was twice invited into *tej-beits* for drinks on the house (Lalibela *tej* is exceptionally good), and one group of old Agow women asked me to stop and eat roast corn with them, as they sat in the sun outside their *tukul*. After our conspicuous arrival here everyone has made enquiries about us /Dervla and her mule/, so I am basking now in Special Treatment. Even the hotel waiters give me double rations at each meal, on the grounds that walkers need more food than fliers."

10 March: "I woke this morning feeling much better belly-wise, but as my cough was worse I walked slowly down to the new Health Centre -- The Medical Officer impressed me by his intelligence and dedication; probably Princess Ruth hand-picked him for this post. He is not a doctor, but simply a sincerely concerned young man with a stethoscope around his neck and lots of common sense in his head."

"When he had written out a prescription for me I took it to another room - stepping over dozens of groaning patients - where an equally impressive Addis-trained nurse poured thick chalky liquid out of a 'Grant's Whisky' bottle into a smaller bottle -- The tablets were obviously of the sulpha group, the medicine could have been anything. I was astonished when my cough dwindled after the first dose and almost stopped after the second."

When she got better, Dervla made excursions outside Lalibela, and hired a porter-boy to help her. "-- last evening Giorgis, a charming fourteen-year-old, came to my room and said he had been sent by Mrs Dettenberg, a German artist who is Lalibela's only foreign resident - apart from the hotel manager -- Giorgis is the son of a priest and is himself a deacon. He looks pitifully undersized and being a pupil of the Church school he speaks no English, but he is an unspoiled child --"

[Dervla Murphy, In Ethiopia with a mule, UK 1968(1994) p 225-228(229-232)]

A one-day charter trip by air to Lalibela on a Sunday 14 May 1967 was arranged by the association of Swedes in Ethiopia.

The University Women's Club arranged a charter trip to Lalibela on 25-26 November 1967.

Around 1967 over 10,000 cubic metres of rubble and earth from trenches etc were removed with a work force counting 400 men at its maximum. One reason was improved drainage, but it then could also be seen that the trenches tied the parts of the ancient city together into one unit, "Jerusalem".

By clearing away accumulations in the Jordan (Yordanos) valley during restoration, Angelini thought that an ancient entrance for pilgrims could be opened also for modern visitors. In order to preserve the character of the landscape, Angelini insisted that the road from the airfield should not be asphalted.

Miss Ivy Pearce, who studied rock churches, visited Lalibela six times in the 1960s, and she thought Angelini's restoration was an impressive work.

1968

Emperor Haile Selassie escorted the (non-Christians) Mohamed Reza Pahlevi, Shah of Persia, and his consort Farah Diba on a visit to the churches of Lalibela. Abebe Siyoum was governor of Lasta awraja in that year.

Kidus Lalibela (St. Lalibela) primary school in 1968 had 262 boys and 171 girls, with 8 teachers.

In June-July 1968 Ethiopian television showed two films made by a British TV team about Lalibela and restoration work there.

Bernhard Lindahl and Karl Åkerblom from ESIBT (Building College) arrived on Saturday 16 November 1968 to make studies for ETO, the Ethiopian Tourist Organization. Åkerblom was to make a town map. Aerial photographs taken by the Mapping Mission (established 1965) were available. Their scale was established by measuring the length of Seven Olives Hotel. Lindahl was to study general improvements and stayed a little longer until Wednesday 20.

Among the many tourists at the hotel were Canadians, Americans, one from Finland and young Indians from Uganda. A young French architect Pierre Lombard, working for the Municipality of Addis Abeba, made drawings and later exhibited them in the capital in March 1969. Georg Gerster, photographer for ETO, was there and could show a copy of his newly published book "Kirchen im Fels".

On Tuesday a one-day visit was made by W/o Tsedale, director of ETO. When Lindahl was sitting with her at the churches she said: "I would like to be an old olive tree here." Lindahl: "That would be a very limited life, wouldn't it." Tsedale: "I could notice the sun rising and setting, I could notice rain ...".

Lindahl also made his own private studies trying to figure out excavation technique. He came to believe as most probable that the approach trench was excavated first, for drainage, and that the whole western front of a church would have been excavated rather early, permitting interior hollowing out to proceed from the main entrance along the symmetry axis. Gerster did not believe in this theory but afterwards mentioned it in National Geographic December 1970 page 884 and in his book *Äthiopien* (1974) 1976 page 223.

units

Lindahl also collected many figures to see if a particular *unit of measurement* had been used. The probable unit seems to have been a *palm*, across four fingers of a substantial (mason's?) hand, 90 mm on average and down to 85 mm. Its 3-multiple of about 270 mm is fairly common and could be called a measurement *foot*, but it is strange to think of a foot walking on wall surfaces. Common multiples of the palm seem to be 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 12, 16 ... which suggests a 12-system. (Half a year later Lindahl arrived at a theory that Aksum used a 10-system and a palm of 58.5 mm - across four fingers of a king or a young prince? - and that a unit of  $8 \times 58.5 = 467$  mm was fairly common in the stelae and monuments. The theory of 10-system and 12-system was presented to a conference of historians in Addis Abeba and printed in London in conference proceedings, without Lindahl knowing it until much later.) There are so many ancient units and systems in Egypt and the Mediterranean area that it has not been attempted to trace possible different origins of a 12-system and a 10-system.

*Setting-out* is not very exact. Did they use sticks and not strings (except for plumb lines)? Horizontal setting-out by water in small channels would have been very exact but has not been found.

There seems to be no number mysticism, except obviously three for Trinity and possibly one for Unity of Faith (certain special pillars) and twelve for the Apostles.

That openings are often divided into two may be a technical thing to provide an extra support in the middle, and possibly for that reason it is also a common feature of Aksumite architecture.

There is at least one part of a ruin left in Lalibela of a *built-up wall* with quite large dressed stone block, so this technique was well known.

Lindahl criticizes the habit (in tourist guides etc) to say "first group" and "second group" of churches as the chronology had not been fully determined. Better to say "Maryam group" and "Amanuel group".

[B Lindahl 1968, unpublished]

Overview of about 900 existing houses in Lalibela were reported to ETO in early December 1968, and a cost estimate of five-year improvements in the town for a total of

Eth\$ 306,000 was discussed with ETO in mid-December. Nothing substantial was followed up.

(Lindahl started lecturing to students of architecture about the architectural history of Ethiopia. At the first lecture on 27 February 1969 even W/o Tsedale and Mrs Florence Gluckman from ETO came to the school to listen. Even for this there could not be a continuation, since schools at academic level were closed for a while because of student unrest.)

build *Buildings in the town*, as found in late 1968 from an on-the-site survey of about 4/5 of them:

#### WALLS

38% stone walls generally without mortar

23% wood frame tightened with clay (traditional chicka)

39% poles and organic materials, not tight

#### ROOFS

61% traditional thatched

39% corrugated steel sheets

Only three permanent sheet roofs, on a school and a health station, were laid before 1959. During the following eight years there were introduced an average of 50 sheet roofs per year. In single cases this was done also on traditional round 2-storey Lasta houses.

#### HEIGHT

73% one storey

27% two storeys

so far none higher

#### SHAPE

48½% circular plan

51½% rectangular plan

#### MODERN BUILDINGS BY 1968:

\* Awraja Governor's office, red stone masonry, sheet roof painted red;

\* Seven Olives Hotel, stone and white plaster, traditional-type dining hall roof;

\* Health Station, horizontal wood panelling, painted in subdued colours;

\* EAL radio station and temporary office, "Uniport" pre-fabricated barrack;

\* Princess Ruth Rest House, brown wood panelling

(annexe "Angelini's House" being a replica of a traditional Lasta house built with modern aesthetic approach);

\* School with six classrooms, red stone masonry;

\* Restoration Group temporary sheet iron sheds;

\* a few small public latrines of sheet iron, painted in a bright and, for the circumstances, rather nasty red colour.

1969 Queen Juliana and Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, accompanied by Emperor Haile Selassie, visited Lalibela on 28 January 1969.

The Evangelical Central Agency of West Germany would pay for a Vocational Training School planned to be established in late 1969, following a study by engineer Ernst Kreuger in 1967-1968.

[Eth Herald 1969-08-29]

1970s It was said that there could be up to 4000 visits per month at the height of the tourism there.

1971 A group of Swedes flew to Lalibela on 2 May 1971 together with other nationalities, altogether 31 people. The DC-3 could land only at the second attempt, because there were some donkeys on the runway. Transfer up to Lalibela was half an hour by Landrovers. Lunch was at Seven Olives Hotel, still the only hotel in town.

[Svenskbladet]

1972 A map of Lalibela by Karl Åkerblom of the Building College was completed in the beginning of 1972.

- 1975 Well into the revolution, in January 1975, some tourists had a narrow escape at Lalibela airport when an EAL plane was, at the last moment before landing, 'waved over' by police, who found that ditches had been dug across the airstrip and then camouflaged. [B Thomson, Ethiopia - the country .., London 1975 p 143]  
Dejazmach Berhane Meskal (cf above Bidder's caravan in the 1950s) occupied Lalibela and held it for nearly six months until he was routed by the army in late 1975. [M & D Ottaway 1978 p 88]  
14 March 1975: Several hundred men, led by Berhane Meskel-Desta, took control of Lalibela after an encounter with the small police force there. Berhane Meskel-Desta used to own much land in the Lalibela area and "took to the mountains" already in November. The rebels took control also of the airfield. When an Ethiopian Air Lines DC-3 touched down at the landing strip on a regular flight from Kombolcha, the rebels attacked the plane and set it on fire. The aircraft's security guard was killed. Two more security men and one rebel were killed in subsequent fighting. [Reuter]  
Saturday 15 March: A convoy of Landrovers and trucks left Lalibela with 50 evacuees, mostly Ethiopians but including four Americans. The convoy met Ethiopian troop carriers on their way in to Lalibela. The government side recaptured control of Lalibela in a brief battle on Sunday. [Reuter]
- 1978 Lalibela was included on Unesco's World Heritage List from 1978.  
ICCROM, the International Centre for Conservation, Rome, organized an international symposium on stone conservation, held on 5-12 April 1978 in Lalibela itself. This symposium was attended by stone chemists, geologists, restorers of paintings, seismologists, and micro-botanists.  
It was shown that the principal cause for the deterioration of the monuments in Lalibela is an impermeable basalt horizon preventing the flow through of water and thus encouraging cycles of crystallization of sulphates already present in the scoria. Thermal differential expansion of components within the scoria has also created stress fields. Microbiological lichens and mosses also do some harm. [UNESCO, bulletin October 1978]  
In October-November 1978 Berit Härd of Göteborgs-Posten was the first Swedish journalist to visit Lalibela in the period of famine. A summary of her article in G-P 19 November is printed in Tenaestelin (Sthlm) 1979 no 1 p 38-39.  
A civil aircraft was shot at the airport in the beginning of the revolution. Since then the airport had been closed /?/ and still was in 1978. [Göteborgs-Posten 78-11-19]
- 1980 A first group of tourists to Lalibela at Easter 1980 had to turn back, because the runway at the airport was not yet repaired. [Le Point no 459 p 70]  
In May 1980 Lalibela was visited by a group including the East German doctor Jürgen Wenzel who later published a book about Ethiopia. They flew from Gondar in an old DC-3 on a regular flight, but it had taken quite some time to obtain all the necessary permits for the visit.  
There were two round buildings at the airstrip, one being the airport office and the other a school.  
Eden Eyassu, representative of EAL and the tourist office, brought them to the hotel with a Landrover and later guided them to the churches.  
When they met the priests and monks, one of them had a plate of the West German *Bayer* company as a decoration on his breast. At Medhane Alem they noticed damages in the roof and that tourists had scratched flakes of stone from the walls as souvenirs. Among souvenirs for sale to tourists were parchment books, no doubt recently manufactured. Even the waiters at the hotel restaurant tried to sell souvenirs. [J Wenzel, Im Land der dreizehn Monate, Rudolstadt 1985 p 161-173]
- 1982 The Seven Olives Hotel around 1982 had 72 beds. Manager was Getachew Seifu. There

- was no telephone, but radio communication.
- 1983 Graham Hancock, author of "The sign and the seal - The quest for the lost Ark of the Covenant" (1992), visited Lalibela in 1983. He only summarizes its history as found in books and thinks that Prince Lalibela left Jerusalem in 1185 and that Jerusalem fell to Muslim forces two years later. Hancock was particularly interested in the Templars and wonders whether any such knights accompanied Lalibela to Roha.  
[Hancock p 105-106, 114, 153]
- 1984 In 1984 the TPLF briefly held ten foreigners captive at Lalibela.  
[Young 1997]
- 1985 A French military transport aircraft carrying relief and medical supplies was seized by the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (EPDM) at Lalibela on 3 March 1985.  
A couple of days later it was released along with its crew of five.  
[News]
- 1990s About a third of tourists to Lalibela in the 1990s were Ethiopians (unusual in Africa for people to be tourists in their own country).
- 1991 The 'Historic Route' was opened to visitors again in late August 1991 and special travel permit was no longer needed. /The first group tour took place in January 1992?/  
[Eth. Herald]
- 1992 Late in 1992 a Danish traveller Hjalte Tin with wife and teenage son and daughter visited Lalibela, driving on motorcycles on the 'Chinese Highway' from Weldiya.  
"Nina and I rise early and walk through the town, down past the distribution point for emergency aid and the dilapidated sheet iron shed of Ethiopian Airlines, past the old generator building and the new cable drums with high tension lines being constructed through the town."  
Abba Berhane Meskel was (-1992-) the highest church dignitary.  
At that time a new hotel was half completed, located near the place for Timket celebrations (see Hotel Roha Lalibela below?).
- 1993 Population 7,591 in 1993.
- 1995 "Access to Lalibela is impossible during the rainy season. The road closes after the first rains (generally in late June) and, depending on when the rains stop, it only re-opens in late September or early October. When the road is open, there's an early morning bus in either direction between Weldiya and Lalibela. There are sometimes private vehicles which will take paid lifts.  
Most tourists fly to Lalibela. Flights between Addis and Lalibela via Gonder go at least four times a week in each direction. Depending on demand, there may also be flights between Lalibela and Aksum."  
[Bradt 1995(1998) p 332]
- 1997 Resident Engineer of the National Consultants firm stayed at the Lalibela Airport Passengers Terminal project from 1997.  
The first telephone connection was established in late 1997/?/, and round-the-clock supply of electricity a little later.
- 1998 The airport had an unpaved runway, length about 1500 m. There were domestic EAL flights between Lalibela and Aksum.
- 1999 In 1999 an international competition approved by UIA, International Union of Architects, was held and named "Shelters for five churches in Lalibela".  
First prize was won by Teprin Associati of Italy.  
Ethiopian authorities paid \$ 25,000 to a Belgian art collector for the return to Ethiopia of a famous large gold-plated cross which had been stolen from Lalibela in 1997 and sold abroad. /This cross has often been shown as an illustration in publications./  
[Reuters 2000-03-26]  
Espen Solheim wrote in February 2002 from a tourist visit: "We were shown a 7-kilo pure gold cross that was stolen -- but which reappeared. -- No guards or security - the priests just brought it out for us to photograph."  
*From tourist guide Lonely Planet 2000:*  
"Until recently, there was no electricity; there are still no petrol stations, no pharmacies

and no banks. In 1998, the tiny tourist office unceremoniously opened."

"Right up until 1997, the main road leading to the town was impassable during the wet season. -- the sense of arrival at the little town is rather like that after making a great pilgrimage."

"Many travellers are shocked by the rather unflattering corrugated-iron roofs -- During the 1990s, seepage had become a major problem and the only way of protecting the churches from further damage was with the construction of temporary shelters. An EU-funded competition to design more sympathetic shelters is being launched."

2000

"Tickets /to visit the churches/ are bought from the Church Authority office. They cost Birr 100 and give access to all churches inside town."

"Close to the Tomb of Christ is a moveable slab of stone, said to cover the most secret place in the holy city, the tomb of King Lalibela himself."

Near the Bet Abba Libanos church is the so-called monastery-village of Lalibela, where 12 monks and 6 nuns continue to live in tiny caves.

Lalibela, including its hotels, still suffers from water shortages. Of the cheap hotels "the least awful are the St George Hotel -- and the Fkreselam Hotel -- The Asheton Hotel has character, is clean and quite well run -- a brand-new place is the -- Jerusalem Guest House -- The government-run Seven Olives Hotel has over-priced singles/doubles -- Offering much the best value in the top-end category is the Hotel Roha Lalibela, around 2 km out of town -- The private Lal Hotel -- though reasonably comfortable, the rooms are wildly overpriced."

There are daily flights from Lalibela via Bahir Dar to Addis Abeba and Gondar. There are two motorable routes from Weldiya, one via Dilb (120 km) and another via Gashema (170 km). The old road remains quicker, but it is not always passable in the wet season. Buses from Lalibela leave when there is enough demand. Two new roads to connect Lalibela are scheduled to be completed by 2003. A new sealed road is being built to the airport, 13 km from town.

[Lonely planet 2000 p 202-210]

"The only problem is that the several hour tour of the 11 churches turns into a gruelling overload - too much to take in too fast. You leave with an undervalued impression of the churches - your initial sense of awe is smothered by exhaustion. Better to take them in over 2 or 3 days, with side trips to other churches in the vicinity. Even dividing them up between the afternoon of one day and the morning of the next helps your absorptive capacity."

[John Graham in AddisTribune 2000/04/07]

"According to legend, the churches were built in 23 years. -- One of them was hewed in 24 hours. Angels helped. One of our group on a tour thought our guide said 'Lalibela and the NGOs built it in 24 hours'."

[Graham]

2001

Population about 10,400 in 2001.

In 2001, the chief priest of Bet Giyorgis was Wodjanew Aseffa, age 46. Secretary to the bishop was Besfat Ayalew, 35. Gebez Melese-Demese, age 40, was a high-ranking priest. In a hole in the wall next to Medhane Alem lived the hermit Aba Wolde Maryam, 74 in year 2001. He had been there since 1974 and came from a village some 100 km west of Lalibela. The hole next to Wolde Maryam's became empty in 1998 when the hermit there died. Some distance away another hermit was still living.

[New York Times, Aug 2001]

2002

"The Lalibela Post Office was something special. I found a small stone/mud house with a single room, one door, one window, one desk, one cupboard, one friendly female Postmaster and lots of spectators or customers. After introducing myself /as a philatelist/ I was allowed to stand next to her behind her desk and postmark all my letters. They used a rectangular rubber stamp without date, which I have not seen before."

[Espen Solheim, February 2002]

texts

(arranged chronologically by time of publication)

M.G. Rohlfs, Die christlichen Wunderbauten zu Lalibela in Abyssinien, *in* Globus 14, 1868;

A. Raffray (vice Consul de France), L'église monolithe de la ville de Lalibela, ... avec un résumé de l'histoire des Zagues et la description des églises monolithes de Lalibala, Paris 1882;

also *in* Bulletin de la Société de Géographie, 2 trimestre 1882;

G. Simon, L'Éthiopie, ses moeurs, ses religions, ses traditions, les églises monolithes de Lalibela, Paris 1885 p 296-332, appendix with 14 plates of measured drawings of the churches;

J. Perruchon, Vie de Lalibela, roi d'Éthiopie .., Paris 1892 (Publications de l'École des Lettres d'Alger - Bulletin de correspondance africaine vol. X);

H.V. Harlan, Caravan journey through Abyssinia: from Addis Ababa through Lalibela ... in search of new grains for American farms, *in* National Geographic Magazine vol 47, 1925;

Rosita Forbes, From Red Sea to Blue Nile .., London 1925, also as Rosita Mc Grath, Lalibela, *in* The Geographic Journal (London) vol LXVI 1925;

H. Dabbert, Die monolithenen Kirchen Lalibelas in Äthiopien, Berlin 1938, the author partly measured the churches in 1926;

A.A. Monti della Corte, Lalibelà - le chiese ipogee e monolitiche e gli altri monumenti medievali del Lasta, Roma 1940 p 1-83, 121-153 with 23 plans, sections and other drawings of churches in Lalibela (also other churches in the book) and plates I-XXV with 52 photos of churches mainly by Elio Zacchie and 4 drawings by Lino Bianchi Barriviera;

T.A. Lambie, A doctor without a country, New York c. 1940;

L. Bianchi Barriviera, Le chiese monolitiche di Lalibelà - 16 acuaforti originali (20 sheets 70x65 cm), 1943;

L. Findlay, The monolithic churches of Lalibela in Ethiopia, *in* Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte (Cairo) vol 9 and/or 10, 1943, in book form Cairo 1944;

Bianchi Barriviera/Monti della Corte/Zacchia as published in other forms: Le chiese monolitiche di Lalibelà, 64 sheets 70x65 cm, Roma 1948;

L. Bianchi Barriviera, Le chiese monolitiche di Lalibelà e altre nel Lasta-Uagh .., 60 stampe originali all'acquaforte, Roma 1957;

I. Bidder, Lalibela the monolithic churches of Ethiopia, Cologne 1958, Köln 1959, US edition New York 1960, p 31-35 text, p 45-84 ten colour photos and forty-eight black/white of churches and their decorations, appendix p 107-125 text illustrated with ten plans and drawings from Monti della Corte and individual descriptions of churches with an attempt to analyze their artistic symbols and culture;

Beckingham & Huntingford, The Prester John .. vol I 1958 p 205-228 chapters LIV-LV of Francisco Alvares in 1520s with drawings from several sources; vol II 1958 p 526-542 summary of and comments on church descriptions in other books; Monti della Corte's is criticized as "little better than that of Alvares";

S. Pankhurst, The monolithic churches of Lalibela, one of the wonders of the world, *in* Ethiopia Observer, April 1958 p 21-26 & 1960 no 7 p 214-224;

D.C. Bliss, Lalibela opened to motorised traffic, *in* Eth. Observer 1960 no 7 p 229;

R. Pankhurst, Short bibliography on Lalibela, *in* Ethiopia Observer 1960 no 7 p 229;

Beckingham & Huntingford, The Prester John, vol I 1961 p 205-228, contents of chapters LIV-LV of Alvares in the 1520s with ill. from other sources;

L. Bianchi Barriviera, Le chiese in roccia di Lalibela e di altri luoghi de Lasta, *in* Rassegna di Studi Etiopici vol 18-19, 1962-1963, Roma 1963, also *in* Rivista Fede e arte no 4, 1962;

O.A. Jäger, Antiquities of North Ethiopia - a guide, Stuttgart 1965 p 103-115;

S. Angelini, *Le chiese monolitiche di Lalibela ..*, in *Sestante*,  
 Asmara 1966 p 107-115 illustr.; from preliminary study Nov 1966-Feb 1967  
 for the coming restoration;  
 Lalibela - Phase I, (International Fund for Monuments) New York 1967;  
 R. Pankhurst, *The Ethiopian royal chronicles*, Oxford Univ. Press 1967, p 8-12,  
 with extracts from a chronicle;  
 Ivy Pearce, in *Ethiopia Observer* vol XII 1969 no 3 p 141-146  
 with four photos of Lalibela churches;  
 K. Hildemann & M. Fitzenreiter, *Äthiopien* (Verlag Därr, Deutschland) 1999  
 p 320-323, 327-337, 341 with three plans.

picts

(pictures of churches are detailed under each of them further below)  
 G Simon, *L'Éthiopie ..*, Paris 1885, 14 plates of churches and details, of which  
 six are reproduced in *Ethiopia engraved* 1988 p 34-35;  
 F Wencher-Wildberg, *Abessinien*, Berlin 1935 pl 43 Abba Libanos;  
*Gli annali ..*, anno III vol I /Roma 1940/ p 964-965 [4] six photos at churches;  
*Gli annali ..*, anno IV vol 4, Roma 1941 p 1186-1187 [pl 5, 6, 8, 11-13, 15-16]  
 eleven etchings by artist Lino Bianchi Barriviera;  
 D Buxton, *Travels ..* 1949(1957) pl 8-9 churches, pl 12 ploughman near houses;  
 B Playne, *Saint George ..*, London 1954, all illustr. are drawings by her;  
 J Doresse, *Ethiopia* (1956) London 1959 p 77-79;  
 J Doresse, *L'Empire ..* vol II, Paris 1957 p 63 plan of whole church area,  
 p 50-51, 66, 68 five pictures of churches;  
*Aethiopien*, München (Terra magica) 1958(1963) pl 28 many people at  
 village open place, pl 29-31 exteriors of churches;  
 Beckingham & Huntingford, *The Prester John ..* vol I, Cambridge 1961 for 1958,  
 p 206-220, p 224-225 old drawings of different ages;  
 I Bidder 1958 pictures 5-44 practically only of churches and their details;  
 T Pakenham, *The mountains ..*, London 1959 p 145;  
 O A Jäger, *Antiquities ..*, Stuttgart 1965 p 104-105 five photos;  
*National Geog. Mag.* vol 127 April 1965 p 562  
 detailed air view of main area;  
*Merian Monatsheft: Äthiopien*, Hamburg Okt 1966 p 50-55, 122;  
 B Davidson, *Africa ..*, London (1966)1972 p 140 Giyorgis;  
 G Gerster, *Kirchen im Fels*, Stuttgart 1968, p 85-93 drawings from previous publ.,  
 plates 15, 55-99 large photos of all the churches, some in colour;  
*L'Éthiopie*, Zurich 1968 p 39 market and housing area;  
 C Monty, *Éthiopie ..*, Paris 1968 p 40 crowd in the village,  
 66 processional cross, 94-97 various views;  
 G Gerster, *Kirchen im Fels*, Stuttgart 1968 p 85-93, pl 15, 55-99;  
 A Forsberg, *I Etiopien*, Sthlm 1969 p 90-91;  
*Ethiopia*, Nairobi (for Eth. Govt.) 1969 p 133 Seven Olives Hotel, in colour,  
 p 134 two-storey house and priest;  
 D Buxton, *The Abyssinians*, London 1970 pl 121 ornamental cross;  
*National Geog. Mag.* vol 138 Dec 1970, p 870-872 outside churches, 873 air view;  
 H Helfritz, *Äthiopien ..*, Köln 1972, p 22[10] Amanuel, p 121-124 [pl 51-52] old  
 olive tree, [53] two-storey house, [54] Abba Libanos, [55-57] rock trenches and  
 similar, p 125-126[58-61], 128[63], 148-152[67-74], 169-170[75-77], 179-180[78-79]  
 churches and their details, p 218,220,225,228 plans reprod. from Monti della Corte  
 Etiopien - dess kristna kultur, Sthlm (EFS) 1974 pl 10A-15 nine photos;  
 G Gerster, *Äthiopien*, Zürich (1974)1976 pl 160 view of housing (with many sheet  
 iron roofs) around Amanuel, 165-166 people and atmosphere, 167-177 about  
 twenty church windows, 179-180,182 interiors, 181,183-185 exteriors,  
 pages 224-225 a few drawings from Monti della Corte;  
 G Hancock et al, *Under Ethiopian skies*, London 1983(1987) p 60-73

twelve colour pictures of various views, p 73 mountains to the north and dwelling huts near a church complex;  
 National Geographic vol 163 May 1983 p 640 air view of Giyorgis and village;  
 UNDRO news July/Aug 1985 p 23 children at World Vision's Health & Nutrition Ctr;  
 J Wenzel, Im Land der dreizehn ..., Rudolstadt 1985 pl 24-26 some details,  
 pl 51 two-storey houses in village;  
 G Hancock, The sign and .., New York 1992 p 120, pl 28-29;  
 Bradt guide 1995 p 242-243[3] Abba Libanos;  
 Camerapix guide 1995 p 53 priest, 112 Timket, 113 frescoes, 115 Abba Libanos;  
 S Gish, Ethiopia, New York 1996(1999) p 57 outdoor weddig meal;  
 Bradt guide 1998 p 50-51 Giyorgis, 274-275[4] two-storey house;  
 K Nomachoi, Bless Ethiopia, Tokyo 1998 (English ed. Hong Kong) p 26-69 large colour photos of pilgrims and churches, 78-79 wide view of village and people;  
 T Pakenham, The mountains of Rasselas, London 1998 (luxury ed.) p 149 landscape, 155 pilgrims, 164 ploughing, 146, 154, 156-159 seven photos of churches, also an old drawing from MS in the British Museum of how a church is being hewn with an adze;  
 Sten (magazine, Sthlm) 1998 no 1 p 35-37 Giyorgis, Adam's tomb, MS painting;  
 M Aubert, Ethiopia, Local Colour /guide/, Hong Kong 1999 p 176 girl selling religious pictures, 181 hermit.

**Lalibela : Adam's tomb** (Yeadam mek'abir, Yäadam mäqaber)

"/Before reaching Golgata-Mikael/ one passes a cubical block hewn from the original rock -- A low breach at the bottom of the stone, from both directions, makes the block stand on four short legs."

[Jäger p 109]

The simple but impressive Tomb of Adam is a huge square block of stone, which stands in a deep trench in front of the western face of Bet Golgota. The ground floor of this hollowed-out block serves as the western entrance to the first group of churches, and the upper floor houses a hermit's cell. A cross is the only decoration.

[Camerapix p 116]

Irmgard Bidder suggests that it has been a sacrificial altar in pagan time/?/ and that the symbol cut into its side is a Saturn symbol.

"Christian tradition placed the tombstone of Adam, the first man and author of Original sin, on the hill of Calvary in the hope of Redemption following the death of Christ."

[Aubert 1999 p 178]

picts Monti della Corte 1940 pl XII at p 57 tomb with Golgota behind, p 58 section;  
 Bidder 1958 pict 20 tomb and Golgota, 21 "Saturn symbol" of tomb;  
 Gerster 1968 p 99 plan reprod. from Monti della Corte;  
 Sten (magazine) 1998 no 1

**Lalibela : Adefa**

The capital of the Zagwé kings was at Adefa, at the present site of the town of Lalibela.

**Lalibela : Adriyot** (Adreyot, Auariät, Petros-Pawlos)

The name *Adriöt* used in Guida dell'A.O.I. is a corruption of Hawariat = Apostles?

A small abandoned chapel, recorded e.g. by Dabbert in 1926, but it did not seem to be generally known by the inhabitants of Lalibela in the 1960s.

This excavated room of the Chapel of the Apostles is at 5-10 m to the west from Golgota, and it was abandoned for fear that rocks might fall down.

**Lalibela : Asheten Maryam** (Asceten Mariam)

At the peak of Ashet (Ascet) from which it takes its name.

The monastery is believed to have been started during King Lalibela's reign, but finished under King Na'akuto La'ab.

"We reached it by way of a crevice in the cliff which - I was surprised to hear - had been

hewn by the hand of man in very recent times. This work had been inspired by a monk, Abba Gebra Sellasie, before the Italian régime. He had also excavated, with the help of the local villagers, a completely new chamber adjoining the church - the only instance I know of such work having been attempted in modern times. He was certainly a remarkable man, but, alas! too good a patriot to come through the fascist régime alive. A kind of annexe to the church occupied an ancient, unfinished excavation in the face of the cliff below; it was used by the priests as living quarters and for the storage of church property."

[D Buxton, Travels .. (1949)1957 p 167-168]

"This rock-hewn church is only about an hour's walk from Lalibela, but the way is very steep -- we could see a strange, white-looking façade in the rock wall towering beyond us. It had many windows and appeared to be more like a house than a church; which, indeed, it was. According to tradition, this building was made by King Lalibela who had originally intended to excavate his churches there -- It now houses the priests and their poor relations, whom no one can dislodge. Even at a distance, we could see them moving about on the flat roof. It gave the impression of having been fitted into a hole in the cliff face, but the hole might well have been cut especially for it."

"-- we now entered a narrow defile cut in the living rock and leading steeply upwards. It took us into quite a large, open space where the church, entirely freed from the rock, stood before us. It is quite small and of a whitish-grey colour which, in itself, is not nearly as attractive as the glowing pink of the Lalibela tuff. At one time it would appear to have had an open arcade of square-cut pillars -- but the spaces between the pillars have now been filled in, leaving only small arched windows. This may have been done to give extra support to the roof which had cracked badly and which already had an extra covering of thatch, now in a ruinous state, designed to protect it. Before entering the main church, one passes through an ambulatory with a stone seat cut from its walls and many crosses cut in its roof. In the darkness of the interior I got the impression that the church itself was far more clumsy than those of the Lalibela group and that it was, probably, a later imitation."

"Under its sanctuary, the priest told us, a passage had been tunnelled as far as the church of Naacateleb. We had already noticed the entrance to several other tunnels. Once the Ethiopians started excavating, there seemed to be no end to it. I asked to see the pictures, but found nothing very interesting --"

"It was upsetting to find a number of cheap, crudely coloured reproductions of religious pictures stuck on to the outer walls of the church. I wish Africa might have been preserved from this Western vulgarity -- I presumed that these prints had been presented by the Italians during the Occupation, yet it seemed a curious form of compensation for the murder of the chief priest and of eight others, whose only crime had been the sheltering of their Emperor /in April 1936/. -- Abba Gebra Selassie had caused a large priests' room to be hewn out of the rock-wall near the church. It was beautifully done. In one of the smaller rooms leading from it a huge bell hung -- Looking down from its tiny window was like looking down from a castle turret and there was a fascinating view of Lalibela, lying far below."

"We were entertained in the priests' house and were then pressed to go back by another way so as to call at the Shuum's home in the plain. -- Walking slowly back -- I was attracted to what was, obviously, a very ancient grove of trees and found there two stumpy Axumite pillars as used in the ancient thrones. It was still regarded as a 'sacred' spot and gave one that strange sense of continuity which seems to hang about places that have long been revered by man."

[Playne 1954 p 141-143]

Visit in 1999: "As soon as a highly visible foreigner such as me sets off, he will be surrounded by prospective guides. This was particularly true because all the flights to Lalibela had been cancelled due to the war /with Eritrea, flights resumed again/ and there were no tourists."

"-- my chosen guide, Misrak, pointed out the peak -- In the first climb, I was breathing so hard with my mouth hanging open that I swallowed three flies. -- The church is worth the

walk. Abba Mersha at the top explained that the rock-hewn church was started by King Lalibela's brother and finished by Lalibela. -- the sense of discovery of a unique place, and the hospitality of the startled priest, monks and nuns (given the scarcity of ferengis) made it more than worthwhile."

[John Graham in AddisTribune 1999/11/05]

The 1½-hour climb to reach the church is quite steep; many travellers take mules, though they'll still need to walk on the rockiest parts.

[Lonely planet 2000 p 208]

text Monti della Corte, Lalibela, Roma 1940 p 97-100 with plan, and two photos on plate XXIV.

picts Etiopien - dess kristna kultur, Sthlm (EFS) 1974 plates 10B, 11A photos.

**Lalibela : Betlehem** (Bet Lehem)

Not generally included among churches but listed as such by Roger Sauter. Chapel-like and used as a sacristy for baking the holy bread. From Abba Libanos a 50 m tunnel leads to Betlehem.

**Lalibela : church Abba Libanos** (Aba Libanos Bet Kristiyan)

Plan 9.5 x 8.4 m (or x 7 m?), height 6.75 m.

In a cliff-face at a lower level, attached to the rock both top and bottom but with a cave excavated around it. A part in the north-west corner, which in a traditional church would normally have contained stairs, has been left as an unexcavated block.

"-- is the first one visible on entering Lalibela by the usual route from Waldia. For about an hour before arrival one can see this patch of pinkish-red colour looking, to the uninitiated, like a block of sandstone, but which is, in fact, the exposed surface of that volcanic tuff on which Lalibela is built."

"The southern façade of this small church stands almost flush with the cliff face from which it has been cut. The great cave which has been scooped out round the church to free its remaining three walls, reaches to the height of its roof, but does not actually separate it from the top of the cliff. The result of this joining of roof and cliff is to give the church the effect of having been wedged into a cave, instead of having had the cave excavated round it -- As in good sculpture, the churches give the impression of having been freed from the surrounding mass. It is as if the work of man has only revealed what was already there."

"The walls themselves are carefully finished with pilasters and windows; pointed, Saracenic-looking ones in the middle and square ones above and below."

[Playne p 16, 30]

Queen Maskal-Kebra, wife of Lalibela, was sovereign of an estate which included the great monastery of Abba Libanos at Ham, in Bihat in Tigray. This monastery was in some opposition to Debre Libanos in Shewa.

[J Dorese (1956)1959 p 95]

"On remarque à l'intérieur une peinture murale assez originale, dont la couleur rouge-brique commence à disparaître : c'est le portrait du Négouss Lalibéla ayant à sa droite et à sa gauche Maskal-Kébra, sa femme, et Abba-Libanos (ceux de Maskal-Kébra et de Abba-Libanos étaient presque entièrement effacés). Depuis, les Abyssins en ont arrêté les traits et les contours avec du charbon."

[Simon 1885 p 316]

It is said that Abba Libanos was constructed to his memory by his wife Kebra Mesqel.

"The columns of the interior support the stone representation of lintel beams -- there are only two arches -- This church appears to represent a type in some respects earlier than that of the majority of Lalibela monoliths - a type intermediate between that of Debra Damo and Imrahanna Kristos."

[Sylvia Pankhurst, A cultural history ..., p 154, 161-162]

"A peculiarity of this church is a little 'light' inside the dark part of the upper church, and it is said by the priest to shine day and night from the wall of the altar."

[Jäger p 109]

Any supposition that masons entered through windows for interior excavation is contradicted by the fact that the upper row of rectangular window-like shapes are in reality blind niches and not holes.

[B Lindahl]

A tunnel 50 m long leads from the right aisle of this church to the chapel of Betlehem.

[Bradt 1995(1998)]

picts

Wencker-Wildberg 1935 pl 43

Buxton no 137

Bortom bergen vol II 1954 p 208-209

Playne 1954 p 16 drawing

Doesse (1956)1959 p 77

Bidder 1958 pict 16

Neubacher 1959 at p 135 pl 13

Pakenham 1959 p 145

Jäger 1965 p 104-105

Merian Monatsheft 1966 p 54

Gerster 1968 p 104 plan & sections from Monti della Corte,  
pl 89 exterior from above, pl 90 close-up of exterior

Helfritz 1972 p 123 pl 54

Etiopien - dess kristna .. 1974 pl 11

Wenzel 1985 pl 49 close-up of front

Hancock et al (1983)1987 p 68 rock and stairs very visible

Bradt guide 1995 p 242-243 pl 3

Camerapix guide 1995 p 115

Pakenham 1998 p 146

### **Lalibela : church Amanuel** (Bét Ammanuéł, Emanuel)

Plan 18.5 x 12.5 m, height 12 m.

The exterior wall surfaces have plain horizontal bands imitating Aksumite stone-and timber construction, but the timber cross pieces ("monkey-heads") copied faithfully in the stelae of Aksum are nowhere seen in Lalibela. Amanuel is the most exact of the churches in its horizontal and vertical lines.

Some small holes or caves in the courtyard walls are supposed to be for "holy bees" in honour of King Lalibela's name.

Alvares mentions particularly large chests inside in the 1520s ("larger than the door openings") and there were still seen chests in the 1930s.

"Rises from its deep narrow court, as from a pit. The outside in this case is most elaborate, with horizontal courses alternately recessed and projecting which represent the stone and timber layers of Debra Damo, and indentations of the same tradition. Inside one finds a nave and two aisles (the latter with lofts above) and an impressive stone version of the Debra Damo frieze. A dome surmounts the sanctuary, which is approached through an arch, and there are also longitudinal arches in the nave and transverse ones across the aisles."

"Some of the windows at Amanuel follow the old Aksum style. Others have round arches supported by brackets like those of Medhane Alem. -- /There are/ three rows of windows, the lower row square, the middle row arched, the top row again square."

"A beautifully carved frieze is carried round the east and west ends with windows above looking into the lofts to north and south. -- Amanuel has a spiral staircase leading to an upper storey, where Alvarez found a room he considered should be the choir, but which was used for housing the vestments and from which opened a number of small cells."

[Sylvia Pankhurst, A cultural history ..., p 159-160]

"Entrances and windows are irregularly placed in the wall, but all of them imitate Axumite style."

[Jäger 1965]

"-- elaborately carved in imitation of built-up churches -- Inside we find a lofty nave,

separated by ranges of high round arches from the aisles on either side. And above these arches, where the triforium of a Gothic church would be, we see a stone replica of the old wooden frieze of Debra Damo. At the eastern end of the nave an arch, closed by a large, heavy cloth, leads to the sanctuary."

"At the south-west corner of this interior we find a trap-door leading to a subterranean passage, hewn in the rock. -- we creep gingerly along, feeling our way, in absolute darkness. It seems a long way to go, though not really more than twenty yards. At last a grey glimmer appears ahead; we climb up an incline out into the open air, wondering where we have got to. It turns out to be the threshold of the church of St. Mercurius."

[Buxton 1957 p 165]

Before a temporary protective roof of corrugated sheets was laid in mid-1956 there were signs of weathering and some damage caused by plants taking root in the cracks. Plenty of plants are shown in an engraving made in 1939.

During restoration work around 1967 the tar-based red paint of Amanuel and Medhane Alem was tapped away in small flakes during the cooler hours of the day. Fifty small picks were flown in from Italy for this work.

(Anecdote from a visit by Bernhard Lindahl visit in 1959: Having left the camera on the ground for a moment without the lens cap on, the sun burnt a hole in its curtain shutter. After that a "good picture of the Holy Ghost" was taken at Bet Amanuel with a nun lying and praying on the stairs below and the Ghost shining as a bright light above. The sun penetrated the shutter even when it was closed.)

Remark by Graham in year 2000: The walls have been disfigured by nails and other misguided restoration attempts.

picts

Simon 1885 pl XIII interior lateral wall

Buxton 1949(1957) p 144-145 pl 8 interior

S Pankhurst 1955 between p 154-155, SW exterior, p 159 plan

Doresse vol II 1957 p 68 drawing

Bidder 1958 pict 5 wide view of surroundings, 6 interior, 7a+b roof without and with sheets, 8 upper part of interior

Jäger 1965 p 104-105 sheet roof visible

Gerster 1968 pl 77 large metal cross, page 103 small reproductions of five drawings from Monti della Corte, pl 86 wall of courtyard, with opening for passage, pl 87 southern entrance, pl 88 southern exterior from above

Buxton 1970 pl 58 south side, pl 63 east end of nave

National Geographic 1970 p 870-871 two pictures outside

Helfritz 1972 pl 10 entrance, pl 73 interior

Etiopien - dess kristna .. 1974 pl 14 two exteriors

Gerster (1974)1976 pict 164 main entrance side, with scaffolding of wood and many people

### **Lalibela : church Dingil (Bét Dengel, Biet Danagel)**

Located in the southern wall of the courtyard of Maryam, plan 8.6 x 3.6 m.

A great part of it is a cave structure, but the outer room measures 5 x 5 m.

Divided by an arch into two unequal parts. The arches are of the same kind as in Maryam. "Jutting out at the south of the Bet Maryam courtyard is the little chapel of Bet Danaghel, which is connected with one of the most fascinating legends of Lalibela. Priests will tell you that the chapel was constructed in honour of maidens martyred under Julian the Apostate, who ruled Rome in the mid-fourth century, the time when Christianity was first brought to Axum. It is said that fifty young maidens, nuns, and novices, who lived a pious life under the supervision of their abbess Sofia in Edessa /former Syria, present-day Turkey/, were ordered to be killed by Julian when he passed through the town and learned of the nunnery. The abbess and her young maidens were beheaded."

[Camerapix 1995 p 115]

Thus the word *dingil* or *dengel* in this particular name does not refer to Virgin Mary.

The ceiling of one room is decorated in bas-relief and represents the keystone of the Arch of Alliance.

[Aubert 1999 p 177]

pict Bidder 1958 pict 28 old wooden door

### **Lalibela : church Gabriel (Gebriel)**

(also Yägäbreélna Yärufaél Bétkristiyan with Gabriel+Rufael as a unit)

Roof measures 26.2 x 12.4 m, height of the main pillar 16 m.

To enter the church one must cross a bridge of logs, pass through a tunnel and then cross a second, longer bridge with a deep drop on the sides to reach the threshold (a light improved bridge with railings was supplied by the Building College). One can enter the courtyard below through a narrow passage-way cut through the rock but can then get no further and not reach up to the church entrance.

"Gabriel is perhaps the most dramatic conception of all. -- The effect of great height was increased by the perpendicular lines of the pilasters which were carved on its surface and which ended in ogee-shaped arches giving the impression of an arcade. -- But the strangest part was the entrance, as this had four steps hewn from the rock and then nothing - but a drop of at least twenty feet to the courtyard below."

"It is hard to believe that this most curious excavation was ever intended as church. It is more like a fortified dwelling and has an un-real effect."

"Gabriel is very rough-hewn inside and as it has such an elaborate, Eastern exterior, it gives me the impression of being unfinished. The pillars are so thick that the remaining space is very small."

[Playne 1954 p 31, 48]

From the north a path leads from the outer trench to a narrow chiselled-out ridge of rock called the 'path to heaven'. This in turn leads up steeply to the roof of the church, although there is no entrance from this point.

[Camerapix 1995 p 117]

"You enter the church over a narrow bridge. A recently added safety feature around the cliffsides and bridge of the church is fences, with appropriate little Axumite motifs."

"The distinction between Gabriel and Ruphael churches is largely an artificial one - they are one structure. -- The painting in the church is of St. Gabriel saving three women, who are sitting in fire praying. The three women - Azaria, Ananya, and Misael were being martyred for their Christian faith, but were saved by Gabriel."

[Graham in AddisTribune 2000/04/21]

In the subterranean cisterns at the bottom there are pillars with capitals and remains of soot from fire, so this space may not have been used only for water. The volume had still by the 1960s not been fully investigated.

[G Gerster]

picts Monti della Corte at p 21 back side and landscape

Buxton no 136

Playne 1954 p 32 drawing

Bidder 1958 pict 17 people on platform,

18a+b old log bridge, steep part, opening to cistern,

19a view from "Path to Heaven", 19b backside

(originally intended as entrance?), page 113 author's

drawing of whole front including the "Path to Heaven"

Pakenham 1959 p 122 primitive footbridge

Jäger 1965 p 104-105

Gerster 1968 pl 78 large metal cross, pl 91-92 exteriors  
with cut rock surfaces very clearly shown

Helfritz 1972 p 128 pl 63

Gerster (1974)1976 pl 162-163 footbridge and many people

Hancock et al (1983)1987 eroded backside wall

### **Lalibela : church Giyorgis**

The cruciform church itself, without the base (plinth), measures 11.7 x 11 x 11 m and is thus practically a cube in extent. The lengths of the courtyard walls are north 22 m, east 19 m, south 23 m, west 23 m.

Francisco Alvares visiting a little after 1520 says that there were many tombs in the courtyard walls. On ground level there were wild olive trees - the one still standing? He also mentions a rock bench all around the courtyard - did it ever exist?

The courtyard contains a cistern or baptistry.

This church has kept well through the centuries, possibly because of having been hewn into good rock. There are monolithic protruding gargoyles to "throw out" rain water from the roof. The church gives on the whole a clean appearance but a little vegetation on the roof is visible in some photos.

There is a similarity of cross shape between this church and some *manbar* liturgical pieces, and this seems to be limited to the Zagwe culture.

"At a distance from all the other churches (and quite unlike any of them) is Ghiorghis or St. George. It is cruciform in plan from plinth to roof and stands in the centre of a deep well-like court approached by passages and tunnels excavated in the rock. It was traditionally the last to be built of the Lalibela churches, a supposition borne out by its ogee arches, a feature found in only a few rock-churches which seem, on other evidence, to be later."

[Buxton p 195]

"It is separated from the ground on which you are standing only by the deep pit or courtyard which has been excavated round it -- Naturally, the immense labour required to hew out the rock itself and to remove the debris afterwards did not encourage the medieval masons to make their courts very wide and indeed, with a few exceptions, they are so narrow that it is difficult to get far enough away from the churches to be able to admire them properly. -- Being so closely confined within the rock can give a sense of almost imprisonment when one is standing below in the court."

"To reach the courtyard, you must climb down a slope, partly natural and partly artificial, in which steps have been hewn. Looking at it from below, the church seems to rise up as from a dark pit, aloof, mysterious and somewhat austere. It looks more like a tower than a church. That its floor stands on a surrounding platform or plinth, approached by a flight of steps carved from the self-same block of living rock, greatly adds to the dramatic effect of the whole. Like all the Lalibela churches, it is pinkish red colour, splashed with yellow lichen."

There is another entrance to the courtyard by way of a tunnel cut through the cliff from below.

[Playne p 15]

"Dans la galerie à ciel ouvert il existe, dans la paroi de gauche, six trous circulaires que l'on appelle *Escalier de Lalibéla*. La tradition affirme que le Négouss Lalibéla descendait cet escalier à cheval, tour de force prodigieux qu'aucun cavalier n'a depuis jamais pu exécuter."

"Dans un angle de la cour, au nord-est, se trouve une petite construction, également monolithe, ayant come dimensions 2 mètres sur 2,50; elle sert de logement au prêtre."

"/Ornements de fenêtre/ se terminent au sommet par un fleuron que nous commencerons à apercevoir en France à la fin du onzième siècle; par une anomalie assez curieuse, on voit réunis dans le fleuron la croix grecques et le croissant musulman." /Comment: the moon shape is derived from pre-Christian Axumite symbols?/

[G Simon, Paris 1885 p 303, 304, 306]

"-- cruciform in shape and loftier than the others -- On its flat roof, which can be examined from the mountain above its deep courtyard, are carved two concentric /Greek/ crosses."

"The eastern branch -- is occupied by the domed sanctuary. The main door is in the western branch of the cross and the two subsidiary doors are also situated toward the west, so that the three doors are all visible from the western side of the church."

"In the interior there are no disengaged columns; two rectangular engaged piers, rising

direct from the stone floor without bases, bear the four arches to each of the four branches --"

"The capitals were simplified often to resemble a mere band -- The same desire to produce an appearance of loftiness resulted in the use of similar expedients in /this little church/, erected long before any contact with western Gothic reached Ethiopia. The bracket capitals of the undecorated engaged piers, massive in proportion to the scale of the church itself, are reduced to a mere narrow fillet with a slender moulding beneath."

"The three-tiered plinth on which Bieta Ghiorghis stands is lofty and elaborately contrived. The lowest tier rises to the height of a tall man's shoulders; the other tiers or steps are shallow. A flight of eight steps leads to the main door, the topmost step exceedingly broad. From the subsidiary doors it is necessary to walk round to the main door along one of the upper shallow tiers of the plinth in order to reach the flight of steps leading from the main door to the ground."

"The main door has a shallow porch ornamented by simple mouldings. Within this porch is a door of the traditional type with square-ended binders derived from Aksum. Within this second doorway is a smaller, quite simple door reached by a step higher. The subsidiary doors resemble the main door without the porch."

"The lower window frames resemble those of the doors, being of the old traditional style. The upper windows have ogee arches and bracket capitals. They are more ornate than any others found at Lalibela; sometimes they are comprised of three concentric ogee arches; sometimes a loosely coiled trefoil spiral substitutes the capital and a couple of trefoil leaves, interlaced with a cross, top the arch."

"A string-course placed slightly above the porch of the main door is carried round the entire church. Two others occur above and beneath the upper windows and one in the wall-space slightly above midway between the upper course and the roof. A fifth course is formed by a plain flat band which serves as a cornice edging the roof. There are similar courses on the walls of the interior of the church."

[Sylvia Pankhurst, A cultural history ..., p 162-164]

The external "flowering" ornamentation of the upper part of windows has its Byzantine equivalent on paintings of the "Fountain of Life", a small round temple possibly inspired from some pre-Christian *tempietto*. A painting in an Ethiopian manuscript dating from about 1400 A.D. shows in principle all of the same ornamental details as over the Giyorgis window, but filling the whole roof of the little temple in the painting.

[B Lindahl]

"The dome is not in the centre of the church, as might be expected, but in the eastern arm of the cross. -- Small round caves in which repose skeletons and which might formerly have served as hermitages, and later as tombs of the deceased monks, are chiselled out of the walls of the courtyard." /Bones in some places in Lalibela were removed and re-buried during Angelini's restoration around 1967 - they were lying openly and tempting for visiting foreign children to pick as souvenirs./

[Jäger p 115]

"Legend says that when King Lalibela had almost completed his churches, he was severely reproached by Saint George - who in full armour rode up to him on his white horse - for not having constructed a house for him. Lalibela thereupon promised the saint the most beautiful church, and Saint George apparently supervised the execution of the works in person, as attested by the fact that the monks still today show the hoof marks of his horse to visitors."

[Camerapix p 117]

"It is said to be modelled after Noah's ark. My limited imagination prevented me from figuring that one out. Thank goodness it is not marred by the scaffolding and corrugated metal roofing. This is thanks to the foresight of the architects, who put in gutters and drains on the roof /of stone in monolithic structure/."

"The walls surrounding have many small caverns, some of which have human bones protruding from them. -- the bones visible in one large cavern were attributed to visitors from Israel, who had come to visit long ago and decided to spend the rest of their lives in

Lalibela. When they died their bodies remained in the caves. The amount of dried flesh still on the bones - especially the very visible feet sticking out at us - was attributed to the preservative powers of the holy waters of the River Jordan."

"Apart from the dragon, St. George also is said to have fought with 70 kings for his religion. During the course of this, he travelled around the world three times. He was quite a guy."

[Graham in AddisTribune 2000/04/14]

picts

(Giyorgis is by far the church picture most often used as illustration.)

Simon 1885 plate I plan, window

Buxton 1949(1957) p 144-145 pl 9 from above

Buxton no 135

Bortom bergen vol II 1954 p 208-209

Playne 1954 p 14 drawing of SW side seen downwards

S Pankhurst 1955 p 154-155 from Bianchi Barriviera, p 162 plan

Doresse (1956)1959 p 78 pl 57 NW side from above

Bidder 1958 pict 51 north-west exterior, 42a-43 exteriors

showing decoration, 44a+b interiors of cupola and ceilings

Aethiopien (Terra magica) 1958(1963) pl 29 side of the church

Haile Selassies land 1961 pl 7 whole from above,

with main lines strongly retouched in the photo

Jäger 1965 p 104-105 roof

Davidson (1966)1972 p 140

Merian Monatsheft 1966 p 51 entrance

Gerster 1968 pages 107-108, plan, section, cross-shaped *manbar*,

window - all from Monti della Corte, plate 94 wide air view,

pl 95 two-page view at upper ground level with roof in front,

pl 96 main entrance, pl 97 cupola, pl 98 rectangular ceiling,

pl 99 southern exterior

Monty 1968 p 65, p 70 at entrance level

Saxena 1968 p 37 drawing

Forsberg 1969 p 90

Buxton 1970 pl 56 air view, pl 64 dome inside

Helfritz 1972 p 125-126 pl 58-60

Etiopien - dess kristna .. 1974 pl 15 roof and landscape

Gerster (1974)1976 pl 183 wide air view seen straight down,

184 two-page photo of ground above with roof in foreground

Hancock et al (1983)1987 p 60-61 two-page colour photo with

many people above on the ground at edge, windows in front

Wenzel 1985 pl 50 roof and landscape

Hancock 1992 pl 29 "Templar Cross" on the roof

Camerapix guide 1995 p 112 Timket at Giyorgis

Pakenham 1998 p 158-159 three photos

S Gish, Ethiopia, New York 1996(1999) p 16 air view

Bradt guide 1998 p 50-51 pl 4

Pakenham 1998 (luxury ed.) p 158-159 three colour photos

showing also courtyard walls and cistern/baptistery pool

Sten (magazine) 1998 no 1 p 35-37 exteriors

M Di Salvo, Churches ..., Milano 1999 p 72 fig 73 from above

### **Lalibela : church Golgota (Golgotha)**

Plan 10.5 x 11.1 m for Golgota and Mikael together.

An inner church beyond Mikael. There are four reliefs of holy men.

The four are St John, St Stephen, St George and St Kirkos = St Cyriacus.

The last-mentioned has a turban. Francisco Alvares, visiting a little after 1520, says that he was shown sculptures of St Peter and St John.

Golgota can only be entered from the Mikael church room. By having been mostly covered the number of relief sculptures of standing men have been stated differently (Dabbert one, Monti della Corte ten) but the correct number is seven (Gerster). The name inscriptions above the reliefs have been clumsily added at some later date. Memhir Afe Worq in the 1960s believed that the men were rather Zagwe priest-kings. Another theory is that if two niches cut open as doors also contained sculptures the original number would have been nine, possibly intended to represent the Nine Saints who arrived to Ethiopia from the Middle East.

[G Gerster]

"Golgotha, which opens out of /Mikael/ and whose very existence could easily be missed, is rather crude in comparison and appears to be used more as a vestry and store than as a church. Yet it is here that one finds the four life-size figures of saints, carved in deep relief in the walls of the church. At one time, I am sure that these were painted, as I found traces of turquoise blue and white on their moulded niches. -- Because these figures have their feet at ground level, or only slightly raised from it, they give an almost frightening sense of reality. I could find no satisfactory reason for the decay of two of the figures on the opposite wall and am inclined to think that this is due to a change in the nature of the rock itself. -- I fancy there must be a wedge of softer stone here. (Page 47 of the same book: Two of the four have been so rubbed by the fervent kisses of the faithful that nothing distinguishable remains.) It is noteworthy that Alvarez only speaks of *two* figures so that it looks as if the others had already deteriorated by the sixteenth century."

"As sculptural reliefs, the two remaining figures are exceedingly fine. I do not think that there is anything like them in any of the other ancient churches in Ethiopia. Although they cannot be considered typical, I think they are nearer to Coptic sculpture than to any other. After all, Egyptian workmen are thought to have been employed in Lalibela. (Page 47: In style they are severe, in the early static Byzantine manner.)"

"All four were covered with curtains, so that even if one had penetrated as far as this inner church and was ignorant of the existence of these reliefs, one would never see them." In contrast to the early 1930s, the Memhir helped Playne to see the reliefs and held no notion that it would be prohibited for women to enter and see them.

[Playne p 138-139, 47]

"The churches of Mikael and Golgotha adjoin; both are 12 metres in length and communicate with each other. They are approached by a tunnel leading from the south side of the courtyard of Bieta Mariam and thence by an open passage cut in the rock, turning west and descending six metres below the courtyard of Bieta Mariam."

/Alvarez in the 1520s cited by Pankhurst:/ "Its walls were worked in a fine fashion, also the windows and the doors with all the tracery that could be told, so that neither a jeweller in silver, nor a worker in wax, could do more work."

"The two churches contain several pieces of wooden furniture, with very fine ornamental carving. One chair is said to be the throne of Emperor Lalibela. A silver cross attributed to the King is also shown."

[Jäger p 110]

"The 'tomb of Christ' displays a recumbent figure in high relief with an angel in low relief above its head. -- Not far from the 'tomb' -- in the north-east corner of the church, is a movable slab set into the floor, said to cover the most secret place of the holy city: the tomb or crypt of King Lalibela. -- A doorway at the east end of the right-hand nave -- opens on to the Selassie Chapel, a place of greatest sanctity -- Two windows in the southern wall of Bet Golgotha give light to two shrines - the right-hand one to the Selassie Chapel and the one on the left to the Iyesus Cell --"

[Camerapix p 115]

The "Tomb of Christ" is behind an iron railing. What is under the slab of the "Tomb of Lalibela" has never been publicly revealed.

A space excavated at 5-10 m to the west from Golgota is, according to Monti della Corte, the abandoned Chapel of the Apostles, see Adriyot above at the start of this list.

Simon 1885 pl XII window shapes

Monti della Corte 1940 p 56 plan, p 58 section showing  
 location of relief sculptures, pl XIII windows, trench, roof,  
 pl XIV sculpture of Stefanos, pl XV sculptures of Giyorgis and Yohannes  
 Playne 1954 p 46 drawing of relief of St. Giyorgis  
 S Pankhurst 1955 p 154-155 photo of relief  
 Bidder 1958 pict 20 church seen behind Adam's Tomb,  
 22-23 trench with and without precious objects exhibited outdoors,  
 24 windows and relief, page 119 section from Monti della Corte  
 Merian Monatsheft 1966 p 50 relief  
 Leroy (1964)1967 p 14 relief  
 Gerster 1968 page 99 plan from Monti della Corte,  
 plate 179 relief of Qirqos, pl 80 relief of Giyorgis,  
 pl 83 decorated window of "Iyesus cell",  
 pl 85 exterior toward Adam's Tomb  
 Helfritz 1972 pl 74 relief

**Lalibela : church Maryam (Bét Maryam)**

Width 9.2 m, total length nearly 19 m including the western porch.  
 The church is 13 m high and its upper floor has seven rooms used to store  
 church treasures.

[Bradt 1995 p 335]

The clumsy restoration around the 1920s in Empress Zewditu's time is said to have been  
 done by a Greek.

Maryam seems to be the only Lalibela church that has been decorated in colour directly  
 on the rock inside.

The meaning of most of the story-telling pictures inside can be derived from the Bible.

[Gerster 1968 p 98]

"-- stands as a rectangular block in the centre of a court. Though plain outside there is an  
 unusual wealth of carved detail within. In the depth of the great rock-rampart which  
 surrounds this court two other small churches have been excavated; and to the west,  
 through twin arches, one enters a passage-way which itself forms the roof of yet another  
 church located below one's feet."

[Buxton p 195]

"/The interior/ is very small and so hung with curtains that it is difficult to see much of it.  
 When I got used to the darkness I was aware that the architraves, soffits and capitals, and  
 even some of the pillars themselves, were beautifully carved with interlacing, Celtic-like  
 patterns, and that parts of the ceiling and of the walls carried fragments of fresco. It  
 looked as if the entire ceiling had once been covered --"

"On entering the west doorway -- one is confronted by a pillar which more or less screens  
 the interior and which is normally kept veiled. It was now uncovered for my benefit and  
 revealed a Madonna and Child, with a prostrate donor under her feet, painted in tempera  
 on cloth attached to the pillar itself. Although I thought that it was unlikely that this  
 painting was earlier than late seventeenth or even eighteenth century, it had great dignity  
 of pose and richness of colouring. The elaborateness of the costume and its various  
 details, gave it an extremely oriental appearance which could easily have come through  
 Goanese influence brought in by Jesuit missionaries."

"I had forgotten how very small /the interior/ was and how very dark. The stone porches  
 before each of the three doors cut out most of the light and it takes a long time before  
 one's eyes can pick out the details of the decoration. This is much more elaborate in  
 Mariam than in any of the other Lalibela churches -- More than in any of the others I felt  
 here definite affinity with the ancient church of Imraha. -- I got the doors unlocked for me  
 on several mornings and made, eventually, a fairly successful copy both of the oriental-  
 looking 'Madonna and Child' -- and of the more austere 'Visitation'.

[Playne p 35, 129-130]

"Les plafonds ont été recouverts de peintures murales qui ont disparu; il en reste quelques

traces à l'un d'eux : c'est une croix bordée d'un large trait noir avec des bandes transversales en vert foncé, fond blanc, encadrés par deux traits noirs. Aux quatre angles on voit comme ornements deux rosaces et deux damiers placés diagonalement."

"A la porte -- il y a un tambour d'entrée couvert en chaume, et au-dessus on aperçoit un bas-relief informe, qui ne date pas de la même époque que l'édifice, et qui doit être de provenance portugaise, car il rappelle leur manière." /Comment: Later writers have not suggested that this relief was introduced by the Portuguese./

[Simon, Paris 1885 p 312-313]

"The centre column of the church is wrapped in cloth. The priests declare that behind the cloth the past and future of the world are written on the stone. Ostrich eggs crown the altar."

[Jäger p 111]

"/Mariam/ is alone at Lalibela in having three exterior porches built out from the main fabric. Above the west porch is a bas-relief of two equestrian figures -- engaged in combat with a dragon. The interior is richly decorated -- with highly conventionalized ornament: foliage, birds and animals, the two-headed eagle and other symbols frequently used in early Christian art, with frets, key-patterns and interlacing patterns. The cross is frequently introduced."

"Mariam has a nave and two aisles formed by two rows of five rectangular piers. In the centre of the transept is a tall central pier which helps to support the barrel-vault of the nave. There are three chapels at the east end, each with its altar. The capitals, which extend slightly beyond the top of the pier, are cubical but slightly concave, a feature emphasized by the ornament. In place of the abacus the capital is surmounted by four brackets, each an oval moulding surmounting one face of the capital. These brackets are richly ornamented."

"-- there is an upper storey or loft over each aisle. A frieze over the arcade dividing nave and aisles consists of alternate carved panels and windows looking into the lofts, which receive light from exterior windows. Consequently the frieze serves as a clerestory."

"In the courtyard -- are three other monolithic structures: the small churches of the Martyrs and of the Holy Cross and a larger monolith where Alvarez witnessed alms being given to the poor."

[Sylvia Pankhurst p 160]

"-- standing in a very spacious courtyard. It is the most frequented of all these church precincts and every morning monks and pilgrims congregate there, reading from their holy books. The church itself is plain and box-like outside, except for three projecting porches --"

[Buxton 1957 p 166]

"A deep square pool in the courtyard is said to have miraculous properties, and infertile women dip themselves in the algae-covered waters at certain times of the year, particularly at Christmas.

Dedicated to Mary, the mother of Christ, this church is alone amongst the Lalibela monoliths in that it has a projecting porch. The remains of early unusual frescoes can be seen on the ceiling and upper walls, and there are many elaborately carved details on the piers, capitals, and arches."

[Camerapix p 114]

Among interior decorations is the Byzantine two-headed eagle, also two Zebu bulls fighting. Two simple Latin crosses standing at each end of the roof ridge were late additions. The six-pointed Star of David seen on some pictures has not been regarded as a symbol particularly of Jews until late medieval time, so in the Lalibela case it is a normal Christian symbol.

The relief with horsemen outside over the entrance Irmgard Bidder regards to depict "the bringers of life" with the round disk over their heads in such case being the sun.

Monti della Corte deplored the "repairs" with mortar and thought that the roof under it had decorations of the same kind as that of Medhane Alem.

The work of the art restorer Giuseppe Arrigoni around 1967 was concentrated to Maryam,

and most of its interior was cleaned and fixed.

"Outside the church there is the most famous of the many sacred pools of Lalibela. This one cures women of infertility, if they are dipped three times at Gena (Ethiopian Christmas). It is only used at Gena and only for 'barren' women. It works every time. Because the level of the pool is far below ground (2-3 metres) and there are no stairs, the women have to be awkwardly lowered down by rope or harness. Photographers seem to enjoy capturing this, with the women uncomfortably dangling with their parts sticking out."

[Graham in AddisTribune 2000/04/14]

picts

Simon 1885 plates VII-X four decorated arches, XI decorated ceiling, XIV exterior relief above entrance

Monti della Corte 1940 p 28-29 pl III-IV outdoor service, VII north and east exteriors in full, VIII (at p 47) interior decorated upper part, IX-X exterior relief of horsemen and three photos of interior decorations, p 50 longitudinal section, p 51 cross section showing tall central pillar

Buxton 1949(1957) p 144-145 pl 9 courtyard of Maryam

Buxton no 132 courtyard, 133, 134

Playne 1954 at p 45 colour drawing of the Visitation, p 130 dr. of interior

S Pankhurst 1955 between p 154-155 four pictures

Doresse (1956)1959 p 79 pl 38

Bidder 1958 pict 25 north and east exteriors, 26 twin-door entrance, relief of riders, 27 twin-gate on to roof of Golgota, 29a-h ten types of windows, 30a-34b eight interiors, page 122 section from Monti della Corte

Neubacher 1959 pl 14 church, pl 15 court around Maryam

Leroy (1964)1967 pl 17 painting inside

Jäger 1965 p 104-105

Merian Monatsheft 1966 p 50 paintings inside

Gerster 1968 p 87 perspective from above, plate 60 pool with green surface and people around, seen from above, page 95-98 plan, section and figures from Monti della Corte, pl 61-62 shapes of six windows, including a swastika, pl 63 view from above, showing simple cross on the roof, pl 64-65 relief of horsemen with animals, pl 66-75 ten interiors and paintings

L'Éthiopie, Zurich 1968 p 38 upper ground and roof end

Monty 1968 p 72 upper part, p 90-91 big gathering around church

Ethiopia Observer 1969 no 3 p 144 restored exterior and windows

Buxton 1970 pl 57 interior

National Geographic Dec 1970 p 872 two outdoor pictures

Helfritz 1972 pl 67-72 church and courtyard, 75-79 a number of details

Gerster (1974)1976 pl 179-180 interiors full of decorations

Hancock et al (1983)1987 p 62 church and courtyard with green surface of pool in front

Hancock 1992 p 120 painting with Star of David, pl 28 courtyard

Camerapix guide 1995 p 113 frescoes

Pakenham 1998 p 154 opposite Maryam, 156 courtyard, 157 fresco

**Lalibela : church Medhane Alem** (Amharic: Mädhane Aläm)

(spelling Medhani A. often used by Italians but belongs to Adwa and further north)

Plan 34 x 23.9 m, height about 11 m.

Internal plan measurements 26 x 19.5 m, maximum wall thickness 2.08 m.

The shape reminds one of Greek temples, but this has no historical substance, and it is rather suggested that it might be a copy in rock of the original church of Mary of Zion

at Aksum (of which nothing remains).

The fallen outer piers, visible already on a drawing from 1882, were restored in full in the early 1950s, in built-up masonry with 32 courses or more of blocks for each reconstructed pier. Metal "gargoyles" throwing water away from the roof were added at some point.

A temporary sheet metal roof laid in 1956 was removed again ten years later.

-- surrounded by square-shaped columns, with a further forest of twenty-eight massive rectangular columns supporting the roof inside. In a corner of the church, one can see three empty graves said to have been symbolically dug for the biblical personages of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

"It stands isolated in the midst of a court sunk in the rock, and both the inside and outside are shaped so as to resemble a built-up church. It is divided internally by four rows of massive square columns into a central nave with two pairs of aisles. The piers have plain bracket-capitals but there is no other adornment, and in its extreme austerity this is perhaps the most impressive, besides being the largest, of the Lalibela interiors.

Externally it was surrounded by a complete series of slender, free-standing columns supporting a kind of entablature which formed the edge of the gabled roof. The columns have mostly fallen but are complete at the eastern end. The roof itself is adorned with a recumbent blind arcade on either side."

[Buxton p 194-195]

"Ce monument n'a pu survivre intact à son antiquité; plusieurs piliers sont brisés ainsi que l'entablement, et leurs débris épars jonchent le sol. Comme particularité, les piliers d'angle seuls sont carrés et reliés à leurs voisins par un voussoir à hauteur du deuxième bandeau mouluré."

"Les fenêtres du rang supérieur sont en plein cintre et laissent pénétrer la lumière par des sortes de découpures en forme de cercles, de croix et d'étoiles qui donnent un ensemble excellent; cette ornementation est imitée de l'art arabe, tandis que celle des fenêtres inférieures est byzantine. Toutes ces découpures ont été fermées par des vitraux convexes et très épais, comme il en existait dans les monastères du moyen âge.

Ces fenêtres sont mal conservées; il n'en existe qu'une à la façade sud, qui soit en assez bon état et qui possède encore quelques vitraux."

[Simon, Paris 1885 p 308, 309-310]

"The pillars of these two colonnades are a complete departure from the type found at Adulis, Aksum and other centres of pre-Christian and early Christian architecture being simple rectangular shafts, without either capitals or bases which seem invariably to have been employed in the Aksum period. It should be observed also that the Medhane Alem columns are not square in plan, like those of Aksum, but oblong, being greater in width than in depth."

"These columns extend from the main plinth of the church to the gabled roof itself -- On either slope of the gabled roof is carved the representation of an arcade of semi-circular-topped arches. The edge of the roof is cut so as to form a broad perpendicular band above the columns -- Two decorative string courses are introduced of a type which occurs also in other Lalibela churches. -- /The pillars of the interior/ rise direct from the stone floor without bases and are surmounted by stone brackets extending from each of their four sides to support the continuous barrel vault of the nave and the lateral and transverse semicircular arches of the aisles. The ceiling revealed between the arches of the aisles is flat."

"The principal door is in the centre of the west front; there are also doors on the north and south sides. The doors have also semi-circular arches supported by brackets, thus harmonising with the general interior scheme."

"Of the two rows of windows the upper has also round arches supported by brackets; the lower windows are rectangular and are filled with panels of pierced stone ornament having a central cross; the upper row have diaper patterns recalling those of Imrahanna Kristos. Dr Louis Findlay -- believed he could detect also traces of stained glass in the upper windows such as he had seen in early Egyptian mosques."

[Sylvia Pankhurst p 157-158]

The central nave is clearly the straightest and best cut one of the five bays, with the middle side aisles being intermediate in quality. This almost proves that interior excavation was done from the symmetry line outwards, not "with the daylight" inwards from the window walls. The cutting of some lower windows does not even seem to have been fully completed.

Working light inside could have been improved by placing simple reflectors, such as wooden planks or white goatskins stretched on frames, outside in the sun.

[B Lindahl]

"-- the Memhir called me to him and sent for the church's treasure. But neither its triptych nor the illuminated MSS which I was shown were of any particular interest and I was deeply disappointed."

[Playne p 129]

A cigar-shaped "testing timber" about one metre long was kept on the floor near the main altar. The "test" was to lift and balance it with one hand, something possible for almost everybody.

[Monti della Corte 1940]

"At the side of the church a small rose-garden has been planted by the monks, and a phonolithic bell-stone is hung low over the ground."

[Jäger p 114]

"-- this is not only the largest Lalibela church, it is the largest monolithic rock hewn church in the world. -- The walls are tall and impressive, despite the ghastly scaffolding which envelopes this and most of the other churches. -- The fun part of the graves /in the floor of Medhani Alem/ is the spindle like piece of wood in the 'grave' of Jacob. If you lie next to the grave and reach in, you can lift the piece of wood. If you can lift it three times /with one hand/ above the level of the ground without using your thumb, only your four fingers, then you are without sin. I tried it, and much to my surprise I succeeded!"

[J Graham in AddisTribune 2000/04/14]

picts

Simon 1885 plate II plan, III interior, IV east exterior,

V south exterior with broken piers, VI window shapes

Jones & Monroe (1935)1955 p 50 drawing

Monti della Corte 1940 p 41 plan, plate V engravings of roof and south-east corner, pl VI south side with one pier reconstructed, two interiors, p 43 longitudinal section, p 44 "keyhole" shapes of three windows, p 46 cross section

Buxton no 132

S Pankhurst 1955 at page 50, between p 154-155 east end, interior

Doresse vol II 1957 p 66

Bidder 1958 pict 35 surroundings with many present-day small houses,

36-37 roof (not covered), 38 eastern exterior, 39 interior,

40a+b interior and complicated window

Aethiopien (Terra magica) 1958(1963) pl 30 top of church

Haile Selassies land 1961 p 68, 69 details

Gerster 1968 p 92-93 drawings from Monti della Corte,

pl 55 part of exterior, 56 two-page full exterior, 57-58 interiors

Ethiopia Observer vol XII 1969 no 3 p 144 southern exterior

with reconstructed piers

Etiopien - dess kristna .. 1974 pl 12 south-east corner

Gerster (1974)1976 pl 181 two-page photo of east and

south sides, 182 interior

Hancock et al (1983)1987 interior and priest holding cross

**Lalibela : church Merkuriyos** (Märkureyos, Mercurios, Marqorewos)

With collapsed roof, but according to Monti della Corte 18 of originally 20 pillars were standing in the 1930s. The roughly hewn pillars are good for studying the chiseling

technique. Marks from a chisel with point about 7 x 25 mm can be seen. Fairly long chisel strokes could be made. The mason could move as much as 50 mm between parallel chisel strokes. Chiselling at arrises must be made from the corners toward the middle which may tend to give the surface a slight convex bulge. Such surfaces can clearly be seen in the monolithic cross in the Yordanos valley.

[B Lindahl]

Some archaeological excavations near Merkorios around 1967 found fragments of ancient pottery and also iron tethers for chaining prisoners.

Contains frescoes representing Saint Georges, Saint Maurice on horseback and a Virgin with the Child.

[Simon 1885]

"-- it is quite difficult to find without a guide, as it lies in a labyrinth of tunnels between the churches of Amanuel and Abba Libanos. I got the impression that faults in the rock structure had caused the architect to alter his design, as there is a lone pillar before the entrance which seems to have no purpose now: I noticed that it had scaled badly. The church proper has been screened off by a wall of stone blocks built by Arab workmen, I was told, during the reign of the Empress Zauditu (1916-1930). Over this hung the remains of a painted decoration on cloth -- I could not be sure exactly where it had been. - I could understand why the Memhir had not encouraged me to see these paintings, now that they were so ruined. What remained of them was rich in colour and finely drawn --" "The priest also produced a bag of tiny wooden pictures, hopelessly jumbled up together, with their hinges broken and, to make matters even worse, with several tawdry little Italian prints in tin frames helping to scratch off what colour remained. -- Really, the effort one makes to get these priests to look after their own treasures would be funny, if it were not so tragic."

[Playne p 154]

"-- partially collapsed. The church is now a hewn out hall, walled off from the open part by broken pillars. One enters the church from the trench, but this is certainly not the original entrance. -- One large painting from here is now preserved in the museum in Addis Anbaba."

"From Biet Mercurios a spiral tunnel leads to a cell in a conic hill. This cell is said to have been the hermitage of Emperor Lalibela. The tunnel has today collapsed."

[Jäger p 108]

In the courtyard wall of Amanuel two further underground passages have been discovered leading to Merkuriyos.

"Bet Merkorios, partially collapsed and recently restored, is thought to have originally served a secular purpose - perhaps that of a house of justice, as amongst the secular objects found in recently excavated trenches were shackles for the ankles of prisoners. The Lalibela clergy only much later turned it into a shrine for worship, and the part serving today as a church occupies the eastern end of a subterranean hall that opens to a courtyard. The naked walls -- were once covered with rich paintings on cotton fabrics, which were attached to the walls by a thick layer of clay, ox blood, and straw. For their better preservation they were removed and can now be seen in the National Museum in Addis Ababa. They were most likely painted in Gondar."

[Camerapix p 116-117]

The large painting brought to the capital in 1956 was not restored. A low part was cut off (and lost except on some photo) and the rest was nailed to a wall in the Archaeological Museum.

[I Bidder]

There has been an open area and around it are irregularly shaped rooms in which mummies of dead monks are kept. Behind the Holy of Holies of the present church there is a room from which one can look out on the courtyard of Amanuel like from a tribune.

[Äthiopien 1999 p 335]

"-- the entrance was rebuilt from scratch in the late 1980s - but it does boast a beautiful if rather faded 15th-century wall frieze of what looks like the three wise men or a group of

saints. There is also a recently restored painting displayed in the church, in which a most beatific-looking Saint Mercurios is depicted amidst a group of dog headed men, his sword trailing through the guts of a dying unbeliever."

[Bradt 1995 p 336]

It is named after a Greek saint. Until it caved in, it was the second largest church at Lalibela. "The part of the church still standing is quite large. It has two wonderful paintings - one of Abuna /Gebre Menfes Kiddus/, who apart from a fantastic name has the distinction of being entirely covered in locks of hair - he wears no clothes. He was protected from those who wanted to harm him - the anti-hairy man factions no doubt - by lions and leopards, which crouch menacingly in the corners of the painting.

The other painting is of the evil King Oleanus, who is in the process of being killed by St. Mercurios. Oleanus is wearing Roman looking clothes and leather armour. His intestines are graphically leaking from his wound. The big thing sticking out from under his shirt is his shoe, which is oddly placed due to his bent leg in his death throes. Some odd looking soldiers coming up to assist had been identified as dog headed by one guide book, but our guide said they were sheep, which they look like.

-- Another painting depicts Jesus hung from a tree, rather than the more traditional cross."

[Graham in AddisTribune 2000/04/21]

picts Bidder 1958 pict 9 ruined part of hall, 10 mural of rider on white horse,  
11 of Mary and Child, 12 of rider on black horse, 13 of "donors",  
14-15 smaller paintings

Gerster 1968 pl 15 painting, pl 93 fresco showing a man,  
not known whether king or martyr

### **Lalibela : church Mesqel (Biet Maskal)**

Located in the northern wall of the courtyard of Maryam, 23.2 m long and 3.4 m high, with many crosses in high-relief on the walls, pillars, and floor, even the special type of cross known as Swastika in Europe. It is a pre-Christian symbol of the sun used also in Egypt, and possibly the Zagwe dynasty of Lasta used it already in pagan time.

Inside are three equal pillars, and a fourth larger one with cross-shaped section in the rear. "It is a broad gallery, with a row of four pillars dividing the space into two aisles spanned by arcades. One spandrel between the two arches contains a relief cross beneath stylized foliage -- Bet Meskel also contains several large caves, some of them inhabited by hermits."

[Camerapix p 114-115]

Some "monkey heads" decorate the entrances and indicate an Aksumite influence. Inside, there is a very old wooden altar.

[Aubert p 177]

picts Monti della Corte 1940 pl XI at p 56 full exterior and detail

Doresse (1956)1959 p 79[38]

Gerster 1968 page 87 perspective from above,  
plate 59 two-page exterior, 60 courtyard from above

Helfritz 1972 pl 61

### **Lalibela : church Mikael (Debre Sina)**

Plan 10.5 x 11.1 m for Mikael and Golgota together. See also under Golgota for more about the twin churches.

The alternative names perhaps refer to tabots rather than to the church buildings. The name Debre Sina was found already by Simon in the 1880s but Mikael dominates in present-day publications.

"Mikael has a nave and two aisles. The columns consist of clusters of four engaged rectangular piers, with capitals somewhat less in height than in width. Though rectangular in form, these capitals are rendered slightly concave at the outer corners; they are surmounted by brackets comprised of an oval moulding between two narrow fillets. The

brackets are undecorated; the spandrels of the arches are carved with bold and simple mouldings. All is restrained and dignified."

[Sylvia Pankhurst p 161]

"One approaches this church in a most roundabout way -- Indeed, if one goes through the short, blind passage facing Mariam's west porch, one is actually standing on the roof of Mikael. The windows are pointed and ornamented in the Saracenic manner -- The 'verger' lifted up all the curtains and even let me go inside a holy place to see Lalibela's tomb. But there was little to see, except a great stone mound covered in drapery. I felt disappointed and fairly certain that things were being kept from me."

[Playne p 43]

A painting of King Lalibela which has been often published is kept in Mikael.

"Mikael is also small, although it is said to be the final resting place for King Lalibela. -- Women are not allowed in Mikael, with the explanation that Lalibela's sister tried to poison him and therefore Lalibela never trusted women again. No disrespect intended, but she tried to poison him at the behest of his brother, a man."

[Graham in AddisTribune 2000/04/14]

picts Monti della Corte 1940 p 56 plan, pl XII windows  
S Pankhurst 1955 between p 154-155 interior  
Gerster 1968 p 99 plan from Monti della Corte,  
p 100 ornamental shapes, pl 84 two windows

**Lalibela : church Rufael** (see mainly Gabriel)

picts Merian Monatsheft 1966 p 122 footbridge  
Forsberg 1969 p 91  
Etiopien - dess kristna .. 1974 p 13 depth visible

**Lalibela : church Silase** (or rather a crypt)

May have been the Holy of Holies of Golgota from the beginning.

With a large square pillar representing unity of faith and three monolithic altars. The altar in the middle has reliefs of the four Evangelists on its four sides, depicted in the traditional way as animals. Of monolithic altars there are only two more known in northern Ethiopia.

East wall is 6.5 m, west wall 4.6 m and the central axis 7 m long.

"There is a passage leading from somewhere in Golgotha underneath the church of Mariam, to a crypt where there are three curiously carved stone altars and a relief of a recumbent Christ. This crypt, dedicated to the Holy Trinity, is not even spoken about to strangers, but I knew of the carvings from Monti della Corte's book (Rome 1940).

I begged the Memhir to let me see them, but he declared them to be in so holy a place that no woman might enter - 'Not even the Empress herself'. When I asked about the Italians, he agreed that he had been forced, at the point of a pistol, to show them the sacred places and that they had entered with their *boots* on. This, to an Ethiopian, would be the height of desecration."

[Playne p 139]

Monti della Corte writes that Memhir Heruy told the priests that the Italians had the rank of bishops and therefore could enter everywhere.

Memhir Afe Worq in the mid-1960s gave permission to Georg Gerster to take photos inside, as the first foreigner after the Italians to do so.

picts Monti della Corte 1940 p 56 plan, p 58 section, p 59 interior drawn  
by Zacchia, pl XVI at p 63 photos of altars and their details  
Bidder 1958 page 118 Zacchia's drawing of the interior, 122 section,  
both reproduced from Monti della Corte  
Gerster 1968 page 87 perspective from above, 99 plan from Monti della Corte,  
plate 81 photo with full view of interior, pl 82 one of the evangelists  
(*Arbatu Insisa*) on side of the central altar

### **Lalibela : Iyesus cell**

The left-hand one of two windows in the southern wall of Golgota gives light to the "Cell of Jesus".

### **Lalibela : Kassa mausoleum**

A family tomb, above ground and tall (two storeys inside?) located not far from Bet Maryam. It was built before the Italian time because the Monti della Corte expedition of 1939 has published a photo of it. Ras Kassa Dargie and his sons were important chiefs of Lasta and had residence in Lalibela. Other graves in Lalibela of important people are much less conspicuous.

picts Monti della Corte 1940 at p 28  
Bidder 1958 pict 37 the red mausoleum seen from  
direction of Medhane Alem  
Gerster 1968 pl 63 view from above showing on the ground location  
near and to the south of Maryam

### **Lalibela : Naakuto Laab**

The successor of King Lalibela was Na'akweto La'ab and a church in a cave half a day's journey from the locality of Lalibela bears his name.

[R Pankhurst, The Ethiopians, 1998 p 53]

Situated 6 km from Lalibela.

"It is a simple but attractive little church (apart from the outer security wall), built around a cave. It was almost certainly the site of a much older shrine.

Empress Zewditu built the ugly inner red-brick building. Some very old stone receptacles collect the precious holy water as it drips from the cave roof."

It is just a 10- to 15-minute walk from the church to the village of the same name.

[Lonely planet 2000 p 208]

picts Buxton, Travels ..., 1949(1957) p 64-65[pl 12] front view with screen wall;  
Camerapix guide 1995 p 116 exterior;  
S. Gish, Ethiopia, New York 1996(1999) p 71 painting displayed outside

### **Lalibela : Yordanos**

The Jordan Valley is centrally located among the churches. There is a monolithic stone cross of which only the upper part was visible until accumulations in the valley were removed during restoration work about 1967 and a tall pier with the cross at the top became visible.

At the Timkat holiday blessing of water takes place at the cross.

picts Gerster 1968 p 91 drawing  
Ethiopia Observer vol XII 1969 no 3 p 141  
after restoration of the valley, with the cross in full length  
Helfritz 1972 pl 55 cross before excavation

JD... Lalibela (Lalibala) 09/41 [+ 18]

*lalo* (A) notable of Menz;

*Lalo*, said to be the original ancestor of the Borana and according to one tradition it was in King Zera Yaqob's time

GDM02 Lalo 09°04'/34°31' 1796 m 09/34 [Gz]  
GDM12 Lalo 1710 m 09/34 [WO]  
GDM22 Lalo 09°17'/34°32' 1642 m, near Begi 09/34 [Gz]  
H.... **Lalo** (centre in 1964 of Didu Lalo sub-district) 08/34? [Ad]  
Seventh Day Adventist Mission primary school (in Gimbi awraja)  
in 1968 had 180 boys and 70 girls, with 8 teachers.  
HDA86 Lalo, see Lalo Kile  
HDJ86 Lalo 09°51'/37°08' 2502 m, south-east of Alibo 09/37 [Gz]

HDK09	Lalo 09°08'/38°20' 2750 m, north of Addis Alem	09/38	[AA Gz]
HEF35	Lalo 11°09'/39°52' 1549 m, east of Dessie	11/39	[Gz]
HDH10	Lalo Asabi sub-district (-1964-1997-) (centre in 1964 = Inango)	09/35	[Ad n]
HDH11	Lalo Choli sub-district (ctr in 1964 = Choli)	09/35	[Ad]
HDH11	Lalo Chuli (L. Ch'uli, L. Choli) 09°13'/35°48' 1840 m	09/35	[Gz]
HDA75	Lalo Kera sub-district (centre in 1964 = Kake)	08/35	[Ad]
HDA86	Lalo Kile (Kile, Lalo Kilie, Lalochile, Lalokali) (Lalok'ele, Laloqele, Lelocheli, Lalo, Lulu) 08°55'/35°21' 1674 m (sub-district & its centre in 1964) (-1964-1997-) see under Yubdo	08/35	[Gz q WO n]
HDU22	<b>Lalo Midir</b> (L. Meder, Lalomedir) 10°10'/39°06' 1547 m Coordinates would give map code HDT27 The primary school in 1968 had 63 boys and 11 girls in grades 1-3, with two teachers.	10/39	[Gz x WO n]
HDU22c	Lalo Midir sub-district (-1964-1997-) (centre in 1964 = Molale) Within Mama Midir wereda, an east-west high plateau between Retmet and Aftenet. Historically it has been an Amhara area. [V Stitz 1970]	10/39	[Ad]
HDG09	Lalo Wenjo 09°08'/35°38' 1674 m south-west of Gimbi	09/35	[Gz]
GDM32	Laloshashi sub-district (centre in 1964 = Begi)	09/34	[Ad]
	<i>lalu</i> (Arsi O) collective name for climbers e.g. <i>Cissus</i> sp.		
HDA86	Lalu, see Lalo Kile		
JDB90	Lalu (area)	09/40	[WO]
JDJ42	Lalu 09°30'/41°47' 1801 m, south-west of Dire Dawa	09/41	[Gz]
JDJ55	Lalu (mountain) 09°34'/42°05' 1786 m north of Harar	09/42	[Gz]
JD...	Lalu Bilalo sub-district (centre in 1964 = Ijefera)	09/40	[Ad]
	<i>lam</i> (A,T) cow		
GCU34	Lam	07/34	[WO]
	<i>lam washa</i> (A) cow cave		
HDT07	Lam Washa (Lamuascia) 09°58'/39°07' 1772 m (place & area, WO has Lamuascia at HDL97)	09/39	[Gz WO]
	<i>lam wiha</i> (A) cow water		
HEL27c	Lam Wiha (Lam Wuha) (centre in 1964 of Mekena sub-district) <i>lama</i> (O) two, pair, couple; (T) blade; <i>lame</i> (A) become powdered	11/39	[+ Ad]
HFK23	Lama	14/37	[LM WO]
JBR35	Lama Scillindi (Lammascillindi) see Lema Shilindi		
	lamalimu: <i>lamalmo</i> (A) youth, strong young man		
HES74	<b>Lamalimu</b> (Lamalmo, Lemalemo) (tourist camp) high pass on road between Inda Silase and Gondar "Combien est effroyable cette descente du Lemalmo! Il nous fallut deux jours pour arriver à Waldibba /Woldebba/." [Cardinal Massaia in 1851] March 1936: "-- most difficult of all was the so-called Lemalemò Pass (a name derived, it seems, from the disconsolate exclamation of a French explorer: <i>le mal mont!</i> ), which had been considered absolutely impassable even by small baggage columns with Abyssinian	13/37	[Br It]

mules. Nevertheless all the artillery and train of an entire division and an Eritrean brigade succeeded in getting through, though compelled, indeed frequently, to unload the mules and carry their loads on the shoulders of the men."

[Badoglio (Eng.ed.) 1937 p 131]

pics G Rohlf 1883 p 284 mountains seen from the pass,  
reproduced in Ethiopia engraved 1988 p 139;  
E Reclus 1885 p 211 similar, also in Eth. engraved p 101

*lamba* (A,T) kerosene; (O) kerosene lamp

HEK60 Lamba, see Lemba

HEJ31 Lambaz Maryam, see Tach Lambaz Maryam

lambuda: *lambada* (A) one who stammers

HCS43 Lambuda (mountain) 07/37 [WO]  
North of Hosaina, with SIM mission station from 1929,  
see under Hosaina.

H... Lamfuro sub-district (centre in 1964 = Ajilla) 08/38 [Ad]  
lamina: *lamana* (O) mountain bamboo, *Arundinaria alpina*

HCT30 Lamina (Lumina) 07°31'/38°26' 1539 m 07/38 [WO Gz Gu]  
(island in northern lake Shala)

HD... LaminiFun 08/39? [x]  
At a day's march from Tedecha Melka. The hunting party of Powell-Cotton camped there in late December 1899. They noticed lions and elephants in the neighbourhood, but they did not succeed to kill any. Powell-Cotton's only mule and donkey were stolen by local thieves. They could be recovered from a distant village.  
[Powell-Cotton 1902 p 63-64]

lamma: *lemma* (A) 1. blazed up /in fire/; 2. was developed

JBP09 Lamma (area), cf Lemma 04/41 [WO]

JCF16 Lamma Bar (waterhole) 310 m 05/44 [MS WO Gu]

JEB94 Lammale, see under Tendaho, cf Lemale 11/41 [WO]

JBR35 Lammascillindi, see Lema Shilindi

JEG35 Lammele (area), cf Lemale 12/40 [WO]

*lammi* (O) a relative /specifically child of paternal uncle/

HCN89 Lammi, cf Lemmi 07/35 [WO]

HFE12 Lamorni, see Lomorni

*lamu* (O) 1. second /in order/; 2. again, once more

HDG79 Lamu Limma 09/35 [WO]

HDL97 Lamuascia, see Lam Washa

lan: *laan* (Som) 1. lineage, descent; 2. tree without branches

KDA54 Lan Mulaho 08°37'/45°08' 08/45 [WO Gz]  
border post toward Somalia  
Coordinates would give map code KDA53

HER89 Lancascio, see Lankasho

HFF52c Lanchanet (recorded in 1868) 14/39 [18]

HCU01 Lanchiccia, see Lankicha

HEK38 Lanco, see Derenko

JCL98 Landair 07°14'/44°12' 791 m, near map code JCT08 07/44 [Gz]  
near Fafan river upstream from Kebri Dehar

?? Lanfero sub-district (-1997-) in southern Ethiopia ../. [n]

HEC64 Langafa 11/36 [WO]

HCD83 Langama (Lagama, Zangana) (island in Abaya) 06/37 [Gz WO Gu 18]  
06°10'/37°52' 1219 m

HCT43 **Langano** (Bulbula) (w hotel) 07°38'/38°42' 1579 m 07/38 [Gz]  
Population 5,340 in 1993.

HCT43 Langano, lake (Langara) at 07°36'/38°43', cf Bulbula HCT52c

Edward W. Beals in 1963-1965 carried out a study of seasonal fluctuations of bird populations of a woodland near lake Lngano.

"The Bekele Mola Hotel -- has a large capacity (often full on weekends and holidays), with a fair restaurant. There is a Eth\$ 1 fee per car for access to the camping area which has water, lights and toilet facilities. It is fenced off to keep out animals."

[Welcome to Ethiopia, A.A. circa 1965 p 53]

The Swedish EFS missionaries in Ethiopia had a conference at Langano 12-18 September 1967.

Bekele Molla Hotel around 1969 had 22 bungalows and 22 double rooms, and a petrol filling station.

By a document presented on 10 January 1969 Tedla Desta, who had a business firm since 23 years, donated 1 hectare of land at the southern part of Lake Langano to the Swedish community, to be used as a recreation site.

(This donation did not become much exploited, but the Swedish community at least made a group excursion to the "Swedish site" on 15 May 1971.)

[Svenskbladet, A.A. February 1969 p 12]

Prospecting for *geothermal energy* in the Lake Langano area started in 1982 and was completed at the end of 1984. It was internationally reported in March 1985 that five of the nine boreholes sunk had proved positive. The work was carried out by the UK firm Mowlem International and would be analysed by Italconsult. Mowlem had been compelled to drill down 2,500 metres to obtain samples, rather than the 1,500 metres expected in advance.

[News]

The Langano *earthquakes* in 1906 and 1985 were among the most significant in Ethiopia during that century. Their magnitudes were 6.8 and 6.2 on the Richter scale.

In late 1984 Langano "was the only place in the country foreigners were allowed to visit on just a tourist visa. -- It was possible to phone overseas from the manager's office. It took us an hour of shouting and frantic winding of the ancient cranked telephone to get through to the operator in Addis. Janet spoke first, yelling against the static, then briefly at an enormous distance I heard her twin sister's voice in London. There was a television on in the background -- The line went dead."

[M F Harris, Breakfast in hell, New York 1987 p 190-191]

"The drive to Langano has improved immensely over the last few years. The road was re-paved in patches. During the long period of construction the drive from Addis could take 4 hours or more. With the road paved all the way to Langano the time is cut to 2½ hours or less. According to the /distance/ sign, Langano is almost exactly 200 km from Menelik Square in Addis."

"The first sign is literally a sign - for the Wabe Shebelle Hotel which is two kilometres down a dusty side road. The Wabe Shebelle is nice but faded, with a central restaurant and bar on the lakeside, and a series of bungalows stretching down the beach. Near the turn off into the Wabe Shebelle is the road to a new hotel, now open, which promises water sports and other activities.

Cottages stretch along the shore of Langano from the Wabe Shebelle on the north to the Bekele Molla on the south end of the lake. On the main road, the distance from the Wabe Shebelle turnoff to the Bekele Molla is about 12 km. The Bekele Molla is unfortunately also quite shabby. Both hotels charge tourist prices, which are high by Ethiopian standards but low in international terms.

The far side of Langano is wilder than the western side. Crocodiles and hippos survive with this additional distance from the crowds of humans."

[John Graham in AddiTribune 2001/01/12]

"People flock to Langano more for the lack of any alternatives than the charm of the lake. Although Langano is situated in the natural beauty of the Rift Valley, the lake itself is brown and brackish. This is related to why people go there, the salty waters from the poor drainage of the lake is inhospitable to fresh water snails, which cause bilharzia."

"Once you get into the water it is quite nice and refreshing. The dissolved minerals that give it the brownish hue are quite benign, even wholesome -- A large and healthy fish population is maintained here, as attested by the nets of local fishermen and enthusiastic foreign anglers."

"With a new government since 1991, tourism and resorts have gradually picked up. -- Increasingly there are motorboats and even water skiers plying the lake. There is even the emergence of ski jets, the loud motorized monsters which are ruining the relaxation of lakes around the world."

[John Graham in AddisTribune 2001/08/31]

By 2002 the local women did not wear their traditional leather clothes any more. There was a small village by the main road.

### Langano : Bishangari

"One refreshing exception from intrusive tourism is the Bishangari resort in the south end of Langano, an eco tourism lodge due to open before the end of 2001. It is reached by travelling 11 km off the main road just a few km south of the Bekele Molla hotel turnoff, then following a rather bad dirt road to the SIM centre, then a further 5 km to the picturesque spot on the edge of the lake. Although the lodge can also be reached by motorboat, the jetty is kept far away enough to avoid the noise disturbing the customers. The large bars and comfortable bungalows are solar powered, and sport nature friendly water and sewage systems. -- private walkways enjoy a variety of monkey and bird life."

[John Graham in AddisTribune 2001/08/31]

picts J Eriksson, Okänt Etiopien, Sthlm 1966 p 160-161[38] local people;  
A Forsberg, I Etiopien, Sthlm 1969 p 59 the lake seen from above;  
J Wenzel, Im Land der dreizehn ..., Rudolstadt 1985 pl 31 beach at the hotel;  
Camerapix 1995 p 160 hotel at shore.

HEC64	Langata (with spring to the east) cf Gota Langata	11/36	[It]
JDJ32	Lange 09°22'/41°50' 2002 m south-west of Dire Dawa	09/41	[Gz]
JDJ42	Lange (Langhei) 09°26'/41°48' 2046 m (small village), see under Kersa There is also a lake Lange to the south	09/41	[Gz WO Gu Mi]
HDJ37	Langeno 09°21'/37°18' 2176 m	09/37	[Gz]
HDL73	Langeno 09°45'/38°44' 2797 m, see under Fiche	09/38	[AA Gz]
HDC75	Langisa (Langhisa) (mountain)	08/37	[+ WO]
JDP64	<b>Langudi</b> (mountain) (Iangudi, Yangudi, Jangudi) MS: 10°33'/41°02'; Gz: 10°35'/41°03' 1230 m Volcano north of Dofan. There is plenty of sulphur. [Mineral 1966]	10/41	[Gz WO Mi]
HER89	Lankasho (Lancascio) 13°26'/37°25' 2619 m	13/37	[+ Gz]
HCU01	Lankicha (Lanchiccia) 07°18'/39°25' 2688 m	07/39	[+ Gz]

lankisa: *lankuso* (O) kind of branched palm,  
Dracaena steudneri; *lankessa* (lanqessaa) (O) climber;  
*lankussa* (A) kind of climber, Urera hypselodendron;  
*lankiso* (lanqiso) (A) one who often cries

HDL60	Lankisa (Lank'isa, Lanqisa) 09°39'/38°30' 2353 m	09/38	[AA Gz q]
HEK37	Lanko (Lanco) 2567/2720 m	12/38	[WO Gu]
JDE42	Lankoba (Lancoba) (area) lanta: <i>laanta</i> (Som) government department	08/43	[+ WO]
JDK58	Lanta (area)	09/43	[WO]
HDK00	Lanto 09°07'/37°32' 2521 m	09/37	[AA Gz]
HDM46	Lanto 09°26'/39°54' 1300 m, south-east of Ankober	09/39	[Gz]
JEC11	Laokara (area)	11/41	[WO]

HDH09	Laqamte (Laqqamt), see Nekemte		
GCU50	Lar Gnan 07°44'/34°24' 500 m	07/34	[WO Gz]
HES00	Larei	12/37	[WO]
GDE15	Larre	08/33	[WO]
	las: <i>laas</i> (Som) waterhole, small well; <i>las</i> (A) to lick		
KCR44	Las (Derouda Uen)	07/47	[WO]
??	Las Acanle	07/46	[MS]
JDS04	Las Anod (area) 1635 m	10/42	[WO Mi]
	Between Bajagajar and Las Anod a sandy plain causes a gap in the Pre-Cambrian exposures. In the central part of the ridge following frontier, Pre-Cambrian rocks are again exposed, the area between Las Anod and Gogti /etc/ being occupied by injection gneisses.		
	[Mineral 1966]		
JCS12	Las Dogle (area)	07/42	[WO]
KCR44	Las Dolop (Derouda Ler, Derouda Uen)	07/46	[WO Gz]
	07°41'/46°59' 510 m		
	las dulma: <i>dhulman</i> (Som) seashell; <i>dulluma</i> (O) old age		
JCK52	Las Dulma (area)	06/42	[WO]
JCL34	Las Durkeli	06/43	[WO]
	las galol: <i>laas galool</i> (Som) waterhole of acacias		
JCT83	Las Galol (area)	08/43	[WO]
JDK04	Las Galoleh 09°03'/42°57' 1500 m	09/42	[Gz]
	near map code JDD05, south-east of Jijiga		
JDR79	Las Harad, see Lasarat		
JDD83	Las Murrile (area)	08/42	[WO]
JDR79	Lasarat (Las Harad, Laso Harrad, Lassarat, Lassarat)	10/42	[Gz WO It n]
	(Lazarat) 10°40'/42°27' 740/817 m		
	Small village and railway station 55 km inside Ethiopia from the border, between passenger stations Aysha (Aicha) and Adigala (Adagala).		
1930s	A group of houses in dry stone masonry.		
	[Guida 1938]		
JDJ79	Lasarud 09°44'/42°30' 1523 m, near map code JDK70	09/42	[Gz]
JED03	Lasdeit 10°57'/42°51' 752 m	10/42	[Gu Gz]
JCS31	Lasgaris (area)	07/42	[WO]
HED83	Lashat (Liscia) 11°37'/37°50' 2463 m	11/37	[Gz]
	east of Bahir Dar		
	lasho: <i>lash</i> (A) ring worm; <i>lashe</i> (A) become tender, weak, soft; (O) typhus		
HCK50	Lasho (Lascio) (area)	06/37	[+ WO]
HET27	Lashwa 12°53'/39°05' 1554 m	12/39	[Gz]
JDS92	Lasmahan (area)	10/42	[WO]
JDR79	Laso Harrad (Lassarad), see Lasarat		
HEL26	<b>Lasta</b> (historical area)		
1500s	Ahmed Grañ occupied Lasta in 1533.		
1600s	Fasilädäs when he became emperor in 1632 was confronted with the dissidents of Lasta. "Conflict came to a head in 1634-5. The insurgents took the offensive and advanced into Bägémder. Fasilädäs was obliged to flee" /on that occasion but he returned for an important reign/.		
	[7th Int Conf of Ethiopian Studies 1984 p 218]		
	Lasta had been obliged by Iyasu I (1682-1706) to pay a tribute of gold, a levy which continued to be collected until the time of Ras Mikael when the province became independent.		

- [Pankhurst 1961 p 192]  
 1700s Oromo soldiers in the Emperor's service fought against a Lasta rebel in 1725.  
 [Pankhurst 1997]  
 Ras Bogatu of Lasta died around 1781.  
 Gubala was another chief of Lasta in the 1700s.  
 Dejazmach Welde Gabre'el supported Emperor Tekle Giyorgis and died around 1798.  
 Dejazmach Kasu Bogatu of Lasta lived in the late 1700s and early 1800s.
- 1800s Ras Wend Bewesen of Lasta died about 1820; he fought against Aligas.  
 pict R Acton 1868 p 5 village on a hill, reproduced in Ethiopia engraved 1988 p 22
- HEL26 **Lasta awraja** 12°00'/39°00' 12/39 [Gz]  
 (centre in 1964 = Debre Tsehay, by 1968 = Lalibela)  
 Abebe Seyoum was governor of Lasta at the time of restoration work  
 in Lalibela around 1967.
- 1960s In the National Sample Survey 302 households in Lasta awraja were studied in 1965-  
 1966. The awraja population was estimated to be 292,400. As estimated there were 4,500  
 more females than males in the age group 15-29 while there were more men than women  
 in the other age groups /younger men having left the countryside to find work  
 elsewhere?/. Lalibela had 1/60 of the population of Lasta awraja, so the numerous clergy  
 there cannot explain that there were more unmarried than married people in the awraja.  
 About 3.3% were estimated to be literate. Average size of a cultivated field was  
 0.3 hectare which is typical for all of Wello. Cultivated area per household was  
 0.96 hectare. The population density of about 55 individuals per sq. km was as high as in  
 awrajas south and west of Addis Abeba.  
 Proportions of different crops reflected highland character: 32% barley, 21% teff,  
 17% peas (often chickpeas), 17% wheat, beans, sorghum, 13% others.  
 More than half of the land was owned, and it was relatively common for a farmer to partly  
 own and partly rent land. Holdings purely rented were only 6%. Lasta had a fairly large  
 share of Wello's livestock, especially sheep and goats which again means highland  
 character. It possibly explains the denudation of the land in and around Lalibela.  
 Because of drought, the Emperor ordered that 1,260 tons of grain should be distributed to  
 inhabitants of Lasta in August 1966.  
 [News]
- text A. Miquel, Reconnaissance dans le Lasta (décembre 1955),  
 in Annales d'Éthiopie 1959 vol 3 p 131-155
- HE... *lasta menged* (A) road of Lasta  
 Lasta Menged sub-district 12/39 [Ad]  
 (centre in 1964 = Zew Maryam)
- HCH36 Lasto (wide area) 06/36 [WO]
- JCS42 Lastuch (Lastuc) (area) 07/42 [+ WO]
- lat* (A) 1. fat on sheep's tail; 2. (Gondar A) knife handle
- HEM72 Lat 12°28'/39°36' 1435 m, near Alamata 12/39 [Gz]
- HEM90 Lat (recorded in 1841) 12/39 [Ha]
- HEM70 Lat Giyorgis (Lat Ghiorghis)(w church) 12°26'/39°25' 12/39 [Gz Ad Po WO]  
 (centre in 1964 of Amist Bet sub-district), west of Alamata  
 (Lat: visiting postman under Lalibela), see under Korem  
*lata* (O) shoot, young growth; *laataa* (O) timber,  
 especially split pieces; *laata* (O) uncertainty
- HEC96 Lata, see Debir Duba  
 pict Gli annali dell'Africa Italiana, Roma 1938 anno I vol II p 606-607[3]  
 ford over Little Abay
- HFE07c **Lata** (mountain), cf Lete 13/39 [Gu]  
 "The success achieved on the 20th /January 1936/ prompted a renewal of action on the

following morning against the enemy's force occupying Mount Lata, in order to compel it, in a fresh battle, to retire to the southward. -- During the night the situation in Tembien changed: the enemy evacuated Mount Lata. -- About 9 a.m. the advanced units of the main /Italian/ column reached Mount Lata without striking a blow."

[Badoglio (Eng.ed.) 1937 p 53-54]

	<i>late</i> (lat'ä) (A) take off the bark, peel, skin, scrape		
HE...	Latgie (centre in 1964 of Injefat sub-district)	12/38	[Ad]
JCT79	Lati Bodli, see Latu Botleh		
	<i>lato</i> (A) small bustard /kind of bird/;		
	<i>latu</i> (O) to shoot i.e. to send out new branches, multiply by having offspring		
JCT79	Latu Botleh (Lati Bodli, Latu Bodlih) 07°53'/44°16' 1060 m	07/44	[WO Gz]
JEB24	Laueisa, see Laweysa	11/41	
	lava ded: <i>ded</i> (Som) to cover for protection; extra covering over the roof of a hut		
JBR25	Lava Ded (area)	04/42	[WO]
JEN63	Lavaha (waterhole)	13/40	[WO Wa]
	lawe: <i>lawwe</i> (O) slender, slim /person/;		
	lawesa: <i>laweze</i> (T) blarney; <i>lewesse</i> (A,T) knead, shape;		
	<i>lewwassa</i> (A) crippled		
HFE68	Lawesa 14°07'/39°13' 2335 m, south of Inticho	14/39	[Gz]
JEB24	Laweysa (Laueisa) (area)	11/41	[+ WO]
HEM10	Lawish 11°51'/39°21' 3263 m, west of Weldiya	11/39	[Gz]
	<i>lay</i> (A) above, high up		
	<b>Lay...</b> , see generally Lai..		
HEL38	Lay Amba 12°03'/39°12' 2919 m north-east of Lalibela	12/39	[Gz]
	<i>lay bet</i> (A) second storey: also: the Hereafter, and a school of Biblical exegesis favouring a literal interpretation		
HED85	Lay Bet (in Merhabete) 11°40'/37°58' 2307 m	11/37	[n Gz]
HED85	Lay Bet sub-district (-1997-)	11/37	[n]
JEB42	Layaggili (Laiagghili) (area) 608 m	11/40	[+ WO]
HEL44	Laydaba, see Lai Debba Giyorgis		
HDM12	Laydanis 09°12'/39°32' 2479 m (with church Mikael to the south)	09/39	[Gz]
HEE59	Laydela 11°19'/39°18' 2796 m, south of Mekdela	11/39	[Gz]
??	Laygaw Kotebe (sub P.O. under Addis Abeba)	../..	[Po]
HEK41	Layge (Lage, Lege) 12°11'/37°36' 1805 m at the north-eastern shore of lake Tana	12/37	[Gz]
HDM84	Laygenet 09°48'/39°46' 2629 m, near Debre Sina (with church Kidane Mihret)	09/39	[Gz]
HCJ14	Layma 06°28'/37°02' 2097 m	06/37	[Gz]
	layo: <i>layyo</i> (O) of light nature, not important		
??	Layo Yukro (visiting postman under Jimma)	../..	[Po]
JDP15	Layto (Laito, M.) (area) 838 m	10/41	[+ WO]
HED93	Laywido 11°44'/37°49' 1967 m north-east of Bahir Dar	11/37	[Gz]
	laz gal: <i>laz</i> (Som) well; <i>gal</i> (Som) 1. pond; 2. entrance, entering; 3. cover; <i>gaal</i> (Som) non-Muslim European		
JBU99	Laz Gal (Laz Gol, Laz Gomal), cf Las ..	05/45	[WO Gu Gz]

05°22'/45°00' 305 m

laz ole: *ole* (O) walking stick; *ola* (O) sheep

JCM03

Laz Ole Omone 06°22'/44°35' 497 m

06/44

[WO Gz]

JCF84

Lazole Reidabe (seasonal waterhole)

06/44

[MS WO]