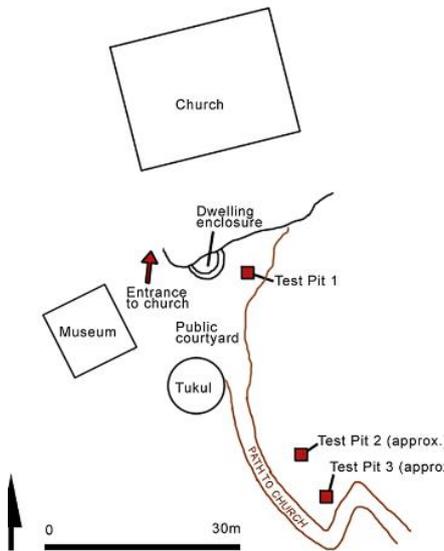




Field School

Archaeology in the Highlands of Ethiopia: Medieval Dynastic Churches and Burial Sites



Recording skeletons *in situ*, Gannata Maryam, 2014

The Project:

Our overall project (the Solomonic-Zagwe Encounters Project) investigates the process of dynastic change in 13th century Ethiopia, when the Amharic-speaking Solomonic dynasty wrested power from the Agaw-speaking Zagwe dynasty in the northern highlands. We are currently excavating a burial site at Gannata Maryam, an outstanding rock-hewn church associated with the first Solomonic king, Yekunno Amlak. The church is located 11 km (but 30 km/1 hour by road) southeast of the renowned Unesco World Heritage site of Lalibela, a unique political and religious center comprising 11 rock-hewn churches founded by the Zagwe from the 10th century onward. Gannata Maryam is significant for its cycle of wall-paintings, dateable to around 1270, and is of key importance for our understanding of the process of state formation and royalty in the highlands of Ethiopia. Our excavation of the previously unknown cemetery began in 2013 on a rescue basis, when work on a new access path to the church exposed bones in the hillside in front of the church. Systematic excavations started in November 2014. The Project Director is Dr. Tania Tribe, Department of History of Art and Archaeology, SOAS, University of London. A project website is under construction and will be accessible via a link on Tania Tribe's page at: www.soas.ac.uk/staff/staff31935.php

Dates: The next season is planned for **March 26—April 10, 2016**

Price: USD 3300 / GBP 2140

How to apply:

E-mail the Project Director, Dr. Tania Tribe, at: tt10@soas.ac.uk by February 19, 2016, expressing your interest.

Why choose this project:

You will have the opportunity to practice techniques and methodologies of modern archaeological research while working with highly experienced field archaeologists. You will be able to learn the importance of record keeping on and off site, how to approach and perform the excavation, planning, and drawing of a feature, and finally take an active part in post-excavation work. Lectures on general archaeological fieldwork and topographic surveying will be provided as well as an introduction to bioarchaeology. All levels of experience are welcome.

Excursions to nearby sites will be included, particularly to the Lalibela rock-hewn church complex and the outstanding built church of Yemrehanna Krestos (which also has World Heritage status), situated within a cave 12 km (40 km by road) north of Lalibela.

Ethiopia is a fascinating country and its people are warm and welcoming. Accommodation is mostly in comfortable hotels but students will also spend some nights with local families in Gannata Maryam.



What you will be doing:

- Day 1 EITHER meet your fellow students and staff at London Heathrow airport, and fly overnight to Addis Ababa together; OR fly independently from your nearest airport to Addis Ababa, whichever is more convenient.
- Day 2 Land in Addis Ababa in the morning (and meet the team if you have traveled independently). Take the day to recover, acclimatize to the altitude and explore the Addis Ababa National Museum. Stay overnight in a comfortable guesthouse.
- Day 3 Early morning flight from Addis Ababa to Lalibela and transfer to the hotel. In the afternoon a briefing about the project and introductory lectures on fieldwork techniques. You will then be free to explore the surrounding area.
- Days 4–14 Working at Gannata Maryam. You will also have the chance to undertake post-excitation work in Lalibela, if time allows. Staying some nights at the hotel in Lalibela and some nights in family homes in Gannata Maryam. Visits to the Lalibela rock-hewn churches and to Yemrehanna Krestos cave church will be arranged at the weekend.
- Days 15–16 EITHER fly back to Addis Ababa in the morning with the option of resting at the guesthouse during the day, prior to a late overnight flight back to the UK or your point of origin;
OR continue your own exploration of the country.

What is included:

- All transportation within Ethiopia, including: airport-hotel-airport transfers in Addis Ababa and Lalibela; some sightseeing in Addis Ababa; return flights from Addis Ababa to Lalibela; overland transportation between Lalibela and Gannata Maryam; excursion to Yemrehanna Krestos
- Accommodation in a comfortable guesthouse in Addis Ababa, with Wi-Fi (1–2 nights); in a hotel in Lalibela, with Wi-Fi and pool (8 nights); and in local people's homes in Gannata Maryam (4 nights)
- Three meals a day, including a light packed lunch in the field
- Training in archaeological field excavation and post-excitation skills
- Main excavation and recording tools
- PPE (such as gloves, safety glasses, and dust mask)
- Entrance fees to the National Museum in Addis Ababa, and to the churches in Lalibela, Gannata Maryam and Yemrehanna Krestos



Post-ex work in Lalibela



Yemrehanna Krestos cave church

What is not included:

- International flights
- Visa for Ethiopia (a 30-day tourist visa is available on arrival at Bole airport in Addis Ababa for nationals of many countries, price US\$50; business visas are NOT recommended)
- Travel/medical insurance, vaccinations (NB: Malaria is prevalent in much of Ethiopia but NOT in Addis Ababa or the Lalibela area, or in areas above 2000 m in general)
- Personal equipment, including black biro pens (Bic), pencils (very hard grade), hand tapes (5 m), trowel, clay modeling tools (used for excavation of human remains), eraser, pencil sharpener
- Personal items such as sunscreen, sun hat, appropriate footwear



Setting up a dumpy level

What to expect:

If you would like to join our excavation team you should bear in mind the following points:

- Travel involves long-haul international flights, and a drive to and from the site (1 hour each way) most days, on poor roads
- Most weekdays we will be working 8 hours in the field
- We will be working with human remains, which may include skeletons, child burials, mummified remains
- We will be working at a high elevation (approx. 2400 m/7850 ft)
- Daytime temperatures are around 25°C (77°F) in the shade, but of course higher in the sun
- Nights can be quite cold, due to the elevation
- Accommodation with families in Gannata Maryam will be basic

Suggestions for further travel in Ethiopia:

Why not make the most of the opportunity and explore more of Ethiopia after your time at the field school? There are plenty of possibilities to suit all tastes, from basic independent backpacking to luxury organized tours. Ethiopian Airlines fly to several points in the country, and bus routes connect most towns (best faced with patience and a smile). Here are just a few suggestions:

- Take the historic route to visit Bahir Dar and Lake Tana, Gondar, and Aksum, as well as Lalibela.
- Explore the monasteries on Lake Tana (unfortunately, some do not allow women visitors, or even female animals!)
- Go bird-watching on the Rift Valley lakes
- Trek through the Simien Mountains National Park
- Visit the holy Moslem city of Harar



Wall painting in Gannata Maryam Church



Discussing the project with the local community, Gannata Maryam