

**Second International Littmann Conference:
Aksum 7-11 January 2006.**

Four years after the 1st International Littmann Conference (Munich, May 2002) the 2nd Littmann Conference took place on 7-11 January 2006 at Aksum. The place of utmost importance for the Ethiopian Studies, the ancient city of Aksum was the main destination of the Deutsche Aksum-Expedition, where its first test-excavations directed by Enno Littmann were started exactly 100 years ago. The conference was organized by Prof. Dr. Steffen Wenig (Berlin) and Dr. des. Wolbert Smidt (Hamburg), with the financial support of the Goethe-Institut in Addis Ababa.

In Aksum, the Conference would not have become a success without the good will and active cooperation of the local Zonal authorities. Technical and personnel support was provided by the Sheba College, directed and coordinated by Muluwork Kidanemariam, who was also in charge of the display of the two guest photo exhibitions at the Abraha and Atsbeha Elementary School. The main venue of the Conference was the conference hall of Remhai Hotel in Aksum. The participants were greatly inspired by the fact that the sessions were taking place in the holy city of Ethiopia, only several hundred meter away from St. Mary's Cathedrals and the great stelae field. At the same time, Aksum, the ancient keeper of the tradition, appeared to be modern enough to meet the needs of the Conference – an experience that organizers of future scholarly conferences in Ethiopia should take into account.

The Conference was attended by some 70 participants and guests (among them some 20 Germans), and ca. 40 papers were read. Honouring the memory of the Deutsche Aksum-Expedition and its scholarly heritage, St. Wenig presented new, previously unpublished photos of the Expedition (7 January, *The Littmann Photo Exhibition*), which were later exhibited in the Abreha and Atsbeha School, and announced the two-volume publication of some DAE materials with updated commentaries entitled *On the Emperor's Order: The German Aksum Expedition 1906 under Enno Littmann* (10 January). The second photo exhibition was devoted to the German-Ethiopian relations and introduced by its author W. Smidt on 12 January. Hussein Ahmed attracted attention of the audience to the scholarly achievements of Enno Littmann (*Littmann's Contribution to Islamic Studies*). Finally, the ceremony of the inauguration of Enno Littmann Street at Mai Shum (9 January) turned out to be the most colourful and touching event of the Conference.

On the whole, several groups of the papers were presented. The Aksumite studies, on the crossroads of archaeology and philology, appeared to have been the pivotal point of the Conference. D. Phillipson's presentation *The Monuments of Axum* (7 January) was complemented by a city tour (10 January), which became for many an excellent opportunity to see well-known monuments with their own eyes and receive precise information on them from one of the major specialists in Aksumite archaeology. Further on, three presentations were devoted to the Ethiopian epigraphic monuments: an overview *A Hundred Years of Aksumite Epigraphy since Enno Littmann* by S. Weninger, and two more specific papers: R. Voigt, *The Royal Inscriptions of King Ezana*, and M. Kropp, *Accountancy in Ancient Ethiopia: the Stela of Anza and its Inscription*. The Aksumite topics were continued by W. Hahn, *The Numismatic Heritage of Aksum – Problems and Aims of Documentation* (all 8 January); P. Henze reported about some new Aksumite finds discovered during the recent field trip (11 January; *Aksumite Sites in Tigray*). Some other participants presented papers considering Aksumite culture from anthropological points of view: Muluwork Kidanemariam, *The Traditional Rule of Aksumites* (8 January), and D. Levine, *Aksumite Civilisation as a 'Seedbed' Society* (11 January).

A substantial number of papers were devoted to the cultural heritage of the northern Ethiopia dating into the post-Aksumite (Medieval) period. The paper of C. Lepage, *The Ancient Churches of Tigray: Post-Axumite Architecture and Liturgical Installations (Abreha-and-Atsbeha)* was read in absentia by J. Mercier (8 January) who later presented his own paper

The Ancient Churches of Tigray: Development of Mural Paintings from the 12th century (Debre Selam) to the Renaissance (13-15th Century: Qorqor, Debra-Tsion)(9 January). P.Henze and Kebede Amare attracted attention to one particularly rich archaeological site in Tigray: *An Ancient Site in Southern Tigray* and *The Site of Mariam Nazre in Tigray: Pre-Aksumite, Aksumite and Post-Aksumite (Persian) Architecture* respectively. Among the papers giving more general overview of historical places were: *An Overview of the Monastery of Asirametira* by Mitiku Gebrehiwot, *Gunda Gunde* by K.O'Mahoney.

The rest of the contributions was devoted to different topics ranging from the urban history of Aksum (Fasil Giorgis, *Urban Transformation in Aksum in the 20th Century*) and problems of preservation of the national cultural heritage (Helina Seyum, Kiros Adera, *National Archives and Library of Ethiopia: History, Roles and Missions of a Patrimonial Institution*) to different issues from the Ethiopian and/or regional history and culture (Dejazmach Zewde Gebre Sellassie, *A Glimpse of Local History, 1889-1906*; R.Pankhurst, *Mansfield Parkyns and his Unpublished Drawings: Glimpses of Northern Ethiopia Half a Century before Enno Littmann*; W.Smids, *The Analysis of Ancient Land Tenure Systems and Understanding Tigrayan society*). A number of paper were presentations of different on-going projects and studies: C.Paine, *The Museum Project at the Residence of Dejjazmach Gebre-Sellassie* – presented during a visit of the site of this residence; Shitara Tomohiro, *Necessity of Research for Existing Condition of Italian Buildings and Proposals for Preservation – Case Study*; E.Sokolinskaia, *The Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*; A.Wion, *Cataloguing Ethiopian Documentary Heritage Using International Standards* etc. The last but not the least, the city tour in Aksum was continued by two other “educational” trips offered to the participants: to Yeha – Enda Abba Garima and Ger’alta.

Though not very large in scale, the 2nd Littmann Conference appears to have been an important scholarly event in several aspects. Concerning the long-term development of Ethiopian Studies, one can not oversee the fact that the Conference (especially if taken in connection with the 2nd Conference of the Ethiopian Philological Society held in Addis Ababa on 15-17 January) has partially filled the lacuna left by the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, which is unlikely to take place in 2006. The Littmann Conference proved, thus, that the postponing of the Conference of Ethiopian Studies should be attributed to the difficulties of organizational character, and not be considered a sign of the crisis within the field itself. The Conference demonstrated that the field has a solid foundation, of which a part was contributed by the Deutsche Aksum-Expedition led by Enno Littmann. This contribution remains basic for the Ethiopian Studies both due to the existence of the four volumes of the Expedition’s reports, one of the main reference works of Ethiopian Studies, and due to the fact that the heritage of the Expedition keeps providing new topics and key-words for new inquiries. Another part of this foundation is represented, of course, by extraordinary rich history and cultural tradition of the northern Ethiopia, which keeps bringing forth interesting finds and attracting scholars of different disciplines.

D. Nosnitsin

Hamburg, 8 February 2006