

Papers of the ITYOPIS Workshop of 17 December 2010

On 17 December 2010 the College of Social Sciences and Languages and Mekelle University hosted a national workshop on the launching of the new journal ITYOPIS. The contributions of the invited Ethiopian and foreign scholars were of high academic interest, as were their suggestions for the upcoming journal, and the discussions. Therefore the editors have decided to publish a selection of the short workshop papers. They formulate aims and ideas, which are certainly not yet achieved but formulate perspectives which will be of great importance for the future work of ITYOPIS and of scholarship in Northeast Africa in general, which looks both into the wider region and into local communities.

Archaeological Publications Desiderata

by TEKLE Hagos¹

Ladies and gentlemen, before I proceed to the topic which I will be talking about in a minute, I would like to express my thanks to the University of Mekelle and the organizers on behalf of the *Archaeologists and Paleontologists Association-Ethiopia* and myself for giving me this opportunity to share my experience on archaeological researches publication experiences on this country in this historic inauguration workshop on *ITYOPIS, Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*. As one of the objectives of our Association is to disseminate the current status of knowledge on archaeological and paleontological explorations and researches to our professionals in particular and the public in general, it is therefore our belief that the proposed Journal is in line with the vision and objective of our Association. We support not only the proposed journal but are also very much eager to see its immediate publication and disseminating knowledge of the same to researches and to the public.

Now, I would like to talk about the development of archaeological research publications, problems and opportunities and recommendation on future archaeological research publications in northern Ethiopia. Let me begin with the first point, which I would like to highlight, on the development of archaeological research publications in what is now northern Ethiopia - where Mekelle University is located. The first systematic multi-disciplinary archaeological research in northern Ethiopia began in 1906 by German researchers under the direction of Enno Littmann (Littmann et al. 1913). The four-volume strong research results of Littmann's team were published (in Berlin) in German language, which the Ethiopian scholars and public do not understand. Furthermore, such publications have never been accessible to the

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majority of the academic circles as one distinguished scholar confirmed in the afternoon lecture he gave to this historic gathering. I very much hope that the new journal of the University of Mekele will find ways to fill this gap in disseminating the knowledge contained in these four volumes to scholars and the Ethiopian public.

In the 1930s, Italian scholars conducted archaeological surveys and test excavations in Aksum and its environs. Monneret de Villard (1938) for example conducted an archaeological survey in Aksum and published a book in Italian language, which the local population at Aksum and the Ethiopian scholars at large do not understand. For the same reason the information he published has never been accessible to the local Ethiopian researchers and the local population. It is my belief that the proposed journal will not repeat the same mistake and will disseminate the result of archaeological researches to the Ethiopian public in general and the researches in particular.

In the 1950s the *Institute of Ethiopian Archaeology* was established as a result of the bilateral agreement between the Ethiopian and the French governments to carry out archaeological research in Ethiopia (Michels 1979). The French scholars who conducted research, particularly in northern Ethiopia, published a journal in French language (Munro-Hay 1989), which most of us Ethiopian scholars and our public do not know. I do believe that the public has the right to know the results of archaeological research, and archaeologists are accountable to the public to inform and disseminate archaeological knowledge to the local people and to researchers. I have a firm belief that ITYOPIS will be accountable and accessible to the local people and researchers without repeating previous mistakes.

At present archaeological research projects are going on in northern Ethiopia. Some researchers are publishing in English and make their publication accessible to the local scholars. Some are publishing in journals that are not accessible to the public and scholars while others are not publishing at all. I hope that this journal will have the means to overcome these constraints. The *Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage* (ARCCH), which is the center of research and the monitoring institute of cultural heritage of Ethiopia has no journal to disseminate knowledge concerning the current status on cultural heritage research. Therefore, it is a good opportunity for ITYOPIS to fill this gap. Thus, the publication of ITYOPIS is an appropriate one; it fills the gaps that most young archaeologists have been looking to fill.

As discussed above, publications that have been carried out so far in northern Ethiopia have been in European languages, which most Ethiopian scholars and the public do not understand. Those published in English have not been accessible to local scholars and the public. They are found either in European or American universities (Tekle 1997). Thus, the locals have been denied access to the results of researches on their cultural heritage. Therefore, there is a need for a journal that can be accessible to our young scholars to inform them on the current status of research, and to provide them with a

forum to publish their research results. I think this proposed journal will overcome the aforementioned shortcomings.

At this moment there is a favorable environment to carry out cultural heritage research in Ethiopia. The government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia encourages scholars in various disciplines to conduct research. There is a cultural policy and a *Proclamation for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage*. Furthermore, there are many universities and training centers that train scholars in cultural heritage studies and conduct investigations in archaeology. These favorable opportunities must be supported by a new journal, such as the proposed ITYOPIS, to disseminate the new knowledge.

I support the proposal that ITYOPIS will be published in English. However, I suggest that the editors should look to incorporate local languages. Local scholars should be encouraged to publish in their own languages. I do not believe that the reputability of a journal will only come through the medium of the English language. Editing a journal is a tiresome task. The continuity, reputability, strength and weakness of this journal depend on the commitment and dedication of its editors. Mekelle University should give priority to choosing or assigning well-experienced and committed editors for this journal to ensure its sustainability and reputability.

In my opinion, the journal should focus on the publication of archaeological research in northern Ethiopia. It is my hope that ITYOPIS will give priority to the rich cultural heritage resources of the same region beginning from prehistory to the medieval period. Results of archaeological researches of both the recent and remote past of northern Ethiopia (prehistory to medieval archaeology) are some possible themes for the proposed journal. The neglected rock arts that are found in many parts of Tigray could be one of the focuses of the Journal. The rock-hewn churches, semi-rock-hewn churches, the semi-cave churches and the built-up churches are some of the interesting themes that I think ITYOPIS should focus on. Archaeological resource management including conservation of cultural heritages and archaeological impact assessment results can be some of the interesting issues which I think ITYOPIS should include in its publication. Furthermore, the same journal should be a forum for scientific debates on the current status of cultural heritage conservation in Ethiopia – for example, regarding the consolidation of the foundation of the Aksumite Stela 3 which was slightly destabilized by the reinstallation of Stela 2.

At last, I very much hope that this journal will be as popular as the Aksumite civilization; a centre of excellence in publishing scientific articles, promoting the cultural heritage resources and sites of northern Ethiopia to the world in general and to the Ethiopian public in particular.

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Contribution of Ethnographic / Ethnoarchaeological Investigations to Northeast African Archaeology

by HIRUY Daniel¹

It would be extremely difficult for archaeologists to interpret the archaeological record if they thought that people and cultures of the past bore no resemblance to those of today. It is generally assumed that there has been some continuity through time, thus archaeologists commonly use information from the present to interpret the past. One way they accomplish this is by doing archaeological research on present-day societies—studying the ways in which people live today and the material traces that their activities leave behind. This method of archaeological research is called ethnoarchaeology.

Ethnoarchaeology is the ethnographic study of peoples for archaeological reasons, usually focusing on the material remains of a society, rather than its culture. The study actually assists archaeologists in reconstructing ancient life style by studying the material and non-material traditions of contemporary societies. Archaeologists can then infer that ancient societies used the same techniques as their modern counterparts given a similar set of environmental circumstances. This will help archaeologist to better understand the archaeological context.

Ethnoarchaeological studies here in Ethiopia started mainly in the 1970s. Several Ethnoarchaeological studies are available on hide-working and associated lithic tool production (e.g., Clark and Kurashina 1981; Gallagher 1977; Brandt 1996), on pottery production (Messing 1957), as well as on the examination of traditional agriculture practices associated with domesticated plants (D’Andrea 1999, Hildebrand 2003) and more recently on vernacular architecture (Lyon 2007). Ethnoarchaeological research on traditional agriculture is currently an expanding field of study here in Ethiopia. Ever since

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