

SUSTAINABLE



PROJECT PRESENTATION

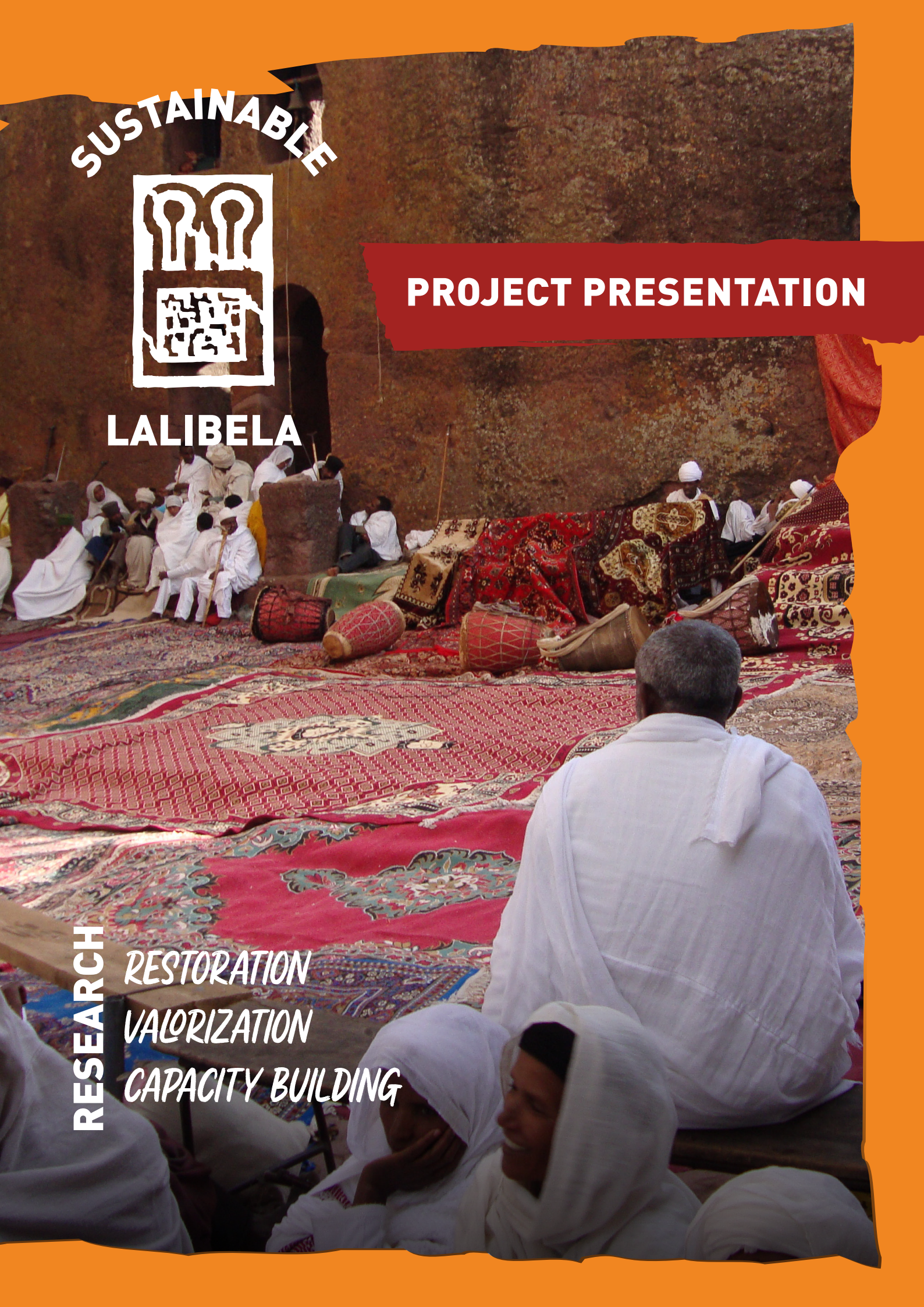
LALIBELA

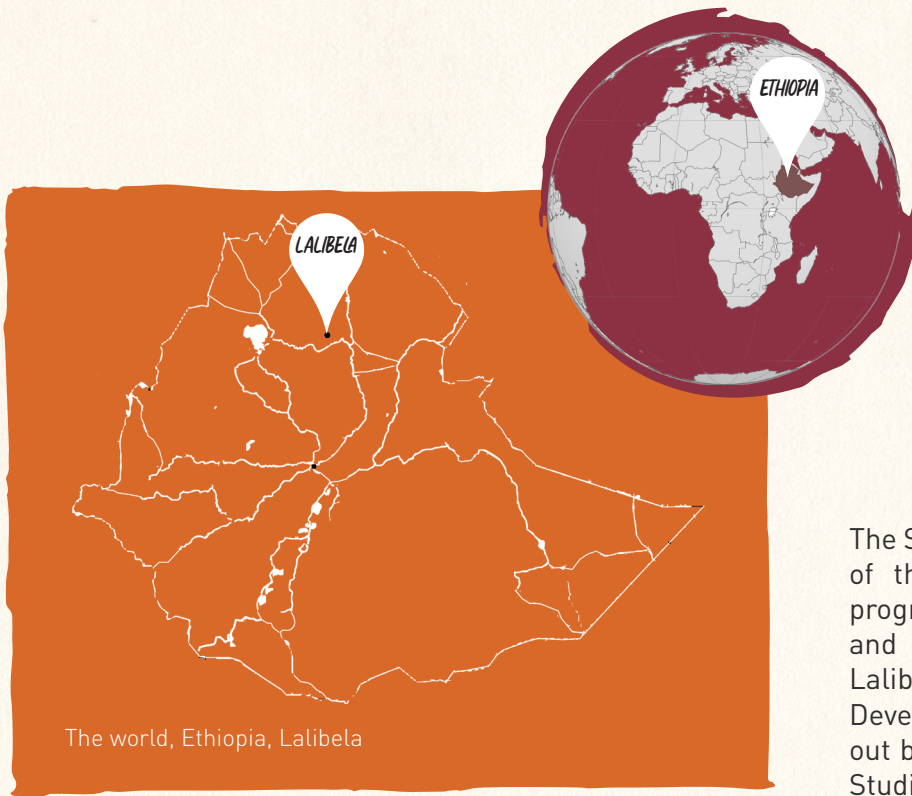
RESEARCH

RESTORATION

VALORIZATION

CAPACITY BUILDING





The Sustainable Lalibela Project is part of the Franco-Ethiopian cooperation program of restoration, preservation, and valorization of the site of Lalibela. Mainly funded by the French Development Agency (AFD) and carried out by the French Center for Ethiopian Studies (CFEE) and the French National Center for scientific research (CNRS). The project includes an intervention on-site and a training program for Ethiopian students, professionals and craftsmen to enhance capacity building in heritage management and conservation.



Lalibela's landscape

EDITOR'S NOTE

WHY SUSTAINABLE LALIBELA?

We have been carrying out researches in Lalibela for more than twelve years. And the time we spend there enables us better understand the site and the societies that invested and contributed to its evolution. The Sustainable Lalibela project for us, as researchers, is a unique opportunity to work with our Ethiopian colleagues and the communities of Lalibela. It supports us to a finer understanding of the site, its sustainable conservation, and its valorization.



Research.

Carried out for a long time by a multidisciplinary and international team. Research provides its methodology to the project: observe, analyze, report and act.

Multidisciplinary.

By gathering in Lalibela, historians, archaeologists, stone cutters, geographers, etc., the project comprehends the site in its complexity, its diversity and its evolutions.

Capacity building.

The project contributes to the establishment of a specialists' network for the Ethiopian heritage by offering on-site and school-fields training. It will enable the site's conservation and valorization using local skills.

Inclusion.

The Lalibela community's contribution to the project is essential. It is through inclusive governance, continuous dialog, knowledge sharing, job opportunities, and an education program.



... *For a sustainable site of Lalibela.*

Marie Bridonneau and Marie-Laure Derat
Scientific coordinators

CONTEXT

THE CHURCHES OF LALIBELA: AN EXCEPTIONAL HERITAGE



Lalibela, product of a long evolution since the Middle-Ages

Located on the heart of the Ethiopian's highlands, the site of Lalibela is composed of eleven churches carved in the rock. Their creation is attributed to King Lalibela, who has reigned over the Christian Kingdom at the beginning of the 13th century and has given his name to the site. The site is the product of a long evolution, which has started before the 13th century, with the first galleries digging and underground rooms. After the 13th century, new architectural programs were superimposed to the previous one, due to the continuous erosion of the upper part of the rock, both on the roofs of the monument and the courtyards at the foot of the churches.

Heart of the Ethiopian Orthodox Culture

Designed as the transposition of Jerusalem in Ethiopia, Lalibela borrows the toponyms of the Holy Land. King Lalibela, himself, is supposed to be buried in the Church of Golgotha. The cohabitation of Holy places and the tomb of the King, who has become a Saint, made Lalibela a great pilgrimage center. The Churches are today one of the most vibrant locations of the Orthodox culture in Africa, welcoming thousands of faithful for major religious celebrations of the Christian calendar.





A fragile heritage

This lively heritage, inscribed in the UNESCO's World Heritage List since 1978, has always been in danger due to the erosion of the rock. Since the beginning of the 20th century, restoration were led to save the churches. The choices made highlight very different visions of what rock monuments' restoration should be. Since the 1980s, the churches were covered to be protected from the rain. At the beginning of the 21st century, sheet-metal roof were replaced by shelters. Alternative

solutions to the shelters have been designed, but without providing perennial results for the monuments.

Conserving the site of Lalibela, enables its attendance by the faithful, the pilgrims, but also the tourists, and restoring the churches to give them back their previous prestige, are the challenges for the local community, the Church and the Ethiopian authorities.

LALIBELA: AN INHABITED HERITAGE

Both high-place of pilgrimage and daily place of worship, the churches of Lalibela are served by a clergy of about 1000 dickens and priests. They host both everyday faithful from Lalibela and its surroundings and pilgrims flocking from all over Ethiopia for Christmas. The churches are constantly occupied, during the religious ceremonies and celebrations, but also during day time. Located in the heart of a small town with about 60,000 inhabitants, the site is also a space crossed by multiple circulations enabled by the networks of cuttings, opening onto different parts of the town. The districts located on the immediate area of the churches have progressively disappeared through successive rehabilitation programs. The churches and its surroundings remain areas of circulation, playgrounds and visit but also camp settlement during the major pilgrimages.



1 HOUR BY PLANE
FROM ADDIS ABEBA

50,000 INHABITANTS



11 CHURCHES

50,000 INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS
PER YEAR

100,000 pilgrims for Christmas

SUSTAINABLE LALIBELA PROJECT

In March 2019, a Franco-Ethiopian agreement rose the conservation and the valorization of the Churches of Lalibela, among the heritage cooperation projects between the two states.

Funded by the French Foreign Office (MEAE), the French Development Agency (AFD) and the National Center for Scientific research (CNRS), the Sustainable Lalibela Project is led by the CNRS and executed by the French Center for Ethiopian Studies (CFEE) located in Addis Ababa. The

project is part of the Lalibela Program which includes a digital exhibition by Archéovision Laboratory (CNRS), a global restoration strategy, and an important program of sustainable conservation of the site through the shelterization of all the churches.

*SUSTAINABLE LALIBELA, IN THE WAKE OF
THE FRANCO-ETHIOPIAN COOPERATION
AGREEMENTS ON HERITAGE.*

LALIBELA PROJECT

The Digital Exhibition

“Lalibela, sculpting faith” by the Archéovision Laboratory:

- Innovative scenography combining technology and traditional means, along a interactive, contemplative and artistic itinerary.
- Immersion in the site’s history, its environment, its liturgical and daily use.
- Traveling between Lalibela, Addis Ababa, France and abroad.

Global Conservation

Preservation and valorization project of the site by Expertise France based on two feasibility studies:

- Diagnostic and analysis of the rocks pathologies in order to raise protection and conservation solutions.
- Analysis of the stability and resistance of the current shelters. Study of conditions for an alternative protection structure and their extrapolation on the uncovered churches (implantation plan, height, structure type).

Sustainable Lalibela

- Emergency restoration and conservation on site.
- Training in heritage restoration and management.
- Historical and touristic valorization of the site
- Establishment of a digital center.

SUSTAINABLE LALIBELA, BETWEEN CONTINUITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

The project offers an association of restoration, preservation, valorization and training in heritage jobs of students and professionals. In the future, this capacity building in Heritage Management could be adapted to other sites in Ethiopia. The project supports the Ethiopian priorities in terms of cultural, heritage and touristic priorities, while making social inclusion, one of its main pillars.

Coordinated by the CFEE, the Sustainable Lalibela project relies on the long-lasting experience of the CNRS and the CFEE. Since 2009, in partnership with the ARCCH, those French research institutions have led multidisciplinary scientific researches in Lalibela (historical, archaeological, architectural, in social sciences). Those researches have highlighted the different digging phases of the Churches, the history of the restorations and also the social dimension of heritage politics.

Those continuous Franco-Ethiopian interactions with scientists, workmen, students and members of the Lalibela's community have enabled to build a network of collaborators and to create strong links with the Ethiopian partners.



COMPONENT
1



Emergency interventions of the Churches

- 24 interventions in restoration and conservation.
- School-field training in restoration for craftsmen and women.

DESCRIPTIVE COMPO

COMPONENT
2



Restoration of the paintings and sculptures

- Light interventions on the paintings of Beta Maryam and Merqorewos.
- Establishment of sustainable conservation and preservation actions on the paintings.

SUSTAINABLE



LALIBELA

COMPONENT
3



Capacity building on heritage management

- Development of a curriculum in conservation and heritage management in order to train 80 Ethiopian students and professionals.
- Scholarships offered to the best students.

COMPONENT

4



ON OF THE NENTS

NABLE



BELA

Upgrading Lalibela historic and touristic value through Archaeology

- Franco-Ethiopian and multidisciplinary excavation mission.
- School-field training for students in Archaeology.
- Touristic promotion of the site. Training of guides.

COMPONENT

5



Creation of a digital center for Ethiopian heritage in Lalibela

- Purchasing of digital equipment.
- Digitization and establishment of a database for artefacts, 300 manuscripts and archives.
- Constitution of a corpus of interviews and movies on the history of Lalibela by its inhabitants.

SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROJECT

FOCUS ON QEYIT TARRARA.

Involving the local community in the project



Community archaeology is archaeology by the people and for the people. In Lalibela, since the 1960s, the successive archaeological missions have integrated the local community. In 2017, the Franco-Ethiopian mission started to dig a rubble hill, remaining unnamed since then, which stands in the continuity of the 2nd group of the churches. During the excavation mission of March 2021, a series of individual interviews with thirty workmen and group discussions led to a consensus on the name that should be given to the archaeological area. Those discussions have created a group emulation, interspersing local narrations, legends and the history of the site. The name "Qeyit Terara" was chosen, Qeyit's mountain. It is a reference to the landlady who is said to have sold her lands to King Lalibela in the 13th century so he could build his churches.

Her house is said to be established on this mountain. This place has an historical value related to the pre-Lalibela time, in accordance with what the archaeological mission wants to highlight.

The name was approved with enthusiasm by the clergy and the workmen of Lalibela. Community archaeology values will be promoted and enhanced all along the project in order to insure the appropriation by the community. - Kidanemariam Woldegiorgis Ayalew

DESALE DEJEN'S PORTRAIT.

School-field training and capacity building

My name is Desale Dejen, I am from Lalibela. I have graduated in Archaeology and Heritage management at Adigrat University.

In November 2020 I started the new Masters in Archaeology of the Training Institute of Lalibela (Woldiya University). To complete the theoretical classes, I have taken field school training at Qeyt Terara with the Ethio-French team. Romain Mensan, head of the archaeological mission, gave me a lot of advice on how to analyze and draw a stratigraphy and excavate step by step.

The excavation training, gave me both practical and theoretical knowledge and confidence that are the basis for my future archaeological career. Later on, I would like to start a PhD in landscape archaeology focusing around Lalibela.



ANTOINE AND AMBACHEW'S WORKING TEAM

Ready to restore. Enhance local knowledge.



**Antoine
Garric**

Stone cutter. After working 16 years in Egypt for the CFEETK (Centre Franco-Egyptien d'Etude des Temples de Karnak), he is today member of the CFEE and is in charge of the emergency intervention works for the Churches of Lalibela.

Born in a village next to Lalibela. Ambachew has lost his job due to the pandemic. Now he collaborates with Antoine for the emergency interventions.



**Ambachew
Tegen**

“We learn from each other”

Ambachew – I learn a lot from Antoine, working methodology, techniques, but also cultural aspects, such as French.

Antoine – Ambachew is going to learn a lot in this job, undergo training in craft industry and conservation (such as reading a map, carving wood and stones, welding). But I also learn a lot from Ambachew: Amharic, Ethiopian culture, Lalibela's specificities, its history and its people.

“Work methodology”

Ambachew – Concerning the craft work, Antoine shows me the goal of the finished work and then we carry out the different steps together.

Antoine – By providing explanations of the different steps, we are much more efficient in the work. We are doing teamwork.

“Providing the community with new opportunities”

Ambachew – Lalibela's income is based on touristic activity. Then, when it was stopped due to the pandemic, I have lost my job and I thought life would be very complicated. Now I can see the opening of an alternative path: specialization in restoration and craft industry. After that, I could open my own workshop.

Antoine – It's an opportunity for the local craftsmen that will gain in competence. Craftsmen will be able to restore other sites around Lalibela or in other parts of Ethiopia.

“A restoration project rooted in the locality”

Ambachew – As much as possible, the equipment is bought locally, in Lalibela or in Addis Ababa. For instance, the wood comes from Lalibela.

Antoine – The symbols of the churches of Lalibela are an inspiration for our work. One of the interventions concerns the building of new bridges. The aim, with the Ethiopian authorities consent, is to achieve bridges in stone for a more harmonious integration within the site. We also want to add architectural elements that will remind of the churches, such as arches, symbols from the doors and windows. It will enable a continuity with the churches' visit. Those achievements will be included in the craftsmen training. They will have to draw the plans and cut the stones.

FIGURES

FUNDING SOURCES

5,113,000 €

in total funding

AFD - 3,300,000 €

ALIPH - 125,000 €

CFEE - 411,000 €



CNRS - 1,227,000 €

FSPI - Heritage 50,000 €

+100

People employed

workmen for the archaeological mission, carpenter, guards, facilitators...

100

People trained

80 students trained in conservation and heritage management
20 craftsmen trained.

50

Experts involved

international and French actors

PLANNED PROGRAM

Projects duration : +3 years

COMPONENTS

2021

- 1 • Launch of the Churches' emergency intervention works
• Study and setting of the electrical system.
- 2 • Records mission in Europe
• Analysis and studies on the materials.
- 3 • Training of Ethiopian students in heritage management.
- 4 • Archaeological mission
• School-field training of the students and professionals and the guides.
- 5 • Purchase of IT and digital equipment.

2022

- 1 • Emergency intervention works
• Setting the lighting and electrical system.
- 2 • Intervention on the paintings and the sculptures in the churches.
- 3 • Training of Ethiopian students in heritage management
• Scholarships for studies (Masters and PhD) and internships in France offered to some students.
- 4 • Archaeological mission
• School-field training of the students and professionals and the guides.
- 5 • Records : centralize the records and organize the data base
• Digitalization
• Training by CNRS agents to archiving professions.

2023

- 2 • Intervention on the paintings and the sculptures in the churches.
- 4 • Archaeological mission
• School-field training of the students and professionals and the guides
• Touristic valorization of the site, call for a typographic designer
• Publications and round-table.
- 5 • Archiving and digitization
• Training by CNRS agents to the records professions.

PROJECT TEAM



**ALEBACHEW
BELAY BIRRU**

*Referent Teacher and
archaeologist*

Doctor in Archaeology, Assistant Professor at Debre Berhan University. Specialized in historical archaeology of the Middle-Ages megalithic in Ethiopia. Excavates in Lalibela since 2018 with the Franco-Ethiopian mission.



**ANTOINE
GARRIC**

*Head of the emergency
intervention program*

Stone-cutter, Engineer assistant at the CNRS. Sixteen years experience as head of the anastyloses works at Karnak Temples, Egypt. Associated member of the mission "Lalibela, Archaeology of a Rock-hewn site" for a decade.



**CLAIRE
BOSC-TIESSÉ**

*Direction and scientific
coordination of the
painting and sculpture
restoration program*

Research fellow (CNRS) and scientific advisor (INHA). Art historian, specialist of artistic production in the Christian Kingdom in Ethiopia (13-19th century). Co-director (2008-2019) of the historic and archaeological mission in Lalibela.



**MARIE
BRIDONNEAU**

Scientific coordinator

Social Geographer, Director of the CFEE since 2018. Phd Thesis on "Lalibela, an Ethiopian city in globalization". Maître de conférence at Paris-Nanterre University.



**HANNA SIYUM
TADESSE**

*Administrative and
finance coordinator*

Budget administrator and accountant of the CFEE since 2013. In charge of the budget's administration, of the financial reports' establishment, the human resources and the current affairs' management in the project's achievement.



**MEKONEN
G/MESKEL
AMAGNOU**

*Correspondent of
Lalibela's Church for
the Franco-Ethiopian
cooperation program*

Born in Lalibela. In charge of the international relations of Lalibela's Church administration.



**KIDANEMARIAM
WOLDEGIORGIS
AYALEW**

Project Manager

Born in Lalibela. Graduated in Ethiopian Studies and Heritage Management. 12 years experience at Lalibela's excavation mission, 15 years experience in heritage development projects in Lalibela.



**KALKIDAN
TIRUNEH TEKLE**

Management Assistant

Graduated in accounting and management. Administrative and financial management assistant for the Sustainable Lalibela Project.



**DR. MENGISTU
GOBEZIE**

*Advisor to the Ethiopian
counterpart*

Born in Lasta region. Archaeologist. Special advisor for the Ministry of culture and Tourism on Lalibela's cases.



**ROMAIN
MENSAN**

*Head of the Franco-
Ethiopian archaeological
excavation*

Geo-archaeologist. Associated member of TRACES laboratory (Toulouse) and CFEE (CNRS). In charge of the archaeological excavation in Lalibela since 2008.



LOÏC ESPINASSE

*Project manager
Lalibela international
exhibition project*

Engineer at Archéovision, specialized in the use of 3D technologies for the research and valorization of cultural heritage. Project manager and technical curator of the Lalibela exhibition.



**MARIE-LAURE
DERAT**

Scientific Coordinator

Research director at the CNRS. Historian, specialized in medieval Ethiopia. Co-director (2010-2018) and then director (since 2019) of the historical and archaeological mission in Lalibela.



**DELPHINE
DELAMARE**

*Communication
Officer*

Student in International Cooperation (Sorbonne University and intern at the Cfee). In charge of the communication of the project and school programs.

PARTNERSHIP AND FUNDING

French Embassy

Through its support in the preservation and valorization of the Churches of Lalibela, France remains faithful to its long-lasting friendship with Ethiopia. Fruit of a common will from the French Republic President Emmanuel Macron and the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Dr Abiy Ahmed, this project echoes the long cooperation tradition that unites French scientists and their Ethiopian colleagues for several decades.

It is this story that we carry on today through this ambitious restoration program of the Churches of Lalibela, scientific research and the training of the Ethiopian actors who are their safe keepers. The double ambition of the project draws its distinction: a scientific approach and a close partnership with the population of Lalibela and their representatives. Through this commitment, France remains faithful to its values: preserve what we trust in; make sure that future generations will be able to grow up and raise in the shadows of those monuments and of the memory they pass through time. Because heritage is a powerful contributor to political cohesion, binding generations, territories and people. This conviction gathers France and Ethiopia: indeed, our two nations comprehend their future with a deep awareness of the deep antiquity of their civilization.

I want to salute the great work led by the CNRS teams, of the French Center for Ethiopian Studies, and its Ethiopian partners to design and execute this ambitious project, with the support of the AFD and the French Embassy in Ethiopia.

Rémi Maréchaux
French Ambassador in Ethiopia and to the African Union



French Agency for Development (AFD)

The AFD supports financially and technically heritage valorization and preservation's projects in Ethiopia. On this basis, the agency has allocated 3,3M€ to the CNRS in November 2020 for carrying out the ambitious and integrated Sustainable Lalibela program. The project has been designed with federal, local and religious authorities in charge of this living heritage.

The AFD was particularly interested in several aspects of the project: the continuous dialog between the Ethiopian and French actors in the definition of the actions, the objectives and the process; the development of sustainable capacities for numerous actors and institutions: local craftsmen, future archaeologists, historians, heritage manager who will use their knowledge and skills to intervene on other Ethiopian sites, local guides for the valorization of the site; improvement of the site's understanding and its open access through the establishment of a digital database center; community and various public's inclusion (such as the schoolchildren) in this project.

The AFD intervenes in Ethiopia since 1996 in order to support the Ethiopian government, its public companies and the civil society in various sectors (energy, water, urban development, agriculture). Those commitments represent about 600M€.

Valérie TEHIO
AFD, Country Director, Ethiopia





CNRS

The CNRS has been involved through its researchers, engineers and technicians in the historical and archaeological research works on the site of Lalibela for over 10 years. It is with great enthusiasm that the CNRS is supporting the Sustainable Lalibela project, which not only continues the work undertaken by researchers, engineers and technicians of the CNRS joint research units in France and the French Centre for Ethiopian Studies, a CNRS unit in Addis Ababa, but also aims to expand scientific collaboration with a wide range of French and Ethiopian partners in an integrative approach.

The various aspects of the project, which combine fundamental research, participatory research and training in and through research with the aim of restoring and enhancing the site, meet the priorities of the CNRS's scientific and international policy. The commitment to a research agenda co-constructed with Ethiopian, scientific and cultural partners, which integrates theoretical and practical training, and which involves the local populations, is particularly valuable because it will ensure the development of specific skills and expertise, supported by research practices, which can effectively meet the needs of the public and the States.



Sylvie DEMURGER
Scientific assistant manager - CNRS

Church of Lalibela

The Church of Lalibela's administration is glad and thankful to welcome the Franco-Ethiopian project, Sustainable Lalibela, led by a transnational and multidisciplinary team which aims to restore, preserve and enhance the World Heritage of Saint Lalibela rock-hewn Churches. The program highlights the multi-facet dimension of the Sacred Churches and the town of Lalibela: the research carried on will enable to bring profound solutions to the fragility of this heritage and to train local actors to sustainable heritage management.

Memhir Komos Aba Tsige Silase Mezgebu
Head of St. Lalibela Monastery



SUSTAINABLE



LALIBELA

CONTACTS

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@sustainablelalibela - Follow us on social media!

SPECIAL THANKS

The artist Tegegne Yirdaw for his inspiring drawings.
The graphic designer, Addismiraph Abebe, Bete-Semay Creative Media, for his creativity.
And all the members of the Sustainable Lalibela project for their cooperation in the preparation of this file.

