

archaeology notes

NEW YORK

New method for preserving buildings

A new process to preserve stone, either in ancient monuments or new buildings is undergoing tests on volcanic rock churches in Ethiopia and on various stone buildings in the United States.

The method includes applying a clear, colorless liquid to silicious stones such as granite, sandstone, and basalt. The liquid penetrates the stone and treats it chemically so it will resist the action of salts and water—principal agents of decay.

Dr. Seymour Z. Lewin, of the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, has recently returned from Lalibela, Ethiopia, where, at the request of the government, he applied his liquid formula to ancient churches deteriorated by time and weather. He will return within a year to determine how well the new formula has protected the stone from exposure. Pending approval of a patent on the solution, Dr. Lewin will not disclose its makeup.

ETHIOPIA

Mysterious volcanic churches

Eleven weathered churches, carved centuries ago from volcanic rock, are being inspected by researchers puzzling over their age and design.

Surrounded by the towering mountains, the churches at Lalibela, Ethiopia, were long inaccessible to all but the local inhabitants. Only recently has an airline opened up the area and stimulated interest in the curiously carved edifices, badly damaged by time, wind, rain and ancient invaders.

The churches were hewn from living volcanic rock in massive rectangular blocks, out of which craftsmen chiseled and carved edifices with ornate roofs and ceilings, walls 30 to 50 feet high, windows, columns and arches.

The churches are surrounded by an extensive system of drainage ditches and defense trenches. Some scientists believe the churches were carved by Coptic priests during the 12th and 13th centuries A.D., under the supervision of King Lalibela. Others believe they were carved during the reign of the Queen of Sheba around 950 B.C. by priests of the Cult of the Universe who believed such temples had to be "one with the earth" and not "built."

ISRAEL

Unknown seacoast town discovered

An ancient Phoenician town, until now unrecorded, is being excavated from a mound of blowing sand along a seacoast road near Caesarea, Israel.

The town, named Tel Magadim, was once a walled settlement, with a main street and large storehouses. At one time some 1,000 inhabitants may have lived there.

The settlement apparently flourished under Persian domination from the seventh to the fourth century B.C. It may have been overwhelmed, then abandoned, by Alexander the Great on his march through Asia Minor.

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Since about 330 B.C. no one has lived on the site, and the ruins have remained undisturbed.

Archaeologists, under the supervision of Magen Broshi, curator of the Shrine of the Book at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, have uncovered a dozen figurines, fragments of Attic black glaze pottery, and other pieces of pottery imported from Rhodes and Cyprus. Cremated bodies have been found in the sand.

Scientists believe the highest part of the town, which has yet to be excavated, may contain a temple and the governor's house.

ISRAEL

Longest Dead Sea Scroll unrolled

The longest Dead Sea Scroll yet discovered—more than 28 feet long—has been unrolled and translated at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. It treats four basic subjects: religious rules, festival sacrifices and offerings, descriptions of sizes and uses of temples, and statutes of the king.

The scroll, provisionally called the Temple Scroll, came into the hands of Hebrew scholars in the midst of last summer's Six Day's War—in a manner they will not discuss for fear of jeopardizing acquisition of further scrolls, reports Dr. Yigael Yadin in December's *THE BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGIST*.

ITALY

Etruscan harbor found in good condition

An Etruscan harbor, in better condition than any others yet found, has been uncovered near Vada on the Tuscany coast north of Rome.

This harbor, mentioned in the work of a minor Latin poet, was discovered some 250 yards inland from the present beach, according to a UNESCO report.

The Etruscans, a wealthy and powerful civilization living in Italy more than 2,000 years ago, ruled the Mediterranean from Italy to Spain. They established many cities and harbors before they mysteriously disappeared and the Roman Empire succeeded them.

MEXICO

Shattered monuments indicate revolution

The deliberate shattering and burying of all great basalt Olmec monuments of the San Lorenzo site several thousand years ago was accomplished by rebels, not by invaders, believes archaeologist Dr. Michael D. Coe of Yale's Peabody Museum.

All stone carved statues and monuments, some weighing as much as 40 tons, were smashed, then laid out in long lines around the San Lorenzo plateau, and buried with tons of fill. This immense task of loosened fury resulted from an internal political crisis, after which the San Lorenzo civilization quickly declined, Dr. Coe reports in the fall issue of *DISCOVERY*. San Lorenzo was once a powerful center of the Olmec civilization, Mesoamerica's oldest culture, which flourished from about 1200 to 300 B.C., some 600 years before the rise of the Maya.