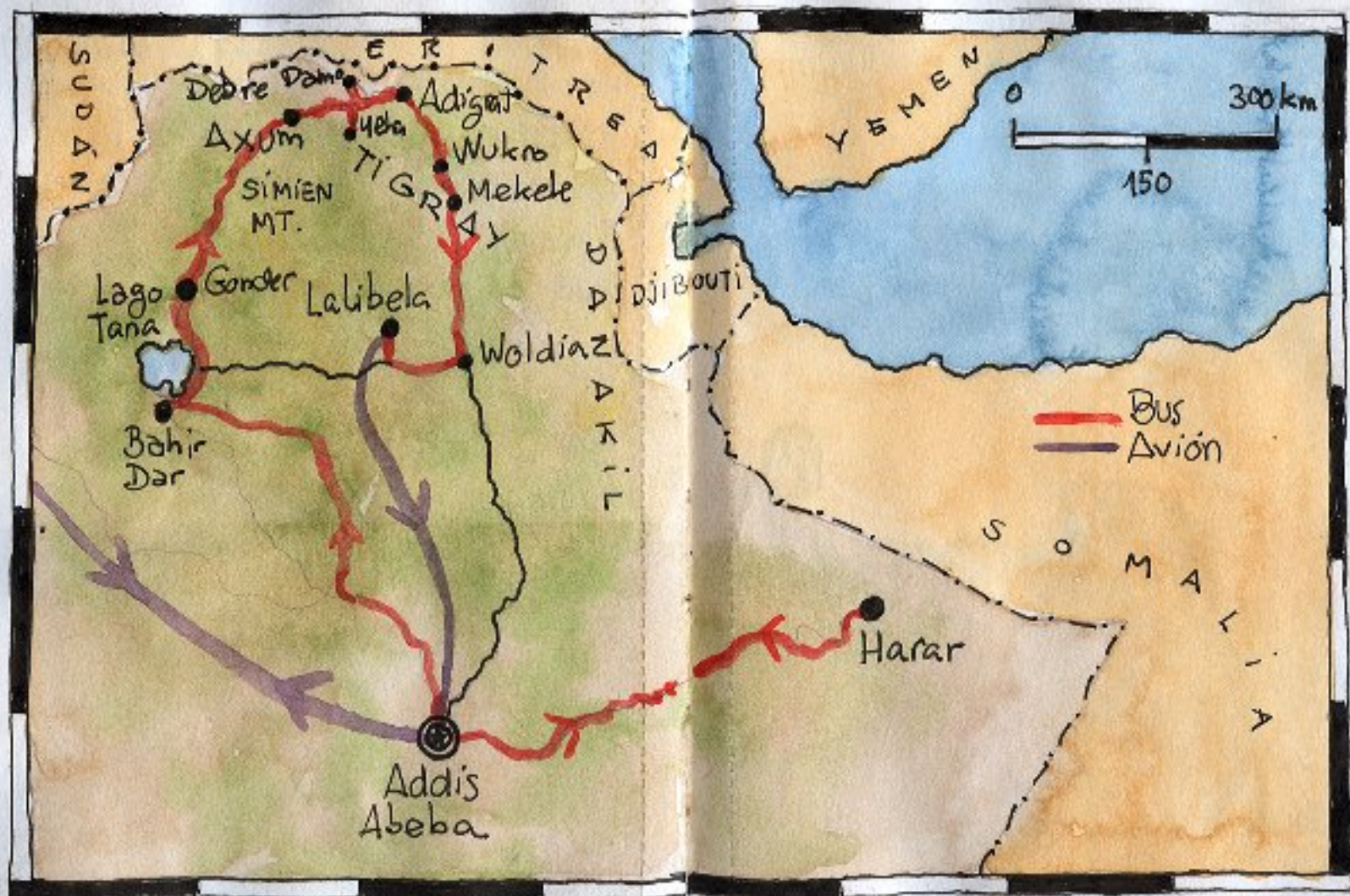


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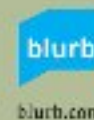


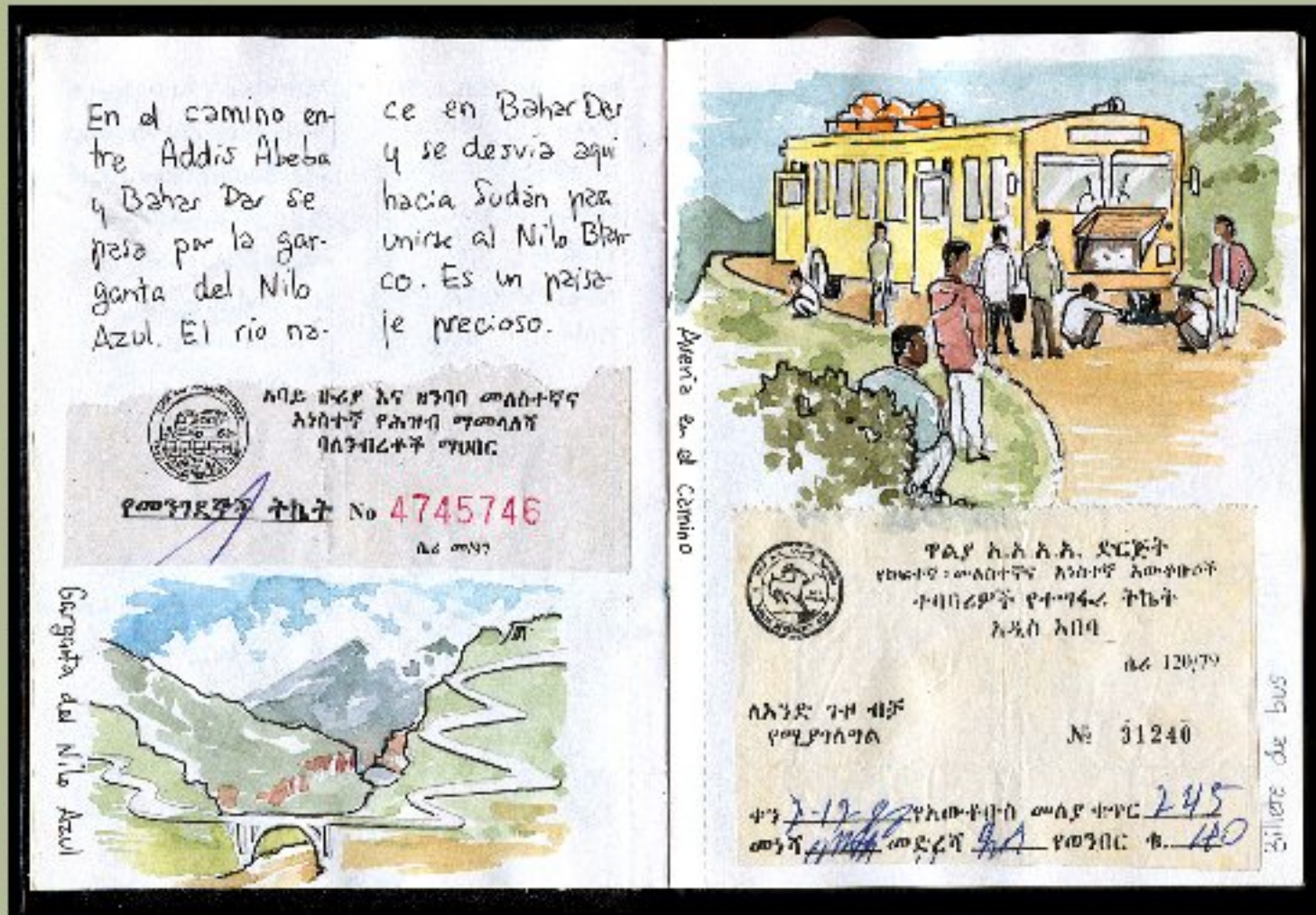
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Travelling by **bus** is the best way to know the real Ethiopia, although a bus trip is always unpredictable, specially in rainy season, when the tracks turn into muddy traps. Most tourists travel by plane but I enjoyed ethiopian buses with all their peculiarities: they all leave at 6am, the wooden seats are often crowded (but never overbooked) journeys last all day and they never open the windows...

Bahar Dar está
a orillas del Lago
Tana. La ciudad
no tiene un en-
canto especial,

sus principales
atrachos están
en torno al lago.
Los monasterios
ortodoxos que hay

en sus islas y
el nacimiento
del Nilo Azul
en las cata-
ratas de Tis
Abay, una es-
pecie de "desagüe"



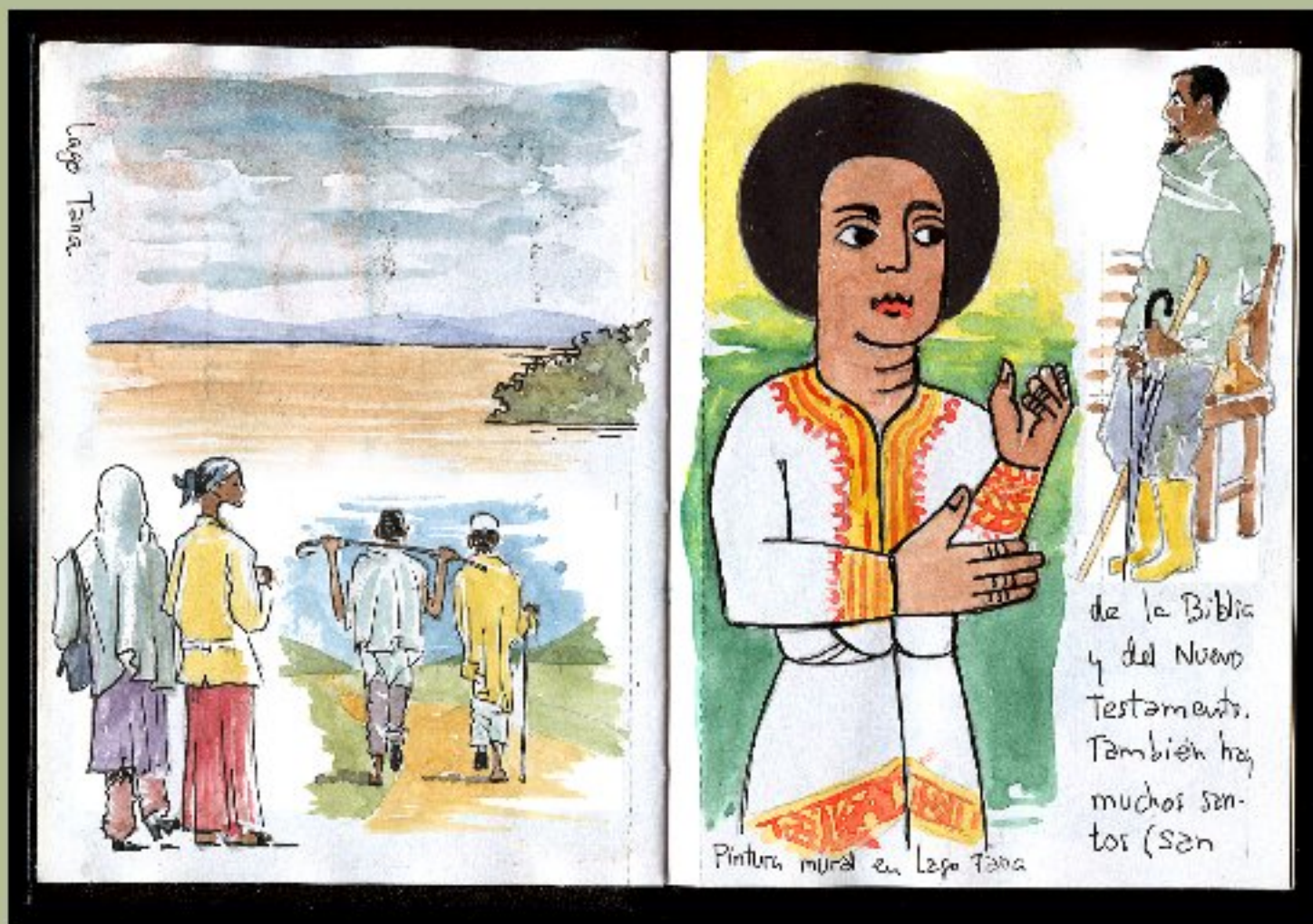
Hotel Union, Bahar Dar



del lago, a 30 km
de la ciudad, des-
cubiertas en 1770
por el escocés
James Bruce.



Bahar Dar is a quiet town by the Tana Lake, famous for the Tis Abay Falls (fountains of the Blue Nile, the Ethiopian branch of the legendary river) and the orthodox monasteries on the many islands of the lake.



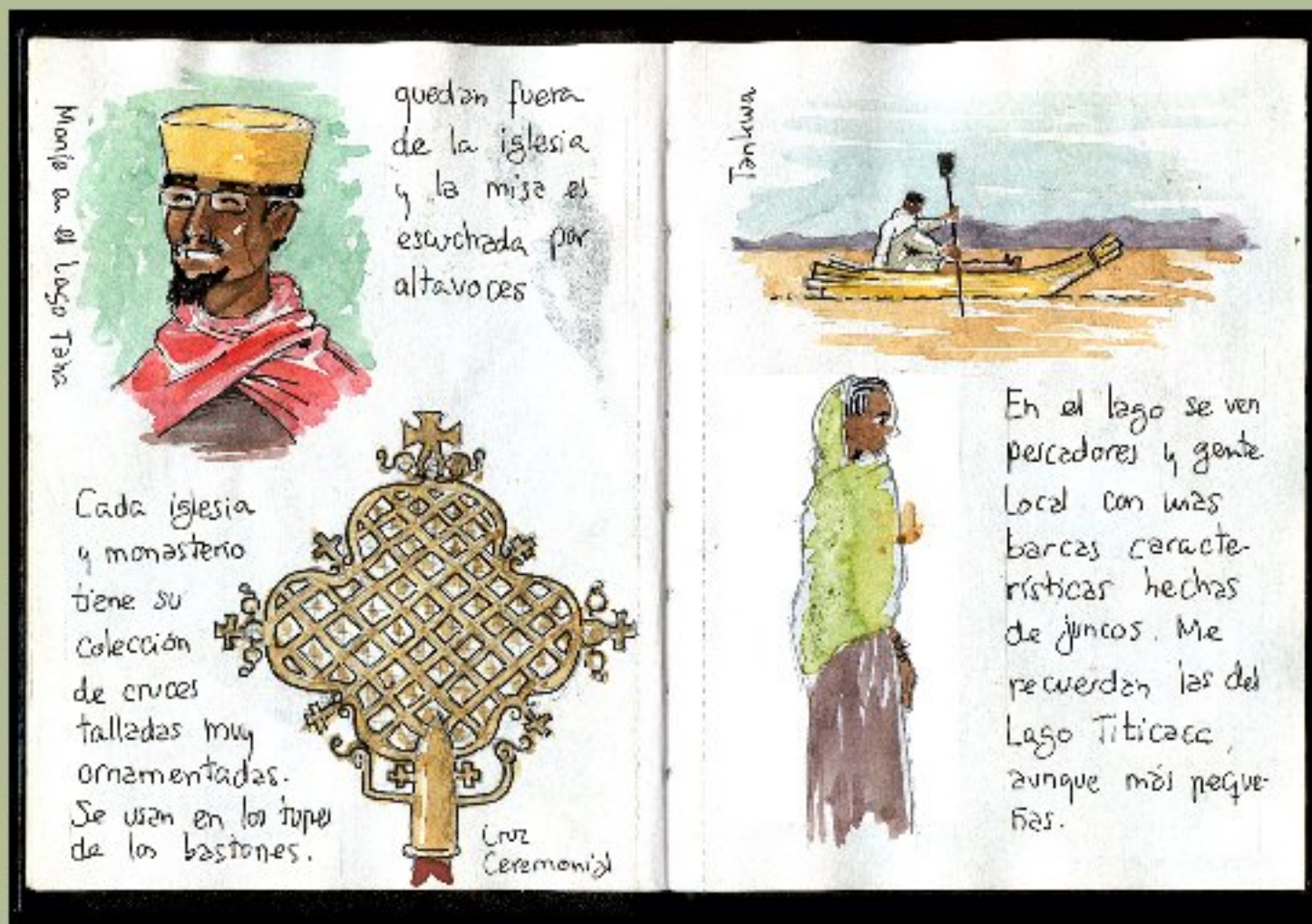
Lake Tana is the largest in this part of Africa and its many orthodox monasteries deserve a visit to observe the ancient customs and marvellous paintings well kept by the many monks and nuns that still live there.



Most of the **monasteries** have a round church with many concentric levels: the outer level is for the people, the inner circles for the priests. Monks live in adjacent cells and there are even villages inside the monastery grounds. In one of them they offered me the "**coffee ceremony**", a welcome sign including the preparation of black coffee right from the seeds.



Orthodox priests follow strict ancient rules and serve as guides to show you the many painted walls inside the churches. The wall **paintings** started as a way to show the illiterate peasants the stories of the Bible: Mary, the saints, the devil, saint George and the dragon... all presented in a "comic style"



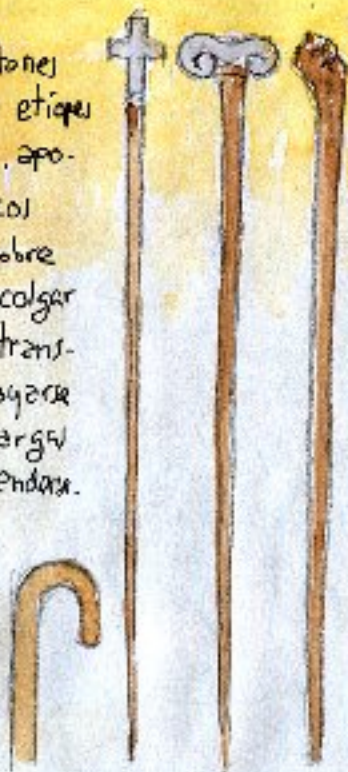
The metallic **crosses** are an important part of the orthodox imagery. Each church has its own, some of them real masterpieces, that show off in religious holidays. Each part of the country has its own artistic style, so you can find "axumite", "lalibelan"... crosses. Local inhabitants of Lake Tana still sail this waters in junk handmade **vessels** that reminded me those in Titicaca lake.



Tis Abay falls are the birthplace of the Blue Nile, that joins the White Nile (coming from central Africa) in Jartoum. Menaced by a future hydraulic power central, in rainy season you can feel the power and magnificence os those brown waters that later become one of the mythical rivers of Africa.

DULAS

Son los bastones que usan los etíopes para andar, apoyar los brazos cruzándolo sobre los hombros, colgar bolsas para transportar, apoyarse en espigas largas y hasta defenderse.



INJERA

Es una tortilla blanda y húmeda que sirve para acompañar

a la mayoría de los platos. Se sirve en bandeja redonda metálica o de mimbre con la comida encima. Con la mano derecha (la izquierda no se usa para comer) se arrancan trozos de injera y se envuelve con ellos la comida. Se puede pedir pan como alternativa.



Dulas are the widely used walking sticks that in fact have many practical uses: hang big bags, a place to lay your arms when walking... and even self-defence! **Injera** is the typical Ethiopian food, a basic pancake served in round trays to which you can add anything on top (vegetables, lentils, meat...). It is eaten with the fingers, rolling some food in it.



Gonder is a sort of medieval african *Camelot*. Here you can find the Palace Complex of ethiopian kings, long lasting dynasties that built libraries, castles, churches... all in an interesting mix of european-indian architectural styles.

Los castillos medievales de Gondar fueron construidos por el emperador Fasiladas, quien es-



El archivo de Fasil
Gondar

tableció su capital aquí en 1636. Durante más de 20 años floreció aquí una corte que se movía entre palacios, castillos, bibliotecas, iglesias... Se dice que fueron arquitectos portugueses los que construyeron este "Camelot" etíope.



Torre del Palacio. Gondar

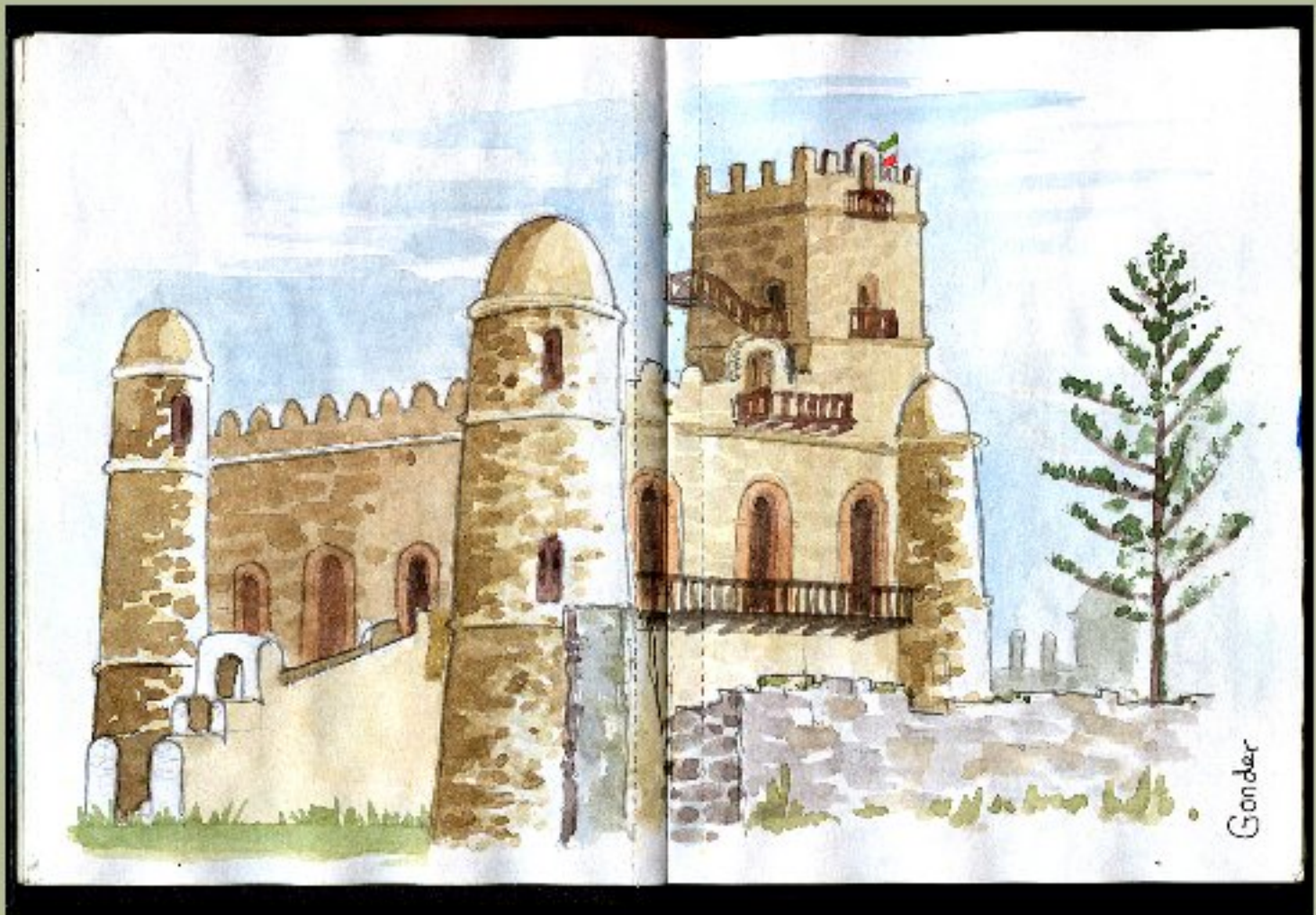
In 1636 Emperor **Fasiladas** established here his court and his reign was a regional power at that time.



Fasiladas Bath is a cozy little building located in the middle of a pool. Built in the beginning as a ludic relaxing complex, it is nowadays used for religious feasts. In *Timkat* festival baptisms take place here.



One of the highlights of Gondar is the **Debre Berhan Selassie church**. It is said to have been built to house the Ark of the Covenants, which finally ended up in Axum. But nowadays it is famous for its mural paintings, specially the wooden ceiling (*see pic*) with the many black angels on it. If you look carefully, each one is different!



Another of the many medieval castles of **Gonder**.