

12-6-2023

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Tesfaye Fentaw Nigatu

Wollo University, Ethiopia, tesfaye.fentaw@wu.edu.et

Endris A. Haider

Wollo University, Ethiopia, endrishaider@gmail.com

Zelalem G. Ambaw

Wollo University, Ethiopia, zelalem.ambaw@wu.edu.et

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Recommended Citation

Nigatu, Tesfaye Fentaw; Haider, Endris A.; and Ambaw, Zelalem G. (2023) "Tourism Potential & Challenges for Islamic Monastery Heritage Sites in Ethiopia: Tiru Sina Mosque," *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*: Vol. 11: Iss. 2, Article 9.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.21427/QCBQ-TH64>

Available at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijrtp/vol11/iss2/9>

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Tourism Potential & Challenges for Islamic Monastery Heritage Sites in Ethiopia: Tiru Sina Mosque

Tesfaye Fentaw Nigatu

Ph.D. Candidate, Sunway University, Malaysia / Academic Staff, Wollo University, Ethiopia
tesfaye.fentaw@wu.edu.et

Endris A. Haider

Wollo University, Ethiopia
endris.haider@wu.edu.et

Zelalem G. Ambaw

Wollo University, Ethiopia
zelalem.ambaw@wu.edu.et

The main intent of this study is to investigate unusual Islamic monastery heritage sites by focusing on the potential resources and challenges for religious tourism development at Tiru Sina Mosque. To meet this objective a qualitative approach was utilised and data were collected through interviews with elderly religious fathers in addition to culture and tourism officers. Additional focus groups, discussions and deep personal observations were conducted. As the findings reveal, Tiru Sina Mosque is a unique Islamic monastic site with great potential for religious tourism development. This unique Islamic monastery heritage site has socio-cultural, economic, historical, religious and aesthetic values. The study also confirmed, even though the area is rich in cultural heritage, there are serious challenges that affect its development. The major problems are lack of awareness, poor handling systems for heritage, lack of infrastructural development, absence of coordination among stakeholders, shortage of skilled professionals, lack of cooperation and partnership among different stakeholders, heritage destruction and lack of conservation, and lack of risk management.

Key Words: Islamic monastery, religious tourism, heritage site, heritage management

Introduction: Background and Rationale

Heritage can be regarded as anything that someone wishes to conserve or to collect and pass on to future generations (Ashworth, Graham & Tunbridge, 2007). This definition places much emphasis on people, values, and ownership issues. In this regard, heritage is for people; not just for a small minority of specialists and experts, but for everyone (Howard, 2003). Heritage resources are part of the past that we select in the present for contemporary purposes - whether economic, political, or cultural issues - which are selected to bequeath to the future (Ashworth *et al.*, 2007). More generally, according to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) definition, heritage is our legacy from the past, which we live with today, and pass on to future generations. Our cultural and natural heritage are irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration. Heritage can also be described in terms of natural and cultural heritage resources. Cultural heritage is about far more than 'stones and bones' from the past. It is all aspects of a community's

past and present which are valuable and need to be passed on to future generations. The term incorporates places, objects, and practises of cultural significance. It thus includes both 'tangible heritage', such as buildings, industrial structures and technology, landscapes and artefacts, and non-visible cultural heritage features such as buried archaeological sites, and 'intangible heritage', such as language, visual art, music, performance, religion, beliefs and customary practises like hunting and gathering (UNESCO, 2003). Cultural heritage is not just about old things. New or newly altered objects, places, and practises are just as much a part of cultural heritage where they hold cultural value for today's generations (Ashworth, 2003).

Heritage resources are multi-purpose and include providing tourist attractions, a focus on community identity, a valuable resource for formal and informal education, and economic regeneration. In economic endeavours, heritage is considered an economic driver in the cultural domain (Millar, 1989). As individuals and

members of various groups in society, we have different 'heritages'; we see different items and sites which are significant to us (Potter 2003). Heritage identification, conservation, and management are paramount importance in learning about the different groups of societies at regional and national levels, as well as about interactions between groups and nations (Aplin, 2007; World Bank, 2001).

Religious tourism is the oldest form of tourism activity. It is a form of tourism whereby people of faith travel individually or in groups for pilgrimage, missionary, leisure or fellowship purposes (Citrinot, 2011). It comprises visits to a temple or place for the purpose of praying, visiting of religious monuments and objects as part of a sight-seeing tour, visiting to religious sites involving religious activities or religious teachings (Henderson, 2003). Moreover, religious tourism comprises not only visiting sites, shrines, and structures with religious significance but also attending religious conferences, different culturally religious events, exhibitions of cultic objects, and concerts of sacred music (Vidic, 2007).

Islamic communities explore their Religion, Geography, History, and Science through a range of artworks that were inspired and influenced by beliefs and practicalities of worship. In Islamic cultures, the decorative arts became highly sophisticated and there was no essential difference between secular and spiritual life. The first Mosque to be built was also the home of the Prophet Muhammed; likewise, the living room of a house can be used as the family's prayer room where the same prayers are said as within the mosque. Beautifully adorned objects at home and in mosques were intended as a constant reminder of the words of God (Bloom & Blair, 1997). Many of the Islamic heritage resources contribute significantly to Islamic history and culture.

Historically, Ethiopian societies are known for their remarkable diversity and religious co-existence. In this peaceful and historical relationship with Christian communities, the Islamic communities produce remarkable historical and ancient heritage resources. These Islamic communities produce interesting antiquities (since the introduction of Islam) throughout Ethiopia (Canby, 2006; Abbink, 1998)

In the Global arena, many heritage resources are destroyed by humanmade and natural disasters. For example; the

cemetery of Al-Muallah, located in Mecca southeast of the Masjed Al-Haram. In this cemetery are buried some of the greatest personalities of Islam, including the first wife of the Prophet, Khadija, as well as the uncle, grand, and great grandfathers of the Prophet and a number of highly respected Sunni scholars such as Imam Malik ibn Anas, the founder of the Maliki school of thought in Sunni Islam. The site was invaded in 1925 and shrines were destroyed (Abbink, 1998; The Centre for Academic Shi'a Studies 2014). Another Islamic site which was destroyed is the cemetery of Baqi, which is also known as the Garden of Baqi, in the early 1800s and again in the 1920s. The Baqi cemetery is located southeast of Masjed Al Nabawi; the mosque and the house of the Prophet and also his burial place. The Muslim communities highly respect the cemetery and according to historians, it is said that the Prophet personally allocated this plot of land as a cemetery for his close relatives and companions. Some of the noblest figures buried there include the Prophet's grandson, the 2nd Shi'ite Imam, Hassan ibn Ali, and the 4th, 5th, and 6th Imams.

In different time periods many heritage resources have been destroyed partially and totally, including the house of Khadija, the wife of the Prophet; the grave of Hawa (Eve) in Jeddah; the grave of Abdullah ibn Abdul Muttalib, the father of the Prophet, in Medina; the second house of Fatema, the daughter of Prophet, in Medina; the Salman al-Farsi mosque in Medina; the Raj'at ash-shams mosque in Medina; the house of the Prophet in Medina, where he lived after migrating from Mecca; the house of Jafar Al-Sadiq, 6th Shi'ite Imam, in Medina and others in Saudi Arabia alone (The Centre for Academic Shi'a Studies 2015).

Many studies have been conducted on the heritage resources of Africa. These studies both identify the many heritage resources and highlight their challenges. Many Islamic heritage resources are also being destroyed in Sudan due to civil conflicts and war. Many heritage resources are also damaged due to out-dated laws and legislation and a lack of comprehensive inventories of heritage resources throughout the continent. One of the great bottlenecks of African heritage resource management is the lack of responsible institutions which provide information and education to heritage conservators and managers (Eboreime. 2009). According to the value-based approach to tourism, heritage resources have different values. They have economic, historic, aesthetic, political, bequest, cultural, evidential

and architectural values. The central assumption of the value-based approach is to conserve heritage because of these values (Avrami et al., 2000). The heritage process depends on the values that people invest in the heritage phenomenon; on the different ways in which things are viewed. To understand the heritage value of any particular item, we need to grasp where all the stakeholders are 'coming from' and what values they bring to it (Howard, 2003). For a long period of time Islamic heritage resources served as a source of income, touristic value, focus of education and long standing architectural and artistic value.

A small number of studies have been conducted in Ethiopia related to heritage and religious tourism. Dagnachew Nega (2019) has explored the role of religious tourism for promoting sustainable tourism development at religious heritage sites by focusing on Adyame Yordanos Wonkshet Monastery. Gedecho (2014) has studied the challenges of religious tourism development in the case of Gishen Mariam, Ethiopia. Alemshet and Legese (2019) have examined religious places as tools for adventure tourism development in Tigray, Ethiopia. However, these three studies listed above in Ethiopia did not study the potential of Islamic heritage resources for religious tourism and the related challenges this would face in Ethiopia. Therefore, in this work the researchers have tried to assess Islamic heritage resources and the challenges for religious tourism in Ethiopia by focusing on the Tiru Sina Mosque in Oromo special Zone in Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia.

The main objective of this study is to investigate unique Islamic monastic heritage resources and the challenges for conservation and management for religious tourism with a special focus Tiru Sina Mosque in Ethiopia.

Methodology

Study Design and Approach

This study followed a qualitative research approach. This approach was adopted in the sense that meaning is multiple, that people can perceive and interpret things differently. This is mainly because people's values, backgrounds, and lived experiences vary, as they inhabit dynamic social, economic and political territories (Patton 2002). The findings as presented in the next sections follow a descriptive research design

Data Sources

Since this study is a qualitative, the researchers anticipated a need for the use of multiple methods / data collection tools. To garner the relevant information on the road to generating the required data for realising the stated objectives, the study used both primary and secondary sources.

Secondary Data

Secondary sources were used to gather information about the heritage of the site under investigation and the related communities, etc. from published documentary materials. Reports of different offices such as the Zone Administration Office, the Culture Zone office, the Tourism Office(s) and Bureaus, were all used.

Primary Data

Public and civil society archival sources & reports, personal narrations of individuals, field observation of the festivals and others collected using multiple techniques of data collection were all utilised. These methods are described one by one in the following way:

Observation method: was used from the very beginning of the data gathering to the end of the fieldwork. During the first week of the fieldwork, the researchers observed the study sites. The main purpose of the field observation was to explore the different environmental characteristics of the study area as well as observe the heritage resources of the community in the study area. During the data collection period, the researchers also observed each site that has the necessary heritage resources. Photographs of the heritages were taken, within their environment (Kothari 2004). The researchers observed the sites on three different occasions within a year. The first observation was carried out during December. The second and the third observation were in April and at the end of June. Three sites were observed these were the mosque itself and the honey preparing house; the material store houses and; the traditional education centres. During field observation, field notes were recorded and pictures of different heritage sites and of some of the key informants were taken by the researchers.

In-depth interview method: was used to understand the detailed history and interpretation of the heritage resources as per the understanding of the local knowledgeable informants, district officials, culture and

tourism office workers, and other concerned stakeholders (Saunders *et al.*, 2007). The majority of the informants were selected from the local community.

The research team have a preference for semi-structured interviews because the approach allows greater standardisation and control while enabling easy comparison of responses to questions. In addition, despite having specific questions, semi-structured interviews allow more probing to seek clarification and elaboration of the participant's own ideas, aspirations, and feelings while generating detailed, 'rich' contextual, qualitative data (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). Thus, the in-depth interview questions were semi-structured; that allowed flexibility in directing the thoughts of the respondents. Some guiding questions were prepared, whereas other important questions arose and were probed, based on the given information. Therefore, this flexibility allowed an extension of the interviews into other issues that were not originally included in the interview checklists. These additional themes have helped in addressing the study research questions. To make communication with the informants easier, and for the sake of the native participants' worldview, the interviews were conducted in Afan Oromo and Amharic languages, and then the findings were translated into English by the researchers.

Samples and Sample Size Determination

The sample from the local and mosque community were selected by using non-probability sampling techniques such as snowball and judgemental sampling (Biemer & Lyberg 2003). The informants were selected based on their knowledge of the heritage, of the local community, in addition to their interpretation ability, and their age. We selected 24 key informants from the local and mosques community.

Testing the Credibility and Reliability of the Study

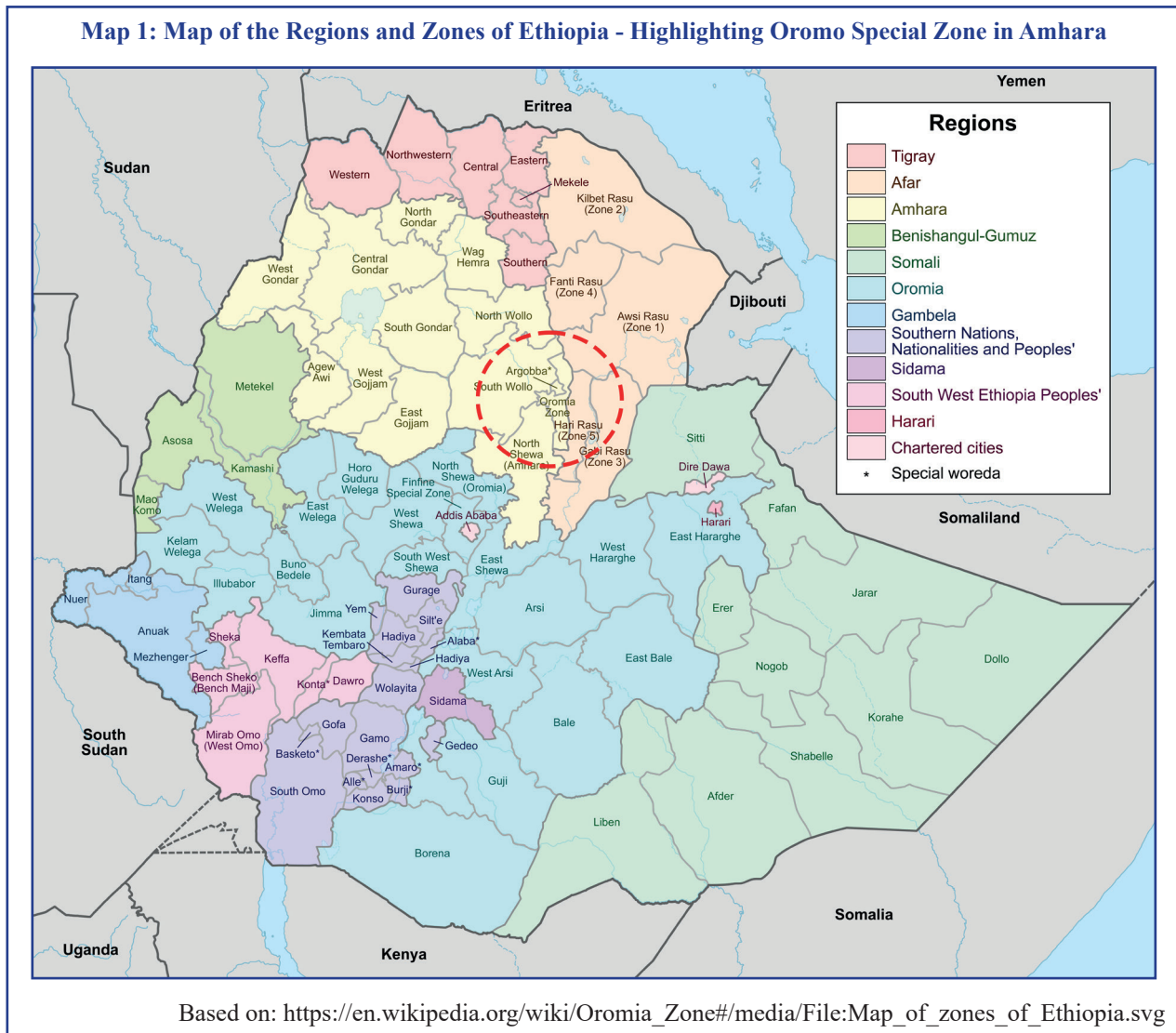
Ensuring readability, outlining processes and ensuring finding understandability are all concerns of scientific study (Creswell, 2003). For this study, readability, understandability, credibility, consistency and applicability or transferability were all considered by the researchers. Simple words are used in the findings and sometimes indigenous language words (Amharic and Afan Oromo) are used when necessary. When undertaking the data analysis, we sometimes use literal translations from Amharic/Afan Oromo into English in order to increase the understandability of the study for wider audiences. This research mainly focused on an

interpretative paradigm, whereby the researchers can enjoy engaging in detailed interview and observation processes. This in turn increases the validity of the study.

On the other hand, to increase the validity and reliability of this study, the researchers adopted triangulation in analysing the collected data. The researchers triangulated the interview data with other interviews and with the recorded observations. In addition to triangulation of primary data, the researchers used investigator triangulation (researchers have different specialisations and research interests), and also triangulated all of this with secondary data and theory. Additionally, the researchers increased the validity of the findings and reduced bias by using the following methods: First, the researchers tried to ensure that the interviews were ethical and did not harm the interviewees. Second, the researchers did not write the name or other personal identification in the paper. Finally, the research findings were communicated through descriptive prose all of these measures ensured anonymity of respondents and encouraged freedom of expression.

Ethical Considerations

First and foremost, researchers have an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values, and desires of their informant(s). Therefore, the research objectives were articulated verbally and in writing so that they were clearly understood by the informants (including a description of how data will be used); oral permission to proceed with the study as articulated was received from all informants and the informants' rights, interests and wishes were considered first when choices were made regarding reporting the data. The final decision regarding informant anonymity rested with the informant. The participants in the one-to-one interviews were introduced to the purpose of the study and were asked to give their written or verbal informed consent before answering any question. If the research participants were not interested to proceed they could leave the interview process at any time. The participants were also be informed that if they were not interested the researchers would remove the tape recorder and cameras. If they requested it the researchers would also delete any information that was already recorded. The participants were also told that information obtained from them would remain confidential. Anonymity of the study participants was maintained. In addition to these practical measures, ethical clearance for the research was received from Wollo University.



Findings

Oromia / Oromo Special Zone in Amhara Regional State (Map 1) contains a considerable number of Muslim followers. Due to this, one can observe considerable evidence of Islamic religious heritage in the Zone. Dodota Mosque, Berensa Mosque, Gedo Mosque, Burqisa Sibiqil Mosque, Toleha and Shonke Mosques, Terusina Mosque and Jerto Mosque are the oldest and most prominent historic mosques found in the special zone. The mosques have been serving as centres of religious education and for the propagation of Islamic education. Tiru Sina Mosque (Figure 1) is considered as a unique Islamic heritage site in the area because it considered as an Islamic monastery, which is unusual. Therefore, our study focused on this unique site.

Figure 1: External View of Tiru Sina Mosque



Photograph from Oromo Special Zone Culture and Tourism Department, 2020

Figure 2: Internal View of the Mosque Ceiling

Photograph from Oromo Special Zone Culture and Tourism Department, 2020

The Islamic Monastery Mosque of Tiru Sina - its Potential Resources for Religious Tourism Development

Ethiopia is one of the countries in eastern Africa that accepted and propagated the Islamic religion since the seventh century A.D. Its earliest penetration in the region under this study took place between the late ninth and twelfth /thirteenth centuries. Islam seems to have been well established by the time of the emergence of the Muslim state of Ifat which supplanted the Sultanate of Shawa. The Ulamaas¹ of Ifat played a significant role in the preaching and propagation of the religion in many areas of Wollo. The existence of ancient mosques and other Islamic heritage sites in various districts of the zone are a living testimony to this.

One of the most unique mosques in Ehtiopia, which displays a most astonishing design is the mosque of Tiru Sina, which is situated in the Dawachefa district of Oromo Special Zone on the Dessie Addis Ababa highway. It is located 16 kilometres from the Zonal Town of Kemise and 5 kilometres away from the small town of Shekla. The mosque is accessible by vehicle from there. To get to the site, visitors are obliged to travel 11 kilometres of asphalt and 5 kilometres of non-asphalt road. Visitors have two

¹ Islamic guardians, transmitters, and interpreters of religious knowledge

alternatives to reach the mosque after travelling on the non- asphalted road. One is to travel by car, which takes a few minutes to reach the mosque compound. After this visitors are expected to travel around 500m on foot from the road. A car road can also be used to reach the gate of the mosque, but, if someone travels the recommended 500 metres on foot they have the opportunity to visit the natural beauty of the mosque compound and the surrounding area.

Before the establishment of Tiru Sina Mosque, Aman Amba mosque, which is approximately 10 kilometres away had served as a centre of religious education. The centre was later moved to Tiru Sina which is on a plateau. As to the information found from elders, Shah Mohamed Amin was a student of the old Amanamba Mosque. When the head and teacher of the mosque passed away in the 1950s, Mohamed Amin travelled from that school and established the first mosque school of Tiru Sina in 1958 C.E.. Before the current mosque was constructed in 1968 C.E. there were two small mosques that had been serving the local community for religious and other services. The present one was constructed by the collaboration of the local community.

The mosque is very large in terms of its internal area (625 square meters). It is supported by 41 internal and 85 external pillars. The total size area is 80m in diameter and its height is 20m, which makes it the longest and widest wooden mosque in Ethiopia. It was constructed from indigenous juniper wood which was brought from Mt. Reqqe forest found 15-20 km away, to the site of the mosque. The local community's involvement in the construction of the mosque was immense. It went to the extent of people bringing the long wood on their shoulders from the forests of Mount Reqqe. Farmers and religious students are locally known as *Deresa*. These played a significant role in the construction process. The design of the mosque was created by Shah Mohamed Amin. Tiru Sina Mosque has 5 different doors, with each being used for various purposes. The mosque is situated on a hilltop in its compound thus its location gives a panoramic view. The mosque compound covers 28 hectares of land and is endowed with various indigenous trees. There are many different old houses within the mosque yard. Some of the houses are contemporary to the mosques and the rest are constructed in different periods for various religious purposes and as residential houses for religious students.

Figure 3: Detail of Coffee House Roof Interior

Photograph by Researchers, 2021

As shown in Figure 1 & Figure 2, the mosque is very glamorous and reveals its indigenous architectural character. The ceiling is made from indigenous wood and bamboo, fastened on to the struts using strips of leather that create an extraordinary decoration. The centre of it the ceiling is decorated with various colours, white, grey, and red colour and this makes it eye-catching.

Different religious activities and ceremonies are performed in the mosque, particularly during the celebration of the Birth Day of Prophet Mohammed known as Mawlid. On this day, thousands of pilgrims congregate in the mosque from all corners of the country to partake in the Holiday. During this day, more than 20 camels and a huge number of oxen are slaughtered and presented to the religious followers who come to participate in the festivity. According to informants, in addition to meat hydromel (a drink, made with fermented honey and water) is given to all participants on the night of the celebration day. However, unlike in other mosques, females cannot enter this mosque and participate in the ceremony, because, males and females have their own separate residences like in Orthodox monasteries. As mentioned earlier, there are different houses within the compound of the mosque which have different purposes and some of these are discussed as follows.

The Coffee House

This house is located on the left side of the main mosque around 50 metres distance. It is round in shape and constructed from wood and stone and its roof is covered with thatch. Its inner wall is plastered with mud and it has no decoration. The decoration and design of the ceiling are similar to the main mosque. But, as indicated in Figure 3, due to smoke, its colour is almost changed to black. Like many traditional Ethiopian countryside houses, one straight pillar is erected to support the ceiling. It is a single-room house.

Coffee is prepared every day in this house and presented to the mosque community two times a day (at 4 o'clock and 7 o'clock local time). At midday, there is a huge congregation for Zuhr Salat (praying). The coffee is prepared by a person named *Kadam*. All males partake in the coffee ceremony regardless of age or status, particularly those who reside in the mosque compound such as religious teachers, students, and those who are devotees to their God (Allah) who spend their time praying, reading, and learning the Holy Qur'an. There is some kind of resemblance with the Christian monasteries of highland Ethiopia in terms of students and their kind of living style. Usually, food and other things are provided for the students and those living in the Mosque compound by the surrounding communities. What is surprising is that there are separate living arrangements for women devotees within the Mosque. These women are not allowed to contact the males within the monastery or any outsiders. They get all their food and other requirements from their nearest families.

Material Objects Found in the Coffee House

Coffee pot: There are more than 30 coffee pots within the coffee house that are all made from locally extracted clay soil. As is clearly seen in Figure 4, the pots are various sizes. Some of the pots have two outlets for pouring. Other material objects within the coffee house are a mortar and pestle. Customarily in Ethiopia, there is a small separate mortar and pestle for coffee; unlike in this building, where the mortar and pestle are very big, so as to grind vast quantities at one time.

Figure 4: Coffee Pots and Cups

Photograph from Culture and Tourism, 2021

Figure 5: Coffee Pots and Cups



Picture from Culture and Tourism, 2021

Figure 6: Coffee Time



Photograph by Researchers, 2021

Coffee Cups: As shown in Figure 5, besides the coffee pot there are more than 250 coffee cups and one big coffee tray. The tray is rectangular in shape and made from indigenous wood. According to our informant, Shek Adem, the existence of these huge numbers of coffee pots and coffee cups is that, in addition to

service on usual days, the coffee ceremony is uniquely performed during the celebration day of the birth of Prophet Mohammed and during the Holy month of Ramadan. Accordingly, coffee is presented to all participants in these two events and thus it is necessary to have a large number of coffee pots and coffee cups

Fig No 7a-c: Barrels and Bowl Made from Wood



Photographs by Researchers, 2021

to serve the large gathering of people simultaneously. Unlike in other similar places and even unlike Ethiopian culture, the most important unique feature of this coffee ceremony is that all the activities are performed by the males. The women are not allowed join this ceremony and they have their own separate quarter a little distance from Tiru Sina Mosque.

As clearly seen in the photographs (Figures 4-6) after the coffee is prepared in the coffee house an individual who is locally called *Kaddam* takes the coffee pot into the mosque where the participants await him. Then, he stands in the middle of the congregation and receives a blessing from an old and respected Shaik. This kind of praying is usually called *Dua*. The prayer is usually made to their creator to give the recipient the health of the community, for their animals and to give them rains and protect them from evil things. Next, the *Kaddam* begins to pour coffee into the prepared coffee cups which are distributed with the help of an individual who is sitting nearest to him. Usually, the cup of coffee is distributed based on age. The Sheik who delivers the prayer receives the first cup, and then others, based on age.

Food Preparation House

The Food Preparation House It is situated near the Coffee House and unlike the Coffee House, its construction is not attractive. However, there are various material objects found within this house. As mentioned earlier, during Mawlid (the birth of Prophet Mohammed) a large number of camels and oxen are slaughtered and prepared in his house. There are different relics made of indigenous wood used for chopping, washing, and storing. All these materials are ancient and made of wood, which shows the unique woodwork technology of earlier periods. Due to their scale, some of them are not easily moved or managed by one or two individuals. There are more than seven iron barrels used for boiling meat. Also there are various old imported trays are used to distribute food during the meal time. There are also age-old calabashes (gourds) used for preparing the food. All of these antiquities are sorted on a shelf made from bamboo in one section of the butcher house. In addition to these ethnographic objects, there are also other religiously significant items such as different sized drums.

As clearly shown in Figures 7a-c, it is astonishing how such a big wooden bowl is made from a single tree and how they carved the various design on it. On the other

hand, it shows that besides the religious activities at the site, our religious fathers were sources of crafts and wisdom and they were self-sufficient in various ways.

The Honey House

This house is located in front of the mosque compound and has a circular shape. In general, the type of materials and its overall design is similar to the main mosque, the only difference between the two is size, and unlike the former, the latter is small in size. According to our informants, the residents collect honey and bring it to the mosque, particularly during the holy month of Ramadan. The mosque servants prepare hydromel which is provided for those who fast for the long day. It is a tradition of the mosque community to break their fast by drinking hydromel. Within the house, there are various wooden barrels for the preparation of this drink.

Traditional Quranic School and Other Features of Tiru Sina Mosque

Males and females live in separate places where both of them lead a solitary life. They have established a permanent life within the mosque where they cook their own food which is provided to them by the surrounding communities. Their own relatives also bring them grains and other materials needed to make a living. They are not allowed to engage in the cultivation or rearing of livestock. Grain for food, animals for meat consumption, and other materials for livelihood are provided to them. These acts of offering by the surrounding community are considered pious acts to Allah and it is believed that demands are fulfilled in return.

Honoured and respected religious fathers living in the Mosque play a pivotal role in conflict resolution. When different kinds of dispute arise within the surrounding communities they play a significant role in pacifying them and bringing a lasting solution. Disputes of different kinds such as killings, problems of inheritance, theft, and other social issues like mental illness and the problems of infertility also receive solutions through the intervention of these religious fathers.

The lifestyle followed by residents of the mosque is one of **material simplicity**. Student houses are constructed from wood and stone and their roof is covered with thatch. The number of students residing in a single hut varies.

Figure 8a-c: Quranic School Tirusina Complex (Dersesa Students' house)



Photographs by Researchers, 2021

These residents have no desire for wealth, entertainment, material objects, money, etc. They pay particular attention to personal and community cleanliness. For instance, at every gate, there are small fences and seats made of stone, at which everyone, including guests, is obliged to take off their shoes and wash their feet before entering the mosque compound. Speaking loudly within the mosque district is strictly forbidden. The whole compound is covered with medium-sized trees where different species of birds live. Located on a hilltop with its green vegetation, it attracts the attention of strangers and even the nearby communities to regularly visit and enjoy the serenity of the area. According to information from the Zonal Bureau of Culture and Tourism, the works done so far to develop the area as a tourist destination is minimal.

As has been said before it is forbidden for any male, even male children to enter into the female living quarters within the Mosque compound. No kind of sexual relationships are allowed. The residents live like monks or hermits of the Orthodox Christian tradition in Ethiopia, where religious communities come together in such places to refrain from a worldly life or the noise of the profane world.

In Ethiopia, before the advent of modern education, during the reign of Emperor Menelik II, the two main sources of education and literacy were the traditional (indigenous) church education and the Quranic Schools. In both cases the offering was religious education; Ethiopian families sent their children to these religious centres to acquire

basic education at an early age. In the former case, students were expected to construct their own small hut near the house of their master and/or near to the church if the master resides within the churchyard. There is an interface in both traditions whereby the pupil mirrors and learns from the lifestyle of the master. In both cases, also, students came to these traditional schools from various places and spent years studying in the religious codes.

In this regard, the Tiru Sina Mosque has been serving as a centre of religious training and education for many years. Some families send one of their sons to become a religious teacher or expert or to engage in a period of training. Some of the students do not return to their families, instead they continue to reside at the monastery throughout their life. According to our informant, there are more than 100 students in the school. Their small hut is found quite close to the main mosque. They are dispersed around the hill and their houses are surrounded by bush and trees. Due to the location, this is quite a silent location which is suitable for meditation and study. Its silence is accompanied by the songs of birds and the movements of the trees. This gives exaltation and great joy to the soul.

If tourists were to avail of an opportunity to experience this lifestyle, of paramount importance would be the unique chance to avoid stress produced by the hustle and bustle of city life. However, if tourism is to be considered for this site, heritage protection needs to be considered. There are two major factors which result in the destruction of heritage - natural factors and human factors.

Natural factors for the destruction of cultural heritage include; floods, thunder / lightning storms, wildfires, earthquakes, climate change, and biological factors such as the growth of plants on historic monuments and so on.

The human factors which contribute to the damage of Ethiopian cultural heritage include negligence and poor handling system, theft and illicit trafficking, civil war and invasion, etc...

To date, the mosque of Tiru Sina has faced many challenges and destructions. According to our informants, the mosque was totally burnt down in July 1991 C.E. due to a lightning and thunder storm. The lightning occurred in the evening time and it caused a blazing fire which was very difficult to get under control. The material from which the House is made (grass and wood) is very susceptible to fire. In addition, the distance from nearby towns made it very difficult to alert any authorities who could have helped to control the fire. There were some attempts made by the residents and the mosque community to control the fire but the actions were futile. The glamorous and historic mosque was therefore reduced to ash with its treasures. This accident created great sorrow among the religious followers in general and the mosque community in particular. Above all, this damage left its scar on Ethiopia since the country has lost most of its historic and cultural heritage to natural and human-made factors. Nowadays, there are activities

initiated by the communities and with support of the Regional Culture and Tourism Office, to reconstruct the mosque on the ruins of the original one.

However, it is a difficult task to revive the original mosque and its heritage. There are collaborations between the communities of the zone and the regional culture and tourism department and offices, to restore the material heritage of the site (the mosque in particular) as they had been before. As stated earlier, the original mosque was constructed with indigenous juniper wood that was brought from Mt Reqqe. Thus, to maintain its authenticity and originality, wood collection has already started. The surrounding communities brought the wood from Mt Reqqe which is found in Argoba around 15-20 km away from the mosque.

According to our informants - the mosque community and pious religious men - the material (the juniper wood) is transported from Mt.Reqqe forest. This is a dense and protected area where one can find different varieties of tree species. The former mosque which was destroyed was built with materials from this forest. Logging and transporting the wood from this dense forest was a difficult task. Given the poor quality of roads, a minimum of ten to twenty individuals are required to transport a single timber from its source to the *amba* (hilltops) of Tiru Sina.

Figure 9a & b: Original and Damaged Views of Teru Sina Mosque - Damaged by Natural Risk (Lighting)



Photographs by Researchers, 2020

Figure 10: Material Objects Found in Tiru Sina Mosques After Destruction



Photographs by Researchers, 2020

The Challenges of Heritage Management and Religious Tourism Development in Tiru Sina Mosque

Taking the above findings into account; the site is rich in cultural heritage resources that have great potential for the development of the tourism sector. However, the heritage resources face many challenges and drawbacks, as evidenced in the collected data and our observations.

Natural Risks

This challenge was seen at Teru Sina Mosque especially with the lightning which totally destroyed the main building. However, structures such as the mosque can be damaged due to sunlight and not just fire. See Figures 9 and 10.

Heritage Destruction and Lack of Conservation

Around the globe, many cultural heritage resources are under constant threat of destruction; the problem is clearly seen in Tiru Sina Mosque. Many tangible cultural heritage resources are managed in traditional ways. This can mean that there is no continuous monitoring and conservation practise. Where there is utilisation of these heritage resources, activity is often undertaken in a non- sustainable manner, where valuable treasures are considered as ‘objects’. This can leave physical structures, designs, and material conditions of these objects in poor conditions.

Many valuable heritage elements, especially unique architectural sites such as mosques and churches consider conservation and management issues as distractions due to their interference with the daily practices of such living sites. This old mosque was destroyed due to natural factors, but this was exacerbated by human factors - the problem was poor conservation practices.

Lack of Cooperation, Partnership and Stakeholder Awareness on Value and Use of Attractions

As found from interviews, the stakeholders have no common understanding of the value of the heritage resource. Furthermore, they do not agree / cooperate in the conservation and management of the heritage resources. This problem is most particularly seen at Zone and Woreda administration levels. A lack of communication between culture and tourism offices and bureaus in relation to security and conservation issues was seen throughout administration systems within the Zone.

Lack of Finance and Skilled Human Resources for Heritage Management

Even when some fundamental awareness exists among the respondents on the potential significance of tourism and the need for a resultant conservation / management model, there is a gap in knowledge. This gap relates to heritage conservation and skills in preservation of resources to underpin a resultant development agenda. Many heritages elements in Ethiopia in general, and

in this site in particular, suffer from a lack of heritage conservation and management by professionals. Where even a modicum of such skills do exist, the individuals seem to lack a basic cognisance of the different importance which heritage resources can hold in relation to tourism. There is also a lack of skilled support related to heritage tourism. In summation, no professional has been consulted to maintain the heritage elements (Figures 9 & 10) that are being damaged and losing their historical, aesthetic, scientific, and cultural values. In such a scenario, when heritage is damaged, it becomes confusing how it should be maintained.

A lack of even basic documentation is another challenge in the study area. There are lots heritage assets and resources that can express and represent the heritage and culture of the area in a meaningful way. However, they are typically only found in oral tradition rather than documented and kept in a more solid way to ensure transfer to future generations. Even the resources and assets which are precious heritages of the area may be found without proper registration and documentation - with poor evidence of their age, use, history, materials made from, and other related issues. Most of these challenges are seen in Tiru Sina Mosque and its heritage resources.

Lack of Proper Disaster and Risk Management

Due to the absence of proper disaster risk management, even minor problems which occur in heritage sites of the area can be catastrophic. This was seen in the Tiru Sina Mosque fire. The culture and tourism offices' awareness level about risk and disaster prevention is very low. Therefore, the authorities must raise awareness about the socioeconomic value of cultural heritage, and initiate measures to protect these sites. This needs to be established in normal times, not after the occurrence of a serious risk. In this way, risks to cultural heritage and the related losses of livelihoods, cultural identity, and social cohesion can be mitigated before disaster strikes.

Lack of Awareness Among Locals about Heritage Resource Management

According to our informants, the absence of local community participation related to heritage management is observed in the study area. The locals are not engaged properly to manage heritage. Rather there is a lack of participation, which arises from a lack of understanding

and awareness in relation to managing heritage. The locals have some ideas and perceptions about the heritage assets but do not fully appreciate the heritage they have and thus, do not participate actively to conserve and manage these entities.

Arising from financial and professional constraints, undue consideration is given to the heritage legacies and natural assets of the area. This leads to a lack of awareness of their cultural, economic, political, and social values.

Conclusion

Oromo Special Zone in the Amhara Region has rich cultural heritage resources, especially in terms of this unique Islamic monastic site. These heritage resources have socio-cultural, economic, historical, religious, aesthetic, and scientific values. As the study confirmed, even though the area is unique with distinctive sites such as this culturally rich Islamic monastery, there are serious challenges that affect its potential development as a religious tourism site. The major problems are lack of awareness, poor management systems for heritage, lack of infrastructural development, absence of coordination among stakeholders, shortage of skilled professionals, poor partnerships between agencies, heritage destruction related to a lack of conservation and the absence of risk management protocols.

Recommendations

It is strongly recommended to organise training in strategy and experience sharing mechanisms among local representatives, religious leaders, and other concerned stakeholders. Such training and awareness creation should also be undertaken by incorporating all religious representatives and heritage administrators to create a common understanding of heritage management and religious tourism.

Skilled professionals in heritage maintenance and conservation works should be available, at least in the area culture and tourism offices.

Infrastructure that provides service to both tourists and local communities should be expanded, in order to facilitate making the site accessible and more easily manageable. Roads should be either constructed where they are not available, or the quality improved where they are available. Furthermore, all concerned stakeholders

should participate in the development of infrastructure and facilities to reduce the challenges in relation to heritage management and conservation.

The future potential of this religious site as a tourism product depends on the coordination of all stakeholders in managing and sustaining the heritage of Tiru Sina Mosque in a professional way. Strong coordination of stakeholders (government, community, NGO, local enterprises, and tourists) must be achieved cooperatively in order to ensure this heritage site is appropriately prepared for a future in religious tourism.

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