Full Length Research Paper

Potentials and challenges of Entoto Saint Mary Church to heritage tourism development

Zelalem Getnet Ambaw

Department of History and Heritage Management, Wollo University, Ethiopia.

Received 16 March 2015; Accepted 26 May, 2015

This paper is intended to assess heritage tourism potential of Entoto Saint Mary church. To achieve the objective the researcher employed qualitative research method. Both primary and secondary data are used to assess the potentials. To collect the primary data interview was undertaken with selected church servants, community elders and other concerned individuals. In addition, deep and continuous personal observation was conducted to fill the gaps of interview and other sources gathered from various literatures. The analysis of the study revealed that Entoto complex has huge heritage tourism potentials. In this regard, the church of St. Mary with its mural paintings and precious antiquities, the different historic houses found in the churchyards of Entoto St. Mary, the palace and bedroom of Emperor Menelik II and the ESMCM with its possession are worth mentioning. Even though Entoto St. Mary has huge heritage tourism potentials and diversified values, they have not yet been utilized due to the presence of various hindering factors. Lack of tourist facilities, lack of heritage conservation and absence of documentation are among the factors that hinder heritage tourism development of the church. Finally, it is recommended that the collaboration of the administrations of the church with different stakeholders such as local people, private sector and the Addis Ababa culture and tourism office is very imperative to exploit the heritage tourism potential of the complex and mitigate the hindering factors.

Key words: Heritage tourism potential, Entoto St. Mary, challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia is a land of unique culture and heritage with a history going back thousands of years. It is one of the oldest nations in the world. It has an immense heritage tourism potential owing to its natural attractions that include some of the highest and lowest places in Africa, very old and well preserved historical traditions with fascinating obelisks, churches and monasteries (Yabibal, 2010). Since its advent in the 4th century, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church (EOTC) produces innumerable tangible and intangible heritage that has a great heritage tourism potential of the country. Even though the primary objective of the church is to provide spiritual services to the followers of the religion, it also plays an important role in the development of heritage
resources (Ayalew, 2002; Aymro and Motovu, 1970). Entoto is the name of a mountain situated nine kilometers North of the city center, Addis Ababa with the altitudinal location ranging from 2,600 to 3,200 meters above sea levels and its annual rainfall and temperature are 1200mm and 14°C respectively. Entoto St. Mary is found on the center of Entoto Mountain between the Blue Nile to the North and Awash River to the South. Its surrounding is covered with indigenous and dense eucalyptus forests and has cold climate.

Currently, Entoto complex is located within the Addis Ababa city Administration, Gullele Sub City. The site is bounded by Oromya region Sululta district to the North, Arada Sub City in the South, Yeka Sub City to the East and Kolfe keranyo Sub City in the West. Entoto St. Mary specifically found in Gullele Sub city of Woreda one. Majority of the population of the study area are government employees and fuel wood carrier (Dagnachew, Hailu and Mamo, interviewed on January 11, 2013). Entoto St. Mary is endowed with huge historical and cultural heritages.

The notion of heritage

The concept of heritage is debatable (Herbert, 1995; Mengistu, 2008) and the term ‘heritage’ is used in various literatures. The followings are some of the diversified concept and definition of heritages.

According to UNESCO’s World Heritage Convention (1972), “heritage” in its broader meaning is generally associated with the word “inheritance,” that is, something transferred from one generation to another through birth or legal succession or by any other means. Oxford Dictionary defines heritage as the evidence of the past such as historical sites, buildings, and the undisturbed natural environment considered collectively as the legacy of present-day society.

Similarly, for Prentice (1993) the term “heritage” encompasses landscapes, natural history, buildings, artifacts, cultural traditions and the like that are literally or figuratively passed on from one generation to the other. Another scholar also define heritage as everything that people want to save or retain (Howard, 2003). This author also argued that all heritages are pervasive and that it concerns to everybody. Thus, literature reveals that there is no single agreed definition of heritage. Even though there are a wide range and diversity in concepts and definitions, the term heritage can be summarized into two major categories: natural heritage, drawing its qualities from nature and Cultural heritage, which draws its qualities from culture and built elements in association with people, and events.

For the purpose of this study, heritage is created by and recognized of the value in what our ancestors left behind, which encompasses entities of material and immaterial treasures, the natural environment, built heritages as well as historic places.

Heritage tourism

Heritage tourism is a form of tourism that specifically targets the art, architecture, history, monuments, museums, theatres, religious heritage, social interaction, food habits, and lifestyle of people in a certain geographical region (Maria, 2002). According to Jamie and Eric (2011), heritage tourism deals with traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories, people of the past, and present. It includes irreplaceable historic, cultural and natural resources.

Heritage tourism, as a part of the broader category of tourism is now a major pillar of the tourism industry (Richard, 2002). On the other hand, heritage tourism is an umbrella and comprises both the natural and cultural tourism activity while cultural heritage tourism by contrast, highlights human accomplishments rather than nature (Huht, 2002). Ethiopia has several main varieties of heritage tourism destination in different areas of the country, like monumental heritage related with art and architecture, the religious heritage the natural heritage, traditional arts and crafts, music and dance.

Statement of the problem

Many people regard the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido church as the center of Ethiopian civilization. The church contributes for the development of heritage tourism both materially as well as spiritually. The church has been working strongly to preserve and hand over the culture and heritages for generation. These treasures preserved by the church is important heritage tourism potential of the country. Among the areas where one can understand the church’s contribution is reflected at Entoto St. Mary.

Few historians have studied the History of Entoto St. Mary church separately on specific research topics. To mention some of the research works are, a senior essay about the history of Entoto St. Mary written by Mekonnen in 1988. In this paper, he discussed the history of the church of St. Mary from 1884 to 1974, the administration system of the church, the land holding system and the role of Taitu and Emperor Menelik II to the development of the church. However, Mekonen did not incorporate other valuable heritages that are found within Entoto St. Mary churchyards.

Despite the fact that the aforementioned writer described the historical aspects of the church, yet there is no full-fledged study undertaken regarding the heritage tourism potentials of Entoto St. Mary. The main tangible and intangible heritages found within Entoto the church, which has great heritage tourism potential, are still obscure to both domestic and international tourists.
Even the already known heritages have not been fully utilized due to challenges that hinder the development of heritage tourism in the area. Therefore, the major purpose for this study is to assess the potential of Entoto St. Mary for heritage tourism development, identify the major hindering factors to it and recommend possible solutions.

**Objectives of the study**

**General objective**

The main objective of this study is to assess the heritage tourism potentials and challenges of Entoto St. Mary for heritage tourism development.

**Specific objectives**

1. Identify Entoto St. Mary heritage resources potential for heritage tourism development.
2. Examine the current tourism activity of the site.
3. Identify the major challenges, which hinder heritage tourism development in the Entoto St. Mary church.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Site description**

Entoto is the name of a mountain situated nine kilometers North of the city center, Addis Ababa with the altitudinal location ranging from 2,600 to 3,200 meters above sea levels and its annual rainfall and temperature are 1200mm and 14°C respectively. Entoto St Mary is found on the center of Entoto mountain between the Blue Nile to the north and Awash River to the south. The area lies at 09°06'N, 38°42'E (Peter, 2005). The surrounding of Entoto complex is covered with dense eucalyptus and indigenous forests and has cold climate (Figure 1).

**The research design**

To collect, analyze and interpret the data obtained from the site and to describe the objectives of the study, the qualitative research method is employed.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher has employed non-probability purposive sampling method in which respondents are chosen purposefully who are believed to have the required information like community elders, heads of the churches, heritage and tourism officers.

The research is conducted by interviewing 25 persons. According to qualitative research method sample size of 20-30 are generally believed to be sufficient for studies of this nature. Furthermore, it was felt that rich and relevant information is uncovered. As a result, a sample of 30 respondents was achieved in this study. In order to understand the heritage tourism potential and challenges of Entoto St. Mary data were gathered from the local communities’ elderly people, heritage tourism officers and church servants; to do so snowball sampling was used. On the other hand, in order to understand the challenges relating with tourism facilities, data are gathered from tourists by using non-probability convenience sampling because, they are selected randomly based on their availability in the time and space when data are collected. For the purpose of this research, open-ended, semi-structured face-to-face interviews are conducted. Besides, the researcher’s own extensive personal observation was employed to generate primary data and to fill gaps of interviews.
Data collection method

The main sources used for this study comprise primary as well as secondary data. The primary data are collected from the sample population through interviews, focus group discussions and extended personal observations. Regarding the secondary data, the researcher has employed published and unpublished sources such as, books, journals, magazines, proceedings, pamphlets and articles.

Data analysis method

In order to analyze the contents of documentary materials such as books, magazines, newspapers and the contents of interviews and personal observation the researcher has employed interpretive and descriptive method analysis.

Data quality assurance

To make the data gathered from different interviewees valid, the researcher documented it both in written and in audio recordings form and translated the concepts directly from word to word. In other words, the information from the informants is interpreted accurately.

In order to make the collected data reliable and the results representative the sample populations are selected from the local community’s elderly people, the clergies of the church, tourists and culture tourism officers. Besides, to enhance the reliability of the primary data the researcher used secondary sources as verification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical background of Entoto St. Mary Church

As mentioned earlier, the establishment of Entoto Mary church came through prophecy. The prophecy was about a king who would build a church in honor of the Virgin Mary on Entoto Mountain. In 1882 the then king of Shewa Menelik waged a war against Tekle Haymanot of Gojjam at Embabo (Amare and Fasil, 1987; Hailegebrel, 1987). At this battle, King Tekle Haymanoaot went to the battle with a number of Tabots and at the battle, Menelik won easily and took many treasures. Among the most valuable objects captured with Tekhlymanoaot was a tabot of St. Mary (Zemedkun, 1992).

Hence, the origin of the tabot of Entoto St. Mary is largely associated with fascinating story. It is believed that the age of the tabot goes back to the time of Atse Dawit (1380-1430). According to Haile siilsase Atse Dawit brought the tabot of St. Mary from Bulga and placed it at Entoto. Even though, much latter in the 16th century, Entoto St. Mary church like other church of the time was victim of Ahimed Giragn’s war, the community and the clergy of Entoto managed to rescue the Tabot to Gondar.

After some times with unknown condition, the tabot was taken from Gondar to Debire Mawi in Gojjam. It was from this place that King Tekhlhaymanot brought the tabot to the battle of Embaboo (Hailesillase, 2010; Mekonen, 1988; Tamiru, 2013). Mekonen asserted that, ‘Takle Haymanot had brought it from Debire Mawi (the mountain of victory) in north west Gojjam which was the native village of Tayt’s mother’ (Mekonen, 1988).

Hence, the victorious Menelik at the battle of Embaboo took the Tabot from King Tekhlhymanot to Entoto in 1882 and put it in a Meqagno (small temporary house), which was immediately constructed for this purpose.

As Gebire siilsae noted, Taitu was very dedicated to the holy virgin right from beginnings. In 1884, she selected a site in order to construct a church in her honor and requested Menelik II to build churches for St. Mary. But at that time, the place which was intended for constructing Entoto Maryam church had been occupied by the chief of Oromo whose name was Buktaji (Guda Negow interviewed on January 20 of 2013; Mekonnen, 1988). Taitu agreed with this chief so that he would leave the area and in return, she promised to give him fertile land near Entoto (Ibid).

The decision of Taitu to construct the church of St. Mary delighted Menelik since it coincides with the construction of their palace and he promised to her to do so (Gebire, 1995). Nevertheless, he feared that lack of masons might happen. Finally, Menelik used carpenters and masons who came from Gondar and Swiss. Accordingly, the construction work of the church of St. Mary and the palace performed in parallel, but the work of the palace was completed before the church. For the construction work, wood was brought from Managesha forest and mule back was used to transport the construction materials besides human labor (Gebire, 1959; Pankhurst, 1985; Zemedkun, 1992).

In the construction of his palace as aforementioned Menelik employed three Swiss nationals, Itgi, Zimamermon and Appenzel. In addition, they were assisted by a group of nine carpenters from Gondar who were known for their skill particularly of constructing traditional Ethiopian house (Hazen, 1999; Pankhurst, 1985). Side by side, these masons and carpenters participated in the construction of St. Mary church (Mekonen, 1988; Hallesilass, 2010) As Hazen elucidated most of the laborers employed in the church construction were Gurage men (Hazen, 1999).

King Menelik himself participated in the construction of St. Mary church. For instance, in search for the best wood for the construction of the church, he went with Taitu to Managesha forest (Mersye, 1999; Ge,biresillase, 1959). Finally, after the accomplishment of the construction work, the tabot of Maryam was transferred to the new one from the Meqagno accompanied by blessing and cordial religious ceremony and grand preparation was conducted for the inauguration (Gebire, 1959; Zemedkun, 1992).

All these indicate how much both the emperor and empress devoted and invested both their wealth and power to the construction of Entoto St. Mary church.

Abun Matewes crowned King Menelik and his wife queen Taiytue as Emperor and Empress respectively at
Entoto Maryam church on November 3, 1889. After his coronation, the emperor designated the title of Menibere Tshay Reise Adibarat Entoto Maryam (the sun of the altar and first among its peers and head of all churches in Addis Ababa) (Mersye, 1999; Zemedkun, 1992).

The inauguration ceremony of Entoto Maryam Church

According to Gebire (1959), as soon as the work of the first church was completed, great preparation for the feast started. The preparation took almost four months beginning from mid of June 1985. Initially king Menilik was unhappy to prepare such huge ceremonial preparation for the inauguration for the reason that the rain might affect the glory of the feast and it is not conducive for preparation. After a discussion, Taitu convinced him that prior to the event she had been collecting the required raw materials; she had bought lots of honey for brewing tejil (mead) which took four months, cereals such as sorghum and maize for brewing of Tella, leff for baking enjerra (flat bread) pepper and different types of spices for stew (Ibid).

For brewing the local beer, baking Ingera (flat bread) and to make wat (stew), kitchen equipments such as Gan (big pot), mitad (baking plate) and Dist (bowl) were required in large quantity. To solve the shortage of these equipment, Taitu employed special group of pottery makers and brought clay as a raw materials for the production of pot from a place located near Entoto and the necessary pottery products were produced there (Gebire Sillase, 1959; Mekonen and Tamiru, 2013).

Hence, 100s of big pots were produced to brew mead, Tella, and medium jars to fetch water. Unlike the present days, water was not available at Entoto. Consequently, 40 to 50 women were assigned with the task of fetching water from the nearby springs. 57 big pots (gan) were used to make mead and 70 big pots for preparing tella. As Gebire Sillase elucidated very huge temporary house was also constructed to place the pots and for baking Engera (flat bread). Apart from this, when the inauguration day is approaching large number of volunteer women joined the preparation ceremony; including the wife of the nobilities and their maid and the local inhabitants. Even some other volunteers came from distance areas such as Ankober and Gondar to assist the queen.

On the other hand, men were allotted to collect firewood and construct pavilion (Das). As Gebire Sillase indicated, this pavilion was very huge which lies on a large field and it covered 45 meters width and 70 meters length (Gebire Sillase, 1959). All activities were used to start when the sun rises and end up at the sunset. Eventually, the king and queen sent invitation letters to various lords and the clergy of parish churches and local communities as well.

Four days before the actual feast, Empress Taitu prepared gift program to selected churchmen. She gave them white robe, traditional shema, preying stick and Sistrum, which were made of silver and bronze, belt, and shoes (Gebire Sillase, 1959; Helina, 2013). This was solely for honorable priests and Debiteras but shashi (piece of cloth that rope on the head of the priest) was allotted for all participating deacons and priests. The main intention of the queen was to encourage the clergy and make cordial and colorful the feasts (Ibid).

For inauguration, 5395 cattle were slaughtered for both cook and raw meats. In addition to these, the nobilities, chiefs and local rich men came with sheep and cattle (Gebire Sillasse, 1959; Zemedkun, 1992). At the feast people gathered from different corners of the area without segregation on the basis of wealth, health, status and age.

Invited guests started arriving since September 19, food and drinks was served in the pavilion (Gebire Sillase, 1959; Ayele, 2013). At the same time, the Debiteras used to stand at the four corners of the church, both inside and outsides singing melodious songs. The singing continued until the eve and the day of the inauguration i.e. September 21, 1985. In these days, certain important chants were sung accompanied by different instruments such as religious stick, Sistrum and drum. When the Dabereras chant, the congregate support them with claps and ululta particularly during when the Mahylet heard.

Even though, both the king and the queen were very glad by the success of the feast, an astonishing event happened as Gebire sillas described, ‘On the eve of the feast the sky covered with cloud and the day become fogy and the rain started to drop”; by the time Menilik become worried and call his privet secretary or chronicler and ordered him to wrote a letter to virgin Mary and to put on the tabot. Surprisingly, since then to the demise of the feast the days become dry and sunny (Gebire sillas, 1959).

Entoto St. Mary Church

Entoto St. Mary church is considered as crown of Entoto Mountain and has a panoramic view of Addis Ababa. The church is built in traditional octagonal form. The exterior part is decorated with pastel railing painted glass panels and wooden curving in a patterns cut crosses. The entire wall is constructed from chiseled stone. The interior of the church is arranged into three-fold division of concentric chamber. These divisions are termed as the Kine Mahlet, Qidist and Qideste Qidusan respectively from outside to inside.

The Kine mahalet is octagonal in shape and found all around the entire building, separated from the rest of the interior parts by the wall that is concentric to the exterior wall (Eshetu and Fiqira, 2013).
**Qidist** is found between the *Meqidas* and *Kine Mahelate*. The wall is painted with white paint and its floor is covered with red carpet. It is a place where both male and female used to pray and Holy Communion is administered to the people.

The *Maqidas* (sanctuary) is situated in the center of the church. It has three wooden doors, which is screened by long and decorated curtain as it was in the temple of Solomon. The exterior wall of the holy of holy covered with mural paintings; the Virgin Mary and her son, painting of saints, angels and martyrs are painted on it. These paints have been painted by the notable traditional Painters such as Aleqa Luqas and Aleqa Zeyohannis (Fiqira and Haile Sillase interviewed on March 20, 2013). The altar and the replica of the Ark of the Covenant are placed there.

Ecclesiastical painting covers the ceiling of the sanctuary. However, the ceiling of the *Kidst* and *Kine Mahelate* is covered by canvas which is adorned by different colors. Its edges are decorated with design from gypsum. In general, the painting and the design of the ceiling has great potential to attract any visitors.

**The Meqagno (The First Church of Entoto St. Mary)**

The first and the ancient church (*Meqagno*) of Entoto St Mary was built by king Menelik in 1877. It is located between the bell house and *Dejesselam* (the Gate of Peace). It was built from stone and plastered with mud. Both the exterior and interior walls are smoothed with mud. Initially it was covered with thatched roof but later on, it was substituted with corrugated iron sheet. It comprises one wooden door and single window. The ceiling is made from carved juniper wood, bamboo and fastened with thong that is well decorated, attract the eye of visitors. Currently, the first altar and *atronus* (material that used to book holder while reading in the church) placed in the *Meqagno*. Both of them are made of wood and mirrored that period in a tangible way.

**The palace compound**

After Menelik established Entoto as his capital, he constructed many traditional buildings and churches on the hill of Entoto. Among these the palace, the reception room of the palace and bedroom of the Emperor and Empress was the most important and dominant one. The palace compound is situated in the Eastside of St. Mary church and there is fence between them. The compound is fenced with stone and has an outer gate made with iron door.

**The “Palace” of Emperor MeneliK**

The first palace of Emperor Menelik II is located on the left side of his bedroom and in front of the reception room. The palace is an oval shaped and the exterior roof is supported with 12 big and well-designed wooden pillars. As the bedroom and the reception room, it is thatched roof and, eight clays are placed on top of the roof in a close distance, which looks like a steeple of churches. The roof is made from various indigenous wood mainly juniper and olive which brought from Managesha forest by the order of the emperor, while the wall is built from black stone and plastered with mud and lime.

The ceiling of the palace is too high, which was intended to maintain the coldness and hotness of the house. It was made from indigenous wood and bamboo, fastened on the strut by using strip of leather that gives an extra ordinary decoration. The ceiling is created an oval shape on the interior center of the roof, where the entire struts *(wogagira)* came together. According to local informants, large numbers of cattle were slaughtered to prepare the strip of leather. The palace comprises eight doors, six of them are external and two of them are to the interior. It has also eight windows and all of them are made with long and refine wood. The entire floor is covered with refined and smoothed junipers wood.

The palace comprises clusters of rooms with different functions. These are assembly and banquet hall, podium for the king and the queen, storeroom where raw meat was hanged and honey was stored, princess entrance and seat and *Dejazmatch* entrance and seat.

As mentioned above there are different rooms in the palace of Emperor Menelik. Of these rooms the ones that are dedicated for the preservation of meat and mead are the most significant since they provide important evidence about how the culture of food preservation was seems in that period. In the preservation room horns are fixed on wall by using mud as a means of adhesion (Mekonen interviewed on March 13, 2013).

Horns were fixed on the interior walls of Emperor Fasilades’ palace particularly in the wall of his bath room and been used to hang clothes. Unlike that, in the palace of Emperor Menelik it used to hang meat rather than cloth. However, it indicates that there was a technological exchange between the two. This technological exchange might be the result of those nine carpenters who came from Gondar and employed in the construction of the palace and churches of Entoto complex.

In general, it was from this palace that the Emperor, Empress and his nobility decided about the march to Adwa, solve various political, economic and social problems of the country (Mekonen interviewed on March 15, 2013) (Figures 2 and 3).

**The bedroom of Emperor Menelik and Empress Taitu**

The bedroom of Emperor Menelik II and Empress Taitu
are found on the left side of the reception room, and right side of the palace. It is oval shaped and consists of two floors. Like the palace and the reception room long grass is used as roofing material. The wall is made from stone and plastered with mud. Both the interior and exterior walls are painted with white paint. However, unlike them the bedroom has two floors, the ground floor and the first floor.

The ground floor has two distinct rooms. The one, which found on the western side of the ground floor, comprises one single door and window. This room was used to placing honorable dresses, jewels, weapons and other precious objects of the king and queen. Many of the material objects offered to the church of St. Mary and now exhibited in the museum were kept in this room. Currently, this room is open for tourists. The second room of the ground floor resembles the first one except its function; it was used to store spice and food such as pepper, honey butter and so on. Unlike the former one, now a day, it is not accessible for tourists (Mekonen and Haile Sellassie interviewed on March 15, 2013).

Instead of steel, big juniper and olive wood were laid horizontally and carried the first floor. In other words, on the top of the first floor lattice of wood placed and the second floor built over it. Particularly such type of construction is astonishing and remarkable for foreigners and people who did not experience countryside.

There are two entrance steps used for going up stairs into the first floor. The stairs is made from stone and mud and has staircase. The first floor has only one room, which is the bedroom of Emperor Menelik II and Empress Taitu furnished with a bed that Menlik brought from

Figure 2. The palace of Emperor Menelik II. Source: photograph by the researcher 20 of January 2013.

Figure 3. The central ceiling of the palace with oval shape. Source: Photograph by the researcher on 20 of January 2013.
Figure 4. The bedroom of Emperor Menelik and Empress Taitu. Source: Retrieved from Internet.

Ankober. The bed is now on display at the museum. The bedroom has two wooden doors in the right and left sides of the room; the former is found in front of the palace, which was used to enter into the bedroom, and the latter one served as an outlet. When the kings and queens go to church and other places they exit through this door (Zemedkun, 1992) (Figure 4).

As aforementioned, the bedroom of the first floor surrounded with segenet (balcony). It was from this balcony that the king and the queen look the surrounding environment, admired nature, and enjoyed sunrise and sunset (Mekonen interviewed on March 13, 2013). Moreover, it is on this segenet that the initial idea for establishing a capital, Addis Ababa was conceived. As informants say, “one day Empress Taitu was sitting on the segenet, which has a panoramic view of Addis Ababa and was observing unusual phenomenon in the South of the palace. Soon the Empress marched to the area accompanied with her servants to investigate the events that occurred in the heart of Finfine, the present day Addis Ababa. When she arrived there, the unusual thing was a smoke of steam emanating from the spring water. Then, she moved here and there to observe the surrounding area, fortunately, she found unusual flower and being astonished by incident, since then she called the area new flower (Addis Ababa) (Mekonen and Helina interviewed on March 13, 2013). From this time on ward, the importance of the bedroom diminished. Seldom have the Empress lived near Filweha in tent and finally in 1886 the court as well as the capital moved into Addis Ababa and Addis Ababa became popular (Mekonen, Helina and Eshetu interviewed on January 20 and March 13, 2013 respectively). As Pankhurst (1985), elucidated, “At the end of the rainy season of 1886, Emperor Menelik and Empress Taitu accompanied by followers went down for the second time, the first had in all probability in 1885 to Felweha (spring water) where a large number of tents were erected”. Although its original function is abandoned, the architectural design of the buildings, above all the decoration of the ceiling has the power of fascinating visitors and has great potential for the development of heritage tourism on the site.

In addition to the physical attraction of the palace compound of Emperor Menelik II and Empress Taitu, its intrinsic message is very much astonishing. The architecture as well as the materials used for constructing both the palace and bedroom of Emperor Menelik II resembled the house of the common people. It is apparent that many Gondarine kings built their own remarkable palaces; however, this tradition was terminated until the period of Emperor Yohannes IV due to various reasons. Menelik II as his predecessor of Gondarine kings and Yohannes IV constructed his palace at Entoto but unlike the former, the palace of emperor Menelik II is not huge as already said. Walter and his wife Elzabella, tourists from Belgium that I interviewed in the palace said, “It is difficult to accept that such foremost king was lived in such small house” (Walter and Elzabella interviewed on March 15, 2013). Nevertheless, there are different arguments about this issue, some argue that the king did not have enough wealth to construct huge palace. Others say he was a pious orthodox Christian and is not concerned about his individual life. He rather gave much attention for the construction of churches and monasteries and the solidarity of his people (Haile Egzi, Haymanot and Mentesinot interviewed on March 15, 2013).

The reception house

As stated above, when we enter into the compound we find three thatched roof houses. The first and the smallest of the rest is the reception room. People that came to the
palace to appeal to the Emperor on various issues had to stay in this room until they had obtained permission to enter into the Emperor (Eshetu and Mekonen interviewed on January 20, 2013 and March 15, 2013).

This house is found in the Southern side of the bedroom and West of the palace. It comprises one door and a window. Both its door and window are not well refined and decorated, it just resembles ordinary Ethiopian farmer’s house door and window. Unlike the bedroom and the palace, its architectural design is distinguished by its wing shape and like others its roof is covered with grass and its wall is made with wood and mud and painted with white paints. Like the palace, its ceiling is made with junipers wood and bamboo and fastened with leather strip. Now, tourists are obliged to visit only its exterior section; the interior part is closed and used to store the property of guards.

The “Sherabet” (The First Tomb of Empress Taitu)

The shera bet is located in the Eastern side of the church, between the building of Princess Yeshasheworq Yelma and the palace compound. According to Zemedkun, though the exact age of the building is not clearly stated it said that it was built contemporary to the palace around 1880s. As the name Sher (canvas) signify, the roof of this house initially has been covered with shera. It was then changed into thatched roof, which later on was substituted by corrugated iron sheet (Zemedkun, 1992; Mekonen interviewed on January, 2013).

The architectural design of the sherabet is different from the rest of the buildings that found within Entoto complex. Its roofing style makes it unique from the others. As of other contemporary buildings, the wall of the house is built from stone and the ceiling is made from bamboo fastened with thong. It is a single room house comprising one double wooden door and single window. It has a narrow veranda at the front. Indigenous trees such as olive and juniper tressers surround the building.

As Zemedkun described, when Emperor Menelik and Taitu returned from the church usually on Sunday they took rest in this room and prepare weakly celebration with food and drink (tsabel tsadiq) (Zemedkun, 1992).

Following the illness and the inability of Emperor Menelik II to control his power, political competition was happening in the palace between Empress Taitu and the Shewan nobility. As a result, she was sent to Entoto St. Mary in 1910 and stayed there in a solitary life until the end of her life in 1918. Since then her body buried in sherabet and it stayed there until it moved and joined the dead body of her husband in the church of Beata Lemaryam, which is situated near to the parliament and the grand palace (Tshehay, 1988). Currently the house is giving service to Sunday school students. Despite the fact that this house has huge historical significance and crucial heritage tourism potential, still it is not open for tourist.

The different ruins found at Entoto St. Mary churchyard

It is apparent that from1878 to 1886 Entoto has become center of Shewa kingdom and served as a town of King Menelik (Mekonen 1988; Mengistu, 2008; Pankhurst, 1985). As it has been mentioned earlier, the palace of Emperor Menililk and Empress Taitu were found there. According to Pankhurst there were palace buildings that includes an addarash (banqueting hall), an elfignon (royal sleeping quarters), a madebet (kitchen), a feres bet (stables) and a number of goteras or grain stores (Pankhurst, 1985).

In addition to the palace, there were other houses around it, which were inhabited by the nobility, clergy and lower class people. As Helina and Eshetu elucidated much of the buildings existed until the period of Italian invasion in 1935 (Helina and Eshetu interviewed on 20 of January 2013). However, now a day many of these houses have been destroyed and only their physical remains are left (Eshetu interviewed on 20 of January, 2013).

The ruins of the “First palace of Emperor Menelik”, the ruins of Tshafe Tizaz Gebire Sellassiewolde Aregay (the chronicler of Emperor Menilik) House, which is located in the western side of St. Raguel church, the Ruins of the Gotera (grain stores) that is situated in the East part of the palace and its age goes back to 1885. The Ruins of Ras Abate House, which is placed 500 meters away to Northeast of the church of St. Mary and to the North of the palace. The Remains of Feresbet (the house of the horse) and the Market place (Pankhurst 1985, Eshetu, and Helina interviewed on 20 January 2013) (Figure 5).

Mural paintings of Entoto St. Mary Church

The entire exterior walls of the sanctuaries of Entoto St. Mary church is covered with mural paintings. The paintings of Holy Trinity decorated with red color, the twenty-four heavenly priests, and the life history of Jesus Christ are depicted. The paintings of Virgin Mary and the various saints are also among the most astonishing traditional mural paintings that portray on the sanctuaries of the church. These paintings are the outcome of traditional Ethiopian painters. Among the famous contemporary traditional painters or artists who perform the painting work of these churches, Aleqa Zeyohannis and Aleqa Luqas were the prominent one (Wudu, 1989; Helina and Haile Sillase interviewed on January 20 and March 15, 2013 respectively).

In general, the mural paintings of St. Mary church have an amazing feature; they are color full and serve as one
of the best tourist attraction of the churches.

Entoto St. Mary Church Museum (ESMCM)

As already mentioned, the EOTC is endowed with immense movable and immovable cultural heritages produced and transferred from generation to generation through millennium and centuries. The endeavor of the EOTC and some other emperors made possible the preservation of these precious antiquities of the country (Solomon, 2011). The EOTC has been serving as a storehouse and played an important role in the preservation of heritage. As Mengistu indicated, “each of its monasteries and churches has not only a place of worship but also a museum” (Mengistu, 2010). Although these precious objects were preserved and conserved in, the eqa bet of various churches and monasteries of the country (Solomon, 2011) Entoto St. Mary is the prominent one. This is because the church is considered as the pioneer in the EOTC to construct the first modern museum for the purpose of keeping and exhibiting its antiquity to the public (Haile Sillassie, 2010 and Mengistu, 2010).

There are more than five church museums in Addis Ababa, of these the Entoto St. Mary church museum is the first and foremost and surpass them both in age and collection (Hile Sillassie, 2010).

The museum is located between the two compounds of the church, just the left side of the first gate of St. Mary church. It is separated from the church compound and fenced with stonewall and has its own exterior gate (Mengistu, 2010 and Haile Sillassie, interviewed March 4, 2013). According to Haile Sillassie and Mengistu (2010), the Ethiopian orthodox Tewahido Church built the museum jointly with the then Ministry of Culture in 1986.

Among the domestic tourists that are currently visiting the site, schoolchildren who come from both private and government schools for educational purpose contributes the lion share. People who go to the area for pilgrimage purposes, few number of Muslim and followers of other religions are also visiting the complex (Haile SillasSle and Desta interviewed on May 15, 2013). International tourists come to the site from various countries of different continent, the site being part of the city tour (Mengistu, 2010, and Haile Sillassie interviewed on May 15, 2013). Nevertheless, the activities of the coming tourists are confined only on visiting few heritages of the complex, the EMMC, the palace compound, the church of Entoto St. Raguel and rock-hewn cave of Raguel. The rest of the invaluable heritages are far from the eyes of visitors due to various hindering factors.

Challenges that hindered heritage tourism development at Entoto St. Mary

As stated on the previous discussion, Entoto St. Mary is endowed with cultural heritages, both movable and immovable. Though these heritages have great potential for heritage tourism development, yet they are not fully utilized to the extent of its potential due to various hindering factors. Some of the important factors are absence of supply of accommodation, lack of heritage
inventory. There is no enough trained work force in both quantity and quality. In addition, lack of proper conservation, lack of awareness about the heritage tourism potential of the site and absence of well-organized management body for the development of heritage tourism resource of the site are among the challenges.

Lack of tourist facility

Despite the fact that the number of tourists visiting the site is increased from time to time, there are no tourist facilities such as restaurants, hotels, lodge, internet services, and toilets and so on. As previously stated the area has a panoramic view to Addis Ababa, Wechecha, Menagesha and Yerer mountains. Though many of the tourists have deep interest to take rest and entertain there, due to the absence of the above facilities in the surrounding, they could not stay more than few hours.

Various reasons are given to the absence of hotel and lodge on the area. On the one hand, the church is not interested to facilitate such facilities because they fear that if hotels and lodges are open in the area, the sanctity of the church will decline. On the other hand, there is no sense of ownership and collaboration between the churches administration and the city Culture and tourism office.

Lack of documentation and well-organized information

To conserve, preserve and promote the heritage resource, there should be sufficient information about the site. However, in the case of Entoto complex many of the historic houses, the different ruins and caves are not documented as heritage resource of the site. Many visitors particularly foreigners wonder and ask where the chiefs of the emperor and the common people have been living? How did the socio economic condition of the period look like and so on? Nevertheless, due to lack of documentation and well-organized information, such questions remained unanswered and these decreased tourist’s satisfaction.

Conclusion

This study is attempted to assess the heritage tourism potential of Entoto St .Mary and reveals the hindering factors that challenge heritage tourism development in the complex.

The first and the ancient church (megagne) of St. Mary and other historic houses that are found in the compound of Entoto St. Mary church are among the heritage tourism potential of Entoto St. Mary. The palace and bedroom of Emperor Menlike II and the reception house are another most fascinated heritages that reflects the Menelik’s era in a tangible ways.

Another indispensible untapped heritage tourism potential of the site are the different ruins that are found in and around the Entoto St. Mary.

Because of the presence of different hindering factors, the heritage of the site is not properly utilized and the flow of tourists is not satisfactory. The research findings revealed major challenges that have hindered the complex to develop heritage tourism as its potential include lack of tourist’s facility like hotels, lodges, restaurants, internet access and lack of promotion works. Lack of documentation and well-organized information about the church, poor handling system of the treasures and lack of museum are also contributing factors. Theft of the movable cultural heritages of the churches, unprofessional conservation, lack of trained tour guides are also the main hindering factors that affect the heritage tourism development in site.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to properly utilize the heritage tourism potential of Entoto St. Mary and to attract more tourists than come to the church, the following recommendations are forwarded.

1. Preservation and restoration works should be undertaken as soon as possible giving priority to those ruins and some historic houses;
2. Accommodation and recreational places should be constructed;
3. Trained man power in the area of heritage tourism should be employed and the existing tour guides should enhance their skill about tourism and tour guiding through training or education;
4. The church community, the local people, the private institutions and Addis Ababa Culture and Tourism office should work in collaboration with the administrators of the two churches to mitigate the stated problems;
5. The church should promote its heritage tourism potentials through different printing and electronics media.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

REFERENCES


## Appendix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name of Informant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kesis Yohannes Desta</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20/1/2013</td>
<td>Ticket Office Worker at Raguel Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Merigeta Birhanu Mekonnen</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15/3/2013</td>
<td>Tour guide at St. Raguel Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Haile Selassie W/Michael</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15/3/2013</td>
<td>Tour guide at ESMCM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ato Mekonnen Tamiru</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>13/3/2013</td>
<td>Guard at the Church of St. Mary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Ato Haile Egzi Abate</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13/3/2013</td>
<td>Domestic Visitor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>