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The Role Of Ethiopian Orthodox Churches And Monasteries In Forest Management Practices In Chilga And Mettema Woredas (Districts), North Gondar Zone

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Abstract:

Ethiopian Orthodox Church practices environmental management since time immemorial. The view of the church is highly associated with religious justifications.

This study is about the role of Ethiopian Orthodox Church and monasteries in forest management practices in Chilga and Mettema Woredas, North Gondar Zone. In this Woredas, the church practices environmental management due to religion.

The study dealt with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church role in forest management practices. The forest management practice of the church is highly attached with values and beliefs of its doctrine. This is particularly true with the church thought of its mass followers on the issue of environment management. Believers also in many case abided by the church rule and regulations. Accordingly, this considered as units of analysis for the study.

The main objective of the study is to examine and disclose the forest management practices of the E.O.C on some selected churches and monasteries of Chilga and Mettema Woredas, North Gondar Zone, and maintaining useful forest management knowledge for sustainable development.

Both primary and secondary methods of data collection tools employed to gather information in the study area. Data collection tools such as focus group discussions, interviews, observations, documents both published and unpublished employed and reviewed respectively.

The major findings of the research indicated that Ethiopian Orthodox Church practices have important roles in forest management. The churches and monasteries have deeper values, practices and perceptions under different psalms of bible quotations. Bible citations of the church has highly internalized by the believers. This was further strengthened by the community responsibility managing the forest through the justification of everything inside the church is considered as sacred. Infact some of the community and the government practices have adverse affect on the forest management practices of the church. This is highly attached with the call of vilgazation program of the government and the community response of settlement under different regimes. This called for a new strategy of transforming and called for massive based movement of the community using this knowledge as important insights for the development program imposed from top to bottom. Thus, this called for also a new strategy where by indigenous knowledge can be transformed for best use.

Key words: *Ethiopian Orthodox Church, believers, philosophy, values, bible, priests.*

1.Introduction

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is one of the earliest churches in the world. Since the introduction of the religion, the church is managing surrounding environment using its own religious justifications. Though there were times difficult to clearly distinguish the religious activities of the church from the political arena of the state, the state did not consider at anytime the practices of the church environmental management for its own consumption. As result, the countries forest is continuously devastating. This is particularly true in the Northern parts of the country where dominantly settled by the followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox church.

Furthermore the state was /is trying to search for external solution to the internal environmental problems. The state adopted different policies and strategies from the West which are culturally different from the culture and the religious practices of Ethiopia. As can be known the people of Ethiopia is a very traditionally bounded society, thus, considering any development program outside the culture is at usual failure.

One typical example in this regard was the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPS) in which the Western nations through their financial power tried to enforce International Monetary Fund (IMF) for African development program. For African nations to access

finance in this program, IMF had come up with preconditions. These were African nations should employ Western expertise and use only the seated program by IMF. This was done without considering the African local conditions and, eventually, resulted in failure. This shows that there is a need to understand the local practices and a need for local solution to locally happening environmental problems. In other words; it is very important to understand the physical, social, political, economical, technological and cultural issue whenever a certain sort of developmental program is designed (Atteh, 1992; Simons, 1974 cited in Muchena and Vanek, 1995 cited in Yeshambel , 2012).

Therefore, the case of environmental management using the age old Ethiopian orthodox religious practices is not exceptional since the religion is deep-rooted in the cultures of the people. Thus, utilizing Ethiopian Orthodox Church (E.O.C) knowledge is at least important insight to local level development in particular to environmental management practices. Therefore, the study focuses on the role of Ethiopian Orthodox churches and monasteries in forest management practices at Chilga and Mettema Woredas(Districts), North Gondar Zone.

1.1. Brief Background Of Churches And Monasteries In Ethiopia

Ethiopia has a total of around 35,000 churches and monasteries, some of which are 1660 years old (Taye, 1998.). Approximately 50 of the ancient church and monastery grounds (older than 200 years), all located in the Central and Northern Highlands of Ethiopia, contain natural forest vegetation rich in biodiversity in its yard (Ibid). Their vegetation consists not only of trees but also shrubs and herbs, and they constitute important habitats for a variety of rare vertebrate species, in addition to services for the spiritual and medicinal values attached with it.

1.2 Objectives Of The Study

1.2.1. General Objective

The main objective of the study is to examine and disclose the forest management practices of the E.O.C on some selected churches and monasteries of Chilga and Mettema Woredas, North Gondar Zone, and maintaining useful forest management knowledge for sustainable development.

1.2.2. Specific Objectives

- To assess the thoughts of the church for believers in materializing the forest management practices.
- To pin point the different species on different churches and monasteries as potential gene point center.
- To show problems associated with the church forest management practices.
- To show the possible options for forest restoration in study area.

2. Study Area

Many churches and monasteries located in different Woredas of North Gondar zone. These are: Lay Armachio, Quara, Dembiya, Metemma , Wogera, Alefa, Chilga, Tach- Arma Choho woredas are some to mention. Among these woredas the most known churches and monasteries with deep experiences of forest management is located in Chilga and Mettema woredas. The two Woredas located at distance of 60kms and 180kms away from the Zonal seat Gondar respectively. Furthermore, abundant forests managed for religious reason located in these Woredas. As , a result, the study selected the two Woredas.

3. Methodology

In this study, both the primary and the secondary sources as method of data collections were used. This includes interviews, focus group discussions, observations, participant observations, document analysis and other data sources.

Coll. No	Local Name	Scientific Name	FAMILY
M1	Zobbi	Dalbergia melanoxylon Guill. & Perr	FABACEAE
M2	Digundig / Dergeja/	Lannea fruticosa (Hochst. ex A. Rich) Engl	ANACARDIACEAE
M3	Fochi / Yeahiya gba / Abeterie /	Ziziphus mucronata Willd.	RHAMNACEAE
M4	Zangorif / Keptasker/Hamija/	Combretum molle R. Br. ex G. Don	COMBRETACEAE
M5	Enkoy	Ximenia americana L.	OLACACEAE
M6	Yezinjero Gumero	Capparis tomentosa Lam.	CAPPARIDACEAE

Coll. No	Local Name	Scientific Name	FAMILY
M7	Ader /Gorgoro / Gonoq /	Dichrostachys cinerea Wight & Am	FABACEAE
M8	Nech Abalo /Chameda/	Combretum molle R. Br. ex G. Don	COMBRETACEAE
M9	Key Matint	No scientific name	
M10	Zana / Washint /	Stereospermum kunthianum Cham	BIGNONIACEAE
M11	Tikur Abalo	Combretum molle R. Br. ex G. Don	COMBRETACEAE
M12	Aroresa/Safa/Lenquata/	Grewia mollis Juss.	TILIACEAE
M13	Bamba/ Siti/	Ficus ingens (mif.) mif.	MORACEAE
M14	Kirkira	Anogeissus leiocarpa (A. Rich) Guill. & Perr	COMBRETACEAE
M15	Giramda/ Setie/	Acacia polyacantha Willd.	FABACEAE
M16	Firkuta/Joro kokoba/	Maytenus senegalensis (Lam.) Exell.	CELASTRACEAE
M17 A	Fongera	Combretum molle R. Br. ex G. Don	COMBRETACEAE
M17 B	Liqwaza	Ozoroa insignis Del.	ANACARDIACEAE
M18	Luti Dimeto / Dulysawashila /	Entada africana Guill. & Perr.	FABACEAE
M19	Meqer/Waldemeqer/	Boswellia papyrifera Hochst. ex A. Rich	BURSERCEAE
M20	Fer Weha	Combretum collinum Fresen.	COMBRETACEAE
M21	Chara	Pterocarpus lucens Guill. & Perr	FABACEAE
M22	Kurkudo/Yezinjerokeleb/Emb uway/	Strychnos innocua Del.	LOGANIACEAE
M23	Wnebela / Banegurie/	Combretum molle R. Br. ex G. Don	COMBRETACEAE
M24	Key Abalo	Combretum molle R. Br. ex G. Don	COMBRETACEAE
M25	Qurqura / Geba / Areka /	Ziziphus spina-christi (L.) Desf.	RHAMNACEAE
M26	Temeneha	Securidaca longipedunculata Fresen.	POLYGALACEAE
M27	Qey Girar	Acacia seyal Del.	FABACEAE
M28	Alqi Hareg	Urera hypselodendron (A. Rich.) Wedd.	URTICACEAE
M29	Qureya	Acacia hockii De. Wild.	FABACEAE
M30	Shimet / Dimbita /		CELASTERACEAE
M31	Gambelo	Gardenia ternifolia Schumach & Thonn	RUBIACEAE
M32	Shimel	Oxytenanthera abyssinica (A.Rich.) Mumro.	POACEAE
M33	Tefrena	Kanahia laniflora (Forssk.) R. Br.	ASCLEPIADACEAE
M34	Ymbrat Zaf	Pterocarpus lucens Guill. & Perr	FABACEAE

Coll. No	Local Name	Scientific Name	FAMILY
M35	Sarken (Sarki)	Diospyros mespiliformis Hochst ex. A. DC.	EBENACEAE
M36	Shelel	Ficus capreaefolia Del.	MORACEAE
M37	Alash Shikshik	Dombeya quinquesta (Del.) Exell	STERICULIACEAE
M38	Kummer	Tamarindus indica L.	FABACEAE
M39	Ras Kimir	Leucas martinicensis (Jacq.) Ait.f.	LABIATAE
M40	Yeqola Wanza / Damda/	Piliostigma thonningii (Schumach.) Milne-Redth	FABACEAE
M41	Habuar	Ficus sycomorus F.Chanas Forssk.	MORACEAE
M42	Gebbs / Dimeto /Sandrin /	Albizia malacophylla (A. Rich.) Walp.	FABACEAE
M43	Eshoham Giramda / Guariya/	Acacia polyacantha Willd.	FABACEAE
M44	Yetija Chenger	Hibiscus panduriformis Burm. f.	MALVACEAE
M45	Lalo / Bedeno/	Balanites aegyptiaca (L.) Del.	BALANITACEAE
M46	Liha /Selen /	Hyphaene thebaica (L.) Mart.	ARECACEAE
M47	Kerkede	Hibiscus cannabinus L.	MALVACEAE
M48	Unknown	Chinopodium sp.	CHENOPODIACEAE
M49	Yeahiya Tinbaho		
M50	Darile /Qendo/	Sterculea setigera Del.	STERCULIACEAE
M51	Yset Qest /Seriti/	Asparagus flagellaris (Kunth) Baker	ASPARAGACEAE
M52	Yeahiya Abish	Trigonella sp.	FABACEAE
M53	Yewisha Qula / Kerjej/ Gunden/		
M54	Dingay Seber	Crateva adonsonia DC.	CELASTERACEAE
M55	Fiyelefej /Shasha/	Flueggea virosa (Willd.)Voigt.	EUPHORBIACEAE
M56	Debza / Agurmacha/	Vitex doniana Sweet	LAMIACEAE
M57	Mezaga Zaf / Barkana / Myera/	Pseudocedrela kotschy(Schweinf.) Harms	MELIACEAE
M58	Yemdir embway	Cucumis ficifolius A. Rich.	CUCURBITACEAE
M59	Dengay Seber		
M60	Koshshille	Vernonia adoensis Sch. Bip.ex Walp.	ASTERACEAE
M61	Dengay Seber / Wendo/ Yedebene Zaf	Pittosporum viridiflorum Sims	PITTOSPORACEAE
M62	Shekshik	Dombeya torrida (J.F. Gmel.) P. Bamps	EUPHORBIACEAE
M63	Yegimel Harge		

Coll. No	Local Name	Scientific Name	FAMILY
M64	Yetota Qolet	<i>Galiniera saxifraga</i> (Hochst.) Bridson	RUBIACEAE
M65	Teye	<i>Combretum hartmannianum</i> Schweinf.	COMBRETACEAE
M66	Wanza	<i>Cordia africana</i> Lam.	BORAGINACEAE
M67	Shasha	<i>Flueggea virosa</i> (Willd.) Voigt.	EUPHORBIACEAE
M68	Dargeja	<i>Lannea fruticosa</i> (A. Rich.) Engl.	ANACARDIACEAE
M69	Filshkana	No scientific name	LONGANIACEAE
M70	Kumbi Yeahiya migib	No scientific name	
M71	Nechilo	No scientific name	PITTOSPORACEAE
M72	Cheleqleqa	<i>Apodytes dimidiata</i> E. Mey. Ex. Am.	ICACINACEAE
M73	Yenebir Tifir	<i>Phyllanthus reticulatus</i> Poir.	EUPHORBIACEAE
M74	Jengira	<i>Aristida hordeacea</i> Kunth	POACEAE
M75	Unknown		
M76	Murie	<i>Sporobolus africanus</i>	POACEAE
M77	Embwuay	<i>Solanum</i> sp.	SOLANACEAE
M78	Awunda	<i>Vernonia</i> sp.	ASTERACEAE
M79	Azo Hareg	<i>Clematis hirsuta</i> Perr. & Guill. Var. <i>hirsuta</i> Lma. Ex DC.	RANUNCULACEAE
M80	Korch / Quara	<i>Erythrina abyssinica</i> Lam. Ex DC.	FABACEAE
M81	Karma / Yezinjero Wenber	<i>Polyscias fulva</i> (Hiern.) Harms	ARALIACEAE
M82	Bajira	<i>Syzygium guineense</i> (Will.) Dc.	MYRTACEAE
M83	Agam	<i>Carissa spinarum</i> L. (1767)	APOCYNACEAE
M84	Anferkiki		
M85	Bisana	<i>Croton macrostachyus</i> Del. (1848)	EUPHORBIACEAE
M86	Warka	<i>Ficus vasta</i> Forssk.	MORACEAE
M87	Unknown	<i>Discopodium penninerrium</i> Hochst.	RUBIACEAE
M88	Qinchib	<i>Euphorbia trucalii</i> L.	EUPHORBIACEAE
M89	Yedega Kirkira	<i>Anogeissus leiocarpa</i> (A. Rich) Guill. & Perr	COMBRETACEAE
M90	Kitikita (Yeteleye) / Yefiyel tirechew /	<i>Pittosporum viridiflorum</i> Sims	PITOSPORACEAE
M91	Kamo	<i>Rhus glutinosa</i> A. Rich.	ANACARDIACEAE
M92	Eshe	<i>Mimusops kummel</i> A. DC.	SAPOTACEAE
M93	Atat	<i>Maytenus undata</i> (Thunb.) Blakelock	CELASTRACEAE

Coll. No	Local Name	Scientific Name	FAMILY
M94	Shug /Kosheshila /	Acanthus polystachius Delile	ACANTACEAE
M95	Ahuma	Combretum collinum Fresen.	COMBRETACEAC
M96	Alasha	Grewia sp.	TILLIACEAE
M97	Gicha		
M98	Tantra (Kantra)	Hibiscus articulatus Hochst. Ex. A. Rich.	MALVACEAE
M99	Yegimel Shint		SOLANACEAE
M100	Dakunu / Tikunu /	Gomphocarpus abyssinicus Decne.	ASCLEPIADACEAE
M101	Yeqoq Sar		POACEAE
M102	Yedur Ziqaqibe	Platostoma rotundifolium (Briq.)	LAMIACEAE
M103	Zemen Sar		POACEAE
M104	Sanka	Vernonia sp.	ASTERACEAE
M105	Yebeqilo Chenger		STERCULIACEAE
M106	Sala	Ficus sp.	MORACEAE
M107	Unknown	Senna occidentalis (L.)	FABACEAE
M108	Unknown	Indigofera arrecta Hochst. Ex A. Rich.	FABACEAE
M109	Karma		
M110	Dembeqa		
M111	Ashema Hareg		
M112	Bambuli	Ficus sp.	MORACEAE
M113	Ahiyo	Crotalaria sp.	FABACEAE
M114	Bezbeza	No scientific name	SOLANACEAE
M115	Yenchet Ziqaqibe	Ocimum urticifolium Roth.	LAMIACEAE
M116	Sherenga	No scientific name	RUBIACEAE

Table 1: Final List Of Taxonomically Identified Specimens Collected From Metema And Chilga Woredas Churches And Monasteries, North Gondar

Source: Organization For Rehabilitation And Development In Amhara (ORDA): Biodiversity Program In Amhara

4.Results Of The Finding

The problem of deforestation is a general phenomenon in Ethiopia. The densely settled areas of Northern Ethiopia are among those with the highest rate of soil loss since the forest coverage of the area is highly degraded as compared to the South. At present the forest reserves are estimated to be 2.5-3% of the total land of the country and about 100,000 hectares of forest are lost annually. About 1 billion tons of topsoil also believed to be eroded annually (Taddesse, 1995 cited Yeshambel, 2012). Amhara region is not exceptional in which the forest coverage of the region reduced to the level of patches and in some strips. In this region also, it is not easy to conserve and manage the forest in proper way.

The only institution, but, able to save the small and remaining patches of the forest is the church (Ethiopian orthodox religion). In other words, as usual strips and hills of the area are building sites of the churches and monasteries, thus, the concentration of specifically trees generally forests in this mountains and hills which highly attached with the teaching of the religion, Ethiopian Orthodox. Mountains are a symbol of strength and stability in the religion. For some one climbs on the top of the mountain with church or monastery gives a lesson of strength. In other words, informants stated that religious tour to churches and monasteries on mountain or distant places thought to have add salivation though doubt on clear biblical base or not. Furthermore, for the church or monasteries built on the top of the mountain gives a meaning of controlling its follower's attention at a distant. At usual, as a result, in and around the churches and monasteries covered with forests of natural and manmade. Any ways, the church has a very long tradition of managing and conserving the forest since its establishment. Believers call the church with its associated forests as Deber or Gadem (church or monastery yard) based on the services rendering to the community. Actually, the researcher is not underestimating the role also playing by Islamic religion.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), is an indigenous religion institution, the oldest church in the world and the founding member of the world council of churches. Ethiopia as an ancient state able to embraced Christianity from the era of the apostles to the present day (Acts 8: 26-39). The history of St. Philip the Apostle baptizing the Eunch is the great interest for the Ethiopian church history, whom actually one of the officers serving in the state structure of Candace in the ancient history of the country. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is one of the churches under the Oriental Orthodox Churches which is different from the Byzantine orthodox churches (access at <http://www.angelfire.com>).

According to informants the structure of the church hierarchy is very helpful in attaching what is everything let alone forests and its resources as God's creation of sanctity, help in producing a narrative of continuity and holiness of the church and monastery forests even when change went on and is going on due to political, social and economic nature of the country. Infact, it was/is known that change in the political nature from one regime to the other is prime cause of forest and land encroachments of the church and monastery in the study area.

Furthermore, the establishment of sanctity in the church and monastery yards created specific kind of relationships with the surrounding farmlands and the nation as a whole. In other words, the fragmented forest of the church surrounded by farm land is strong eye catching power. By implication, churches and monasteries do give holy work for the surrounding community and in many cases the surrounding community abide by the church rules and regulations.

According to informants there is distinction between church yard and surrounding community area for food production because the church yard is dedicated for spiritual purpose where as food and daily activities are purely worldly things. As a matter of fact, churches are associated with forests throughout Orthodox Ethiopia, with some commentators suggesting symbolic links to the Garden of Eden. In this small patch of forest there are no houses where by ordinary people living, only the church. The contrast between open landscape and churches and monasteries forest is clear here, and it helps by contrast to define churches and monasteries as the place where everything is forested.

This kind of language-focused on Christ, God, and the Bible-might alienate many in the secular world, but in North Gondar zone, where the majority of people are Orthodox Christian, it makes much more sense than statistical studies and the application of international strategies for the protection of biodiversity. These Christians are rereading and reinterpreting the Bible in light of the threats to the biodiversity of their country and its precious forests. In fact, were the Bible not placed at the center of the thought, the Churches would have no real sense of involvement.

The forest of churches under study belongs to their respective church. The church has owned this forest for centuries. Its priests and decision makers were not ignorant of the forest beauty and environmental importance, but it had a deeper significance for them. For instance, it is known as the Holy Forest of 'Mehbere Selassie' monastery, and at its heart, geographically assumed to be, is the building of the church, with a giant outdoor statue of the Virgin Mary, whom many localities see as the Protector of the Ethiopia.

According to priests using the Holy Bible, God called to Moses out of the burning bush. "Moses, Moses!" And he said, from "Here I am." Then He said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals your feet, for the place on which you stand is holy ground." -Old Testaments, Book of Exodus, the Torah (3: 4-5). This shows that everything around us and the earth which stand on it are created by god and the grounds within the church compound specifically do have biblical interpretations for priests and believers as well.

The Ethiopian Orthodox religion assumes that each aspect of creation-the heavens, the rocks, the wilderness, the stars, and humanity in its diverse forms and beliefs-has its role to play in caring for the creator. This is powerfully summed up in the Vespers hymn that is sung on the evening of Christmas Day, with its description of the Virgin Mary giving birth to Christ. The hymn follows the Orthodox version of the Nativity all the elements of the natural and human world giving of farthings to God in his incarnation as a vulnerable child:

What shall we offer Thee, O Christ?
 Who for our sake was seen on earth as man?
 For everything created by Thee offers You thanks.
 The angels offer Thee their hymns;
 The heavens, the star;
 The Magi, their gifts;

The shepherds, their wonder;
 The earth, the cave;
 The wilderness, the manger;
 While we offer Thee a Virgin Mother,
 O pre-eternal God, have mercy upon us...

It is a model of diversity that the Orthodox Church in Ethiopia has now explicitly extended to the role that all of us have in protecting life on earth, each offerings has its own (different) strengths and abilities. Christianity teaches that all of creation is the loving action of God, who not only allows the existence of creation but also its continual nature.

As indicated forests signify in the bible the predication of the heavenly life in contrast to their absence signifies the demon. The words quoted for trees in the bible are:

“O, God: the art my God: my soul longeth for thee, how shall I stretch my flesh in a dry thirsty land, where no tree and water” (psalm 63:1-2 cited in Alemayehu 2003). Additionally,

“I am the vine of the tree, and my father is the handsome man. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. I am the vine, ye are the branches”

(Jhon 15:1-5 cited at Ibid).

The statement tells to us Jesus and the Lord as a vine tree, believers as the trunk of tree and his relation to them as the source of their entire spiritual and fruitful life. In other words, the teaching of God is using a model of tree and its branches as cohesive power between himself and his followers.

In contrast to this, as the World Council of Churches said in a document from a meeting in Granvollen, Norway, in 1988: The drive to have "mastery" over creation has resulted in the senseless exploitation of natural resources, the alienation of the land from people and the destruction of indigenous cultures (Palmer and Finlay, 2003). Creation came into being by the will and love of the God, and as such it possesses an inner cohesion and goodness. Though human eyes may not always discern it, every creature and the whole creation in chorus bear witness to the glorious unity and harmony with which creation is endowed. And when our human eyes are opened and our tongues unloosed, we too learn to praise and participate in the life, love, power and freedom that is God's continuing gift and grace.

In different ways, according to Palmer and Finlay (2003) the main churches should sought to either revise or re-examine their theology and as a result their practice in the light of the environmental crisis. For example, Pope Paul VI in his Apostolic Letter, Octogesima Adveniens, also comments in a similar manner (Ibid):

By an ill-considered exploitation of nature he [humanity] risks destroying it and becoming in his turn the victim of this degradation ... flight from the land, industrial growth, continual demographic expansion and the attraction of urban centers bring about concentrations of population difficult to imagine.

In his 1990 New Year's message, His Holiness the Pope also stated: "Christians, in particular, realize that their responsibility within creation and their duty towards nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith." (Ibid)

In Ethiopia Orthodox Christianity religion this is brought out even more strongly. The Orthodox Church teaches that humanity, both individually and collectively, ought to perceive the natural order as a sign and sacrament of God. This is obviously not what happens today in many parts of the country where by Churches and monasteries located.

Rather, according to informants humanity perceives the natural order as an object of exploitation. There is no one who is not guilty of disrespecting nature; to respect nature is to recognize that all creatures and objects have a unique place in God's creation. Beginning to see nature as a work of God, we begin to see our own place as human beings within nature.

According to priests we affirm that the world, as God's handwork, has its own inherent integrity; that land, waters, air, forests, mountains and all creatures, including humanity, are "good" in God's sight. The integrity of creation has a social aspect which we recognize as peace with justice, and an ecological aspect which we recognize in the self-renewing, sustainable character of natural ecosystems.

Implicit in these affirmations is the belief that it has been human selfishness, greed, foolishness, or even perversity that has destruction and death upon so much of the planet in general and forest specifically. This is also central to Christian understanding. According to monks in the study area human beings are the only species capable of rebelling against what God has revealed as the way in which we should live. This rebellion takes many forms, but one of these is the abuse of the rest of creation in general and forests in particular. Informants mentioned that Christians are called to recognize their need to be liberated from those forces within themselves and within society that militate against a loving and just relationship one with another and between humans and the rest of environment.

At usual priests in the Orthodox religion of Ethiopia insist that we must attempt to return to a proper relationship with the Creator and the creation in general and specifically between human beings and environment. They call for humanity to bear some of the pain of creation as well as to enjoy and celebrate it. In other words, they wanted mutual respect of the human and environmental issue, thus, sustainable environment management in general and forest management specifically will be maintained.

5.Common Factors For Degradation Of The Church And Monastery Forest

The deforestation process in Ethiopia highly associated with the increasing number of population. According to informants previously the land devoid of people now highly settled with lots of people and practicing fragmented form of agriculture. More people generally lead to an increasing demand on land for living and for agricultural production.

The situation became a serious problem when the Derg launched settlement program which accompanied by the forceful movement of the mass people. Eventually, the pressure on the forest resources increased due to a higher demand on fuel wood and construction purpose. It is the forests of the church in Northern parts of the country became the chief source of wood supply. The natural regeneration of the forest resources is difficult in some cases due to high populations of grazing and livestock within the forests.

In some cases the line that separates the church or the monastery forest from community arable land became progressively and intentionally blurred. And this, in the course of time, turned community members against the resources when they need forests for any personal use.

Generally, the implications of the indigenous forest management practices which were made in line with its sustainability has manifested that church has immense religious knowledge in forest management practices in the study area. This shows that there is a good store of indigenous forest management practices in the church and its believers that have developed over generations through experiences. However, the study revealed that the indigenous practices of forest management have problems in their function, implementation and effectiveness. Thus, based on the above finding, the following ideas are suggested:

- There is a need to have clear boundary for the church to minimize further encroachment of its resources.
- Giving repeated training for the surrounding community and its followers to protect the church forest.
- The government and other interested organ should work together with church in enforcing the legal protection of the forest.
- There is a need to have a deeper study on the botanical resources of the church forest, thus, other organs will participate actively to manage it.
- The government should provide an environmental award and financial support for the churches. This will further insist them to actively engage in environmental management and center of experience sharing and as means of incentive
- Identify and create an inventory of forest cover and biomass and map church forests more and more so that it will be protected in better way.
- Policy enforcement has to be created also in the government side



Figure 1: The Forest Of Aykel Medahanealem



Figure 2: The Forest Of Debere Mariam Monastery



Figure 3: The Forest Of Seraba Medhanale



Figure 4: The Forest Of Aresema Monastery

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