



University of Gondar

College of Social Sciences and Humanities

Department of History and Heritage management

Survey of Cultural Heritages in Soddo Wereda; South Gurgae Zone, Ethiopia

**A Thesis Submitted to the Department of History and Heritage Management in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Masters of Arts in Historic Archaeology.**

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University of Gondar

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College of Social Science and the Humanities

Department of History and Heritage Management

This is to certify that Meseret Tilahun has carried out her research work on the topic in titled “*the Survey of Cultural Heritage in Soddo Wereda South Gurage Zone*”. The work is original in nature and suitable for submission as a partial requirement for the award of master of historic archeology.

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Glossary

Abune: the title of the righteous person in Ethiopia it is given for archbishop and bishops

Adabina: the name of the place which is found in Soddo Wereda.

Adey Ababa: Yellow Flower, it is growth during the Ends of the Summer time.

Anibel: Gurgae language which means, Cabbage.

Areke: traditional beverage of Ethiopia

Asikema: one parts of Church Education

Bete Gurage: a Group of Gurage people.

Bethlehem: the house that made for the purpose of preparing the body and blood of Jesus

Demyammt: goddess with hearing power

Debir: it the Name given the Church that can administer by it self

Dewbre Tabor: the name of Mountains

Deje Selam: *ye Selam Dej* (the place of peace)

Demera: Torch which is lightened during the festive of Mesəkäl

Enkuwan Aselahinim: Gurage Language, which mean Happy Holiday

Enset: (False Banana) types of plant which is found especially in Southern parts of Ethiopia.

Entoris: the Discipline of Church Education

Fitawirary: the title given to the head of the local society

Gedile: the chronicles of the righteous

Gasha Meret: a type of measurements for land

Gojo: Types of traditional house made from Grass and its shape is rectangular

Kahinate Semay: the name of the 24 Sky priests of heaven

Kistane: Christian, the name of the people who is the follower of Christian religion.

Maerege qisna: the dignity of priest

Mahiber: a group of individual they unite for the purpose of religious of different thing .

Meqdes: the holy place where the Tabot are kept

Mesob: traditional material or Basket which is made from grass & it used to kept Enjera

Midrekeebed: the lands of Saint or Honor

Muyat: the name of one ethnic Group in Soddo Wereda

Nibab bet: the house of Reading

Qaysa: Gurgae language which means, Cheeses

Qidsit: the holy place which is found in between qəne mahəlet and māqədäs

Qine Bet: the house of poatery

Qine Mahlet: the entire part of the church & it is a place where the hymn of the church song

Qocho: traditional food which is produce from Enset(False Banana)

Qidus: the title given to the holy person

Seregela Washa: the name of the chariot caves of Abune G/ Menfes Qidus

Tabat: the material which is made from Clay soil.

Tej: traditional beverage of Ethiopia which is made from Different cereal

Tella: like Tej traditional beverage of Ethiopia which is made from Different cereal

Tsina: the material which used to fired incense

Waq Boza: (thunder god) the name of traditional god of Soddo Wārāda

Ye erd Beal: the day of Slaughters.

Yekolo Temari: the students of Church Education

Zema Bet: the house of music

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Abstract

The main purpose of this research is surveying the cultural heritage (tangible and intangible) sites in Soddo Wereda South Gurage Zone. This wereda has a potential of many tangible and intangible cultural heritages which can serve as an evidence of the level of the civilization of the previous society on the area and a platform for the study of the identity of the present society too. It has also its own specific objectives this are, to exploring Midrekebid Abo Monastery including the Museum, to investigating the Megalithic Culture of the area, to analysis the challenge and the conservation practices of the study area. In order to achieve the above objectives the researcher has employed qualitative data analyzing and interpretive Methods and the data are collected through pre field (review of literatures) and field data collection methods such as interview, observation and oral information. This study has found different tangible and intangible cultural heritages within Soddo Wereda. The Midrekebid Abo Andinet Monastery, which is dated back to the 11th-12th Century and found in Midrekebid Mountain, is one of the main historical and cultural heritages of the Wereda. This monastery has also its own Museum. Further, the ancient Megalithic stones site, which was the burial place of ancient society, is the most attractive cultural heritages of the area. Some of the Megalithic Stones sites are engraved with different Symbols and the other are standing without engraving any symbol. From the catalogue of intangible cultural heritages of the area, the festivity of Meskel, Muyat Beal and Adabina are the vibrant values. However, despite the huge historic potential of cultural heritages within this wereda, no remarkable and holistic research is undertaken. Further, this heritage sites suffers from lack of awareness from both the society and the government, poor preservation and conservation practice which have the effect of deteriorating it. To conclude, the Wereda has a potential of many cultural Heritage both Tangible and intangible but they are not well studied. This study has also found poor preservation and conservation practice for this site and some of the heritages are on the verge of deterioration or change of their original nature. In order to protect and preserve the above cultural heritage sites the researcher put some recommendations to the concerning body first, urgent response should be given from the government and the society. Second, Appropriate heritage management professionals should be hired by the government to conduct and manage the preservation and conservation of these cultural heritages. In addition, the society should also be given awareness about the values of these heritages and the ways by which they can overlook these heritages as any cultural heritage management will not be effective without the participation of the society. Lastly, an appropriate protection should be given for these sites by applying proper study and research.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Cultural heritage, as the main and ancient facet of heritage, consists of the monuments, the whole and sites, which are of exceptional universal value from the point of view of history, art and science.¹ It is not confined to monuments and collections of objects. Instead, it also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from previous society by the present, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts. These cultural heritages can be the objects that can be touched, buildings that can be observed, songs, stories and etc. Mainly, cultural heritage is the result of the interactions between and among the society and with the natural environment in the form of historic buildings, important archaeological sites, monuments, works of art and sculpture, painting, Historic city and cultural expressions of any society.²

Cultural heritage can be categorized into tangible and intangible where tangible cultural heritage are usually objects that can be observed and touched whereas the intangibles are mainly within the mind of the society. Tangible cultural heritages can, further, be classified into movable and immovable based on whether the objects can be moved from place to place without losing their original appearance.³

Intangible cultural heritage, on the other hand, has its own unique future and includes mainly oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, folk art, poetry, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts of the past society and being practiced by the present generation.⁴

¹Douglas poco. *Some reflection on world heritage*. University of Durham, Journal of royal Geographical Society. 1997. P260

²ICCROM. *Definition of cultural Heritage*. 1990 revised for CIF: in January 2005.

³ Mulate Adane. *Commendable head way in terms of Ethiopias Heritage*. In 2015

⁴UNESCO. *The convention concerning the protection of cultural and natural heritage*. In paris, 16 November 1972.

One of the uniqueness of intangible cultural heritage is that it is traditional, contemporary and living at the same time in the sense that intangible cultural heritage does not only represent inherited traditions from the past but also contemporary rural and urban practices in which diverse cultural groups take part.⁵ Due to this, it is also known as living heritage. Besides, unlike tangible one, it is community based to mean that it can only be heritage when it is recognized as such by the communities, groups or individuals that create, maintain and transmit it and without their recognition, nobody else can decide for them that a given expression or practice is their heritage.⁶

early cultural heritage destinations focused on sites associated with early hominids and Christian heritage. Ethiopia, as ancient state of the world, is the hub of many cultural and natural heritages, albeit fully unexplored, mainly due to the existence of varied climatic conditions and diversified topographical settings ranging from tropical to temperate creates a good opportunity for the availability of different socio-economic and contexts and the existence of diversified ethnicities with their own culture and languages.⁷

These cultural and natural heritages within Ethiopia are an evidence of the most intense and important achievements in the human experience.⁸ However, the heritage success stories of the country have been fragmented in terms of time and geographical location in the sense that almost until recently, most of the heritage destinations were limited to the northern part of the country and little attention has been paid to the other parts of Ethiopia.⁹

Ethiopia, as a sign of a country with potential Ethiopia is the leading heritages destination in Africa getting the registration of its major sites by UNESCO. Ethiopia is the leading heritages destination in Africa getting the registration of its major sites by UNESCO. Of fourteen properties before UNESCO which includes, Semien Mountains park and Christian rock-hewn churches at Lalibela (1978) Fasil

⁵ UNESCO document, *Intangible Cultural Heritage*, available at www.unesco.com, accessed on March 2018.

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ Agazi, N. *Preliminary results of an archaeological reconnaissance of Tigray, Northern Ethiopia*, 1997. p.47

⁸ Phillipson, L. *Ancient Gold Working at Aksum* "Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa. 2006. p.27

⁹ Finneran, N. *The archaeological landscape of the Shire region, western Tigray, Ethiopia*. 2007. p.21

Ghebbi (in 1979), Aksum (in 1980), Lower valley of the Awash and Omo (in 1980), Tiya (in 1980), Harar Jagol (in 2006), Konso Cultural Landscape (in 2011) and other intangible cultural heritages such as Mesikel festivity, Fiche Chambelala and etc.¹⁰ she has also registered six properties which are intended to be nominated which includes Bale Mountains National park (2008), Dirre Sheik Hussein Religious, cultural and historical site (2011), Holqa Sof Omar (Caves of mystery (2011), Gedeo Mixed Cultural and natural landscape (2012), Melka kunture and Balchit Archeological site (2012) and Sacred Landscape of Tigray (2018).¹¹

Further, efforts are being made to register different intangible cultural heritages of the country. The Gurage People, as one of the ancient and historical ethnic groups, within southern nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia, is also with potential cultural and natural heritages. However, it is only the *Tiya* megalithic stones that have got an attention from the researcher and the UNESCO. Other tangible cultural heritage sites and intangible values of the Gurage People in general and Soddo Gurage in particular are not touched up in spite of their potential economic, cultural, and historic values for the society and the country at large. Despite these success stories, Ethiopia is still with unexplored heritages sites. Moreover, the existing heritages sites are suffering from poor protection, preservation and conservation practice which add a fuel to lack of the study of organized research within a country.¹² Most of the challenges that the existing cultural heritages are facing in Ethiopia is related with lack of professional, the absence of researcher on different sites, illicit trafficking, the absence of preservation and conservation of the sites and lack of awareness about different cultural heritage sites.¹³

A look at the literatures on cultural heritages reveals that some scholars have conducted researches on some of the tangible cultural Heritage sites of the country in general and the Soddo *Wereda* in particular. The first attempt to conduct research on the megalithic stone of Soddo *Wereda* was undertaken by Rogger Jouss Aume with the research entitled “*Tiya L Ethiopie DES megali tres*

¹⁰<https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/et>, accessed on June, 2018.

¹¹*Ibid*

¹² Elizabeth A. Klesmith, *the case for repatriation and protection of cultural heritage in post – colonial Africa*, Notre Dame Journal of international and comparative Law, Nigera and Mali, VOL 4, 2014, p3

¹³ Temesgen Kasahun, *harmonizing heritage Tourism and conservation in the Rock Hewn Churches of Lalibela*, national graduate institution for policy studies, September 2013. p18.

Da biface al- rupestre dans La corne do I Afrique”(Rogger Jouss Aume 1995). Rogger has visited the site in 1974 and studied the structural symbol, the age of the Stone and the material cultures of the ancient society of the sites. And he argued that the megalithic stones of Tiya is date back to the 12th and 13th Century. He has also suggested that the sites were the burial place of ancient society and that the persons who buried under the Stone are the most powerful individuals of the area.¹⁴

However, the focus of this researcher was limited to the sites of *Tiya* and gave no space for other cultural heritages of the Soddo *Wereda* as the area has composed of many cultural heritages. On the Megalithic stones of *Tiya* sites too, the issue of preservation and conservation practice of the area was not given coverage by Rogger. Again, on megalithic stones of *Tiya*, Tequam Tesfa Mariam has conducted a study entitled “*Environmental and social impact assessment of Tiya megalithic world heritage site development.*” The focus of this study was looking these sites from the perspectives of tourism and its main objective was upgrading the *Tiya* Megalithic¹⁵ heritage sites by ‘developing basic tourist infrastructure and producing physical development for availing and improvements of tourist accommodation so as to facilitate access by visitors, develop tourist related service including new Archaeological and Ethnographic Museum, artisanal section and walkways to make *Tiya* modern world Heritage Archaeological/ Megalithic center of the country.’¹⁶

Like Rogger, however, Tequam’s work is also limited to the *Tiya* stones neglecting the other potential sites of the *Wereda*. Further, the study was conducted from the perspective of tourism arguing that infrastructures and tourist accommodations should be developed and accommodated in and around the sites of *Tiya*. Further, no momentum was given to discuss the preservation and conservation practice and the challenges of the sites.

¹⁴ Rogger Jouss Aume. *Tiya L Ethiopie DES megali tres Da biface al- rupestre dans La corne do I Afrique*. In 1995.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Tequam Tesfa Mariam. *Environmental and social impact assessment of Tiya megalithic world heritage sites development, Ethiopia sustainable Tourism development project*. October 2014.

Another very relevant research was conducted by Daniel Wudmatus entitled “*The role of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the lives of the Gurage people; the case of Muhur Eyesus monastery 1889-1991.*” The focus of this research is mainly on the socio-Economic and cultural roles of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the Gurage people specifically in and around *Muhur Akilil* area. The researcher has also raised the issue related to the Socio- Economic and cultural roles of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in South and South eastern parts of Gurage area. In addition, he has also studied the general backgrounds of Christianity and the role of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the case of Education, the contribution of the Church to the society and the historical survey of *Muhur Eyesus* monastery in particular which is found in Gurage region. Yet, his research is devoid of discussing the heritages of the monastery. It also didn’t raise the issues related to the conservation practice of the monastery. Besides, although this monastery has its own museum or archival place, the researcher has given no momentum to it.¹⁷

Biruk W/ Michael has also studied on other monastery of Ethiopia such as Lake Zeway under the title of “*The Lake Zeway Church and monastery from 1941 to the present.*” The main focus of this research was on discussing the historical backgrounds of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and its challenges due to the forceful expansion of different body on the monastery.¹⁸

But, again the researcher did not study the material cultures of the monastery, some heritages of the church and the restoration, the preservation and conservation practices of the monastery.

However, in general, despite the existing mushrooming literatures on the cultural heritages within the country, they are devoid of addressing the existing cultural heritages due to several reasons. Among others, most of the researches are limited to the study of tangible cultural heritages, didn’t address the holistic features and natures of the cultural heritages. On the specific area of study at hand too, the focus of the existing literatures was on the tangible cultural heritages of megalithic stones of *Tiya* site mainly from the specific perspective of tourism and historical survey neglecting the preservation and conservation practice of the area and its cultural

¹⁷Daniel Wudmatus. *The role of Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the live of Gurage people in the case of Muhur Eyesus monastery 1889-1991.* A.A UV , October 2010

¹⁸ Biruk W/ Michael, *the Lake Zeway Church and Monastery 1941-peresent* . A.A UV, February 2009

implications. Moreover, other important tangible and intangible cultural heritages of the Soddo Wereda is left untouched by the existing researches in spite of their overarching significance to the society of the area in particular and the country at large.

Hence, this research has the prime aim of filling the above gaps and addressing the issues which are left unaddressed by the existing researches. To this end, this research surveys the tangible and intangible cultural heritages within the Soddo *Wereda* in southern Gurage, its historical role and the existing preservation and conservation practice of the area and its implication for its well-being. Accordingly, the *Midrekebid Abo Andinet* Monastery, the Megalithic stones of *Tiya* sites and the intangible cultural heritages of the area specifically the festivity of *Mesikel* and *Adabina* are the focus of this research.

The *Midrekebid Abo Andinet* monastery, which date back to the 12th c, is located 22km from *Bue Town*. This place is said to be the burial place of the Ethiopian Orthodox church Martyr *Abunä Gebre Menfes Qiddus*, the *Geyet Gerano* steal a complex of about 100 stone located 22km from Bue town.¹⁹ The steal are similar to the megalithic stone of *Tiya* which is also found in this Wereda. Megalithic stones sites of *Fato*, *Firshi*, *Dachi* and *Damu* kebele are other remarkable Cultural Heritage sites which is found in *Wereda*.

The megalithic stones of *Tiya* sites are among the most important archeological sites discovered in Soddo regions of *Tiya* town in the southern parts of Addis Ababa. The site contains 36 monuments including 32 carved steal covered with symbol.²⁰ According to Rogger, the sites contain the remains of the ancient Ethiopian culture and the age of the remains, though not exactly known, has been argued to date back to 12th and 13th Century.²¹ The Megalithic stone sites of this area were grouped in to three parts by Rogger during the time of his excavation. He has studied the 'A' and 'B' groups whereas the 'C' group of the area is not studied yet. The symbols of the stones which are found in this area are drums, the sword and the picture of queen and the

¹⁹ Informant. Cherinet Gezahagn in 23/1/2010ec

²⁰ Tequqm Tesfa Mariam, *environmental and social impact assessment of Tiya Megalithic world heritage sites developments, Ethiopia sustainable tourism development project*, October 2010.

²¹ Rogger Joues, *Tiya L Ethiopie Des Megalithes Da biface al- Art rupestre Dans La come do I Africa-Memaire*, XI1995.

picture of some local leaders of the area which is engraved on the stone. Roger has also found the remains of material culture which were used by the ancient society.²² These tangible cultural heritages of the area collaborated with the intangible cultural heritages have a lot to speak about the level of civilization of the previous society on that area, evidencing the identity of the current society and have a potential of boosting up the role of cultural heritage of the area within the development of the society and the country at large.

1.2. Geographical Setting of Soddo Wereda

The Gurage zone, one of the zones within the Southern Nations, Nationalities and peoples national regional state, is found in the South eastern ranges of the central Ethiopia plateau in the Southeastern parts of Addis Ababa.²³ The area is bounded by mainly Oromia Region through Awash River in the North and North East, *Selte Zone* in the East, *Hadiya* in the south and *Yem* special *Wereda* in the south west.²⁴ The latitudinal location of the area is between 37-30 and 38-50 east and 7-46 and 8-45 north.

Specifically, the Soddo *Wereda* is one of the *Wereda* within the Gurage Zone. It is named after the SoddoGurage People whose name is *Kistane*. Tesfa Gebreyes and William shack argued that the settlement of the people of Soddo was date back to the 14th c.²⁵ This *Wäräda* is bound by *Meskan Wereda (Butajira)* on the south and on the West, by Oromia Region on the North and East. Currently, the *Wereda* is composed of 21 administrative kebeles and *Bue* town is serving as its administrative center. There are also other small towns within this *Wereda* which includes *Tiya*, *Kela* and *Suten*.

Looking at its distance wise, the Soddo *Wereda* is 104 km far from the capital of the country, Addis Ababa, 193km from Hawasa, and 277 km from the administrative center of Gurage Zone, *Wolkite*. It is found on the main road of Addis Ababa to *Butajira*, *Hossana* and

²²*Ibid.*

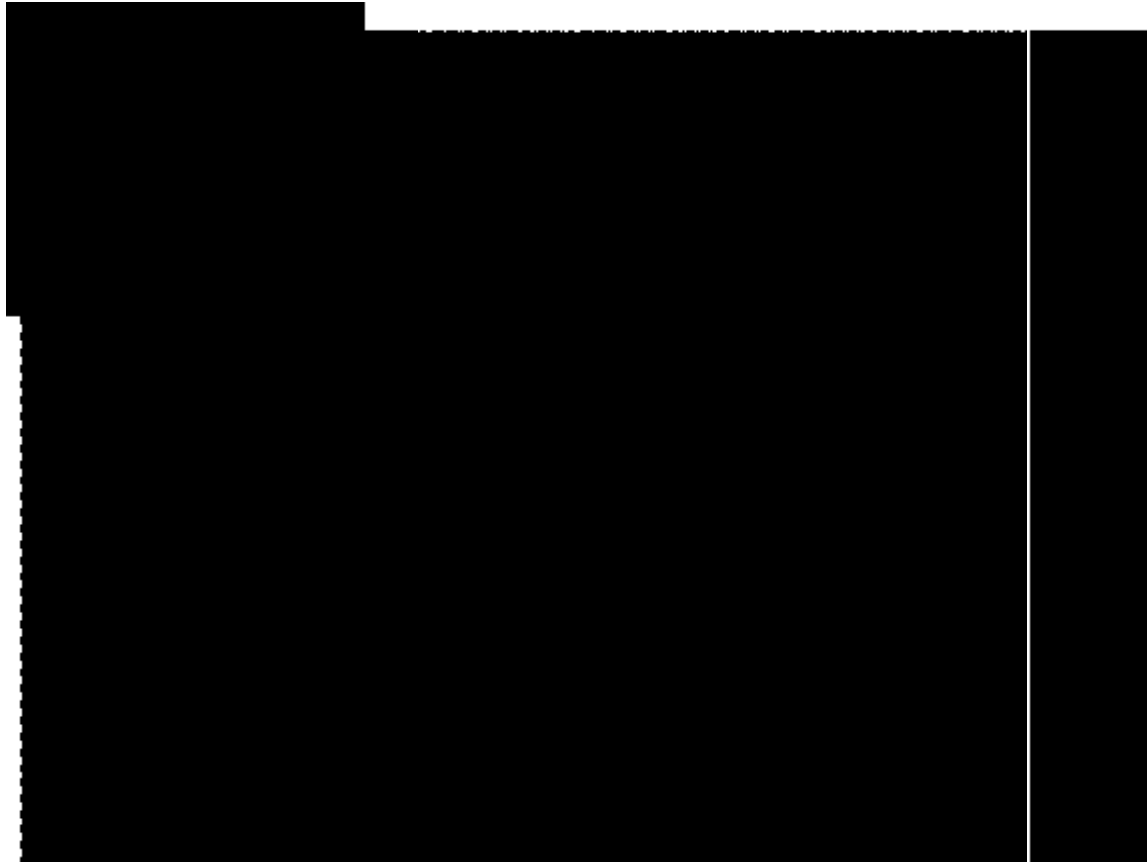
²³<http://joshuaproject.net> > people-groups.

²⁴Stephen Wright. *The Gurage and social life*, in Ethiopian collection of Stephen Wright, Addis Ababa Artistic press, 1962. p 8

²⁵ Tasfa Gebreyes. *Aymellel ye Gurage Hizib Achir Tarik (SoddoGordena)*, 1994.p7

other towns of Southern region.²⁶ Topographically, Soddo *Wereda* and its surrounding is dominated by plain and Mountain which are found around Soddo and *Mesikan Wereda*. *Zebidar* Mountain is one of the highest Mountains which are found in this Region. The area is also endowed with several rivers which are valuable to the local society and the surrounding rural areas of the *Wereda* usually for irrigation purpose.²⁷

In terms of climatic condition, the Soddo *Wereda* and its immediate surroundings is *Weina Dega* having rainy seasons mainly from June to September.²⁸ As this climate condition is for agricultural production, the society residing on this area produce different crops such as Teff, Wheat, Barley and Sorghum.



Figur 1: maps of Gurage Zone taken from [http://www.researchgate .net/.../ map of Gurage zone of Ethiopia-displaying-village R...in 21/9/2010E.c](http://www.researchgate.net/.../map-of-Gurage-zone-of-Ethiopia-displaying-village-R...in-21/9/2010E.c)

²⁶Informant, Shimelis Ayele.SoddoWerda Culture and Tourism office, 26/12/2009 EC.

²⁷*Ibid*

²⁸Magazine, *Gurage Zone lematMahiber(Butajira)*, 1998.p3

1.3. Demographic feature of the study area

According to the 2007 population and housing census by CSA, the total populations of the Gurage zone were 1,577,074. A look at the settlement pattern speaks that 7.6% of the populations are urban dwellers while 92.4% are living in rural area. Linguistically speaking, the people of Gurage are grouped into the Semitic Language family. Out of the total population of the Gurage Zone, 73.8% of the population is the speaker of *Guragigna* language, 2.4% are Qebena speaker, 3% are Mareko speaker and the remaining 20.8% are Kembata, Amhara Oromo and other languages speakers.²⁹

Looking at the Demographic feature of Soddo *Wereda* specifically, according to the 1994 national population census total population of this *Wereda* was reported to be 108,280. Out of this total population, female population counts 53,972 whereas the total number of male was 54,308. Looking at the settlement pattern of the population, only 5.17% of the population was an urban dweller. The ethnic composition of the *Wereda* reveals that 85.52% of the population is *Kistane* or Soddo Gurage, 11.58% reported as Oromo, 1.47% reported as *Amhara* and 1.7% of the total population include other ethnic groups of the country. The majority of the population of the *Wereda* is the speaker of Soddo *Guragigna* and Amharic language. The other language which is spoken in this *Wereda* is Soddo Oromo language.³⁰

However, the demographic of the population of the Soddo *Wereda* has showed an increasing pattern during the 2007 National Census. According to the 2007 census conducted by CSA, the population of this *Wereda* has increased to a total population of 134,683 of whom 67,130 are men and 67,553 women. The settlement pattern of the population of the *Wereda* is also changed significantly in which 13,720 peoples or 10.19% of its population becomes an urban dwellers.³¹

²⁹*Ibid*

³⁰ CSA, 1994 Table. SNNPR Table 2.1 and 3.4

³¹ CSA :2007 Table, SNNPR Table 2.1 and 3.4

Religiously speaking, the majority of the populations of the *Wereda* are the follower of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity which counts 93.35% of the total population. And 3.3 % of the populations are reported as Muslim whereas 3.28 % of it is protestant.³²

1.4. Settlement Patterns of the Soddo Gurage people

The historical settlement pattern of the Soddo Gurage people is one of the issues which have invited a debate between different scholars. Different scholars and historians have argued and suggested different holdings on the historic settlement pattern of the Soddo Gurage people. What is currently vivid is that the *Kistane Bete* Gurage area is bound by Oromia region in the North and East, by *Mesikan* and *Dobe* in the South and West. And it is composed of 21 administrative Kebele namely, *Wacho*, *Natena*, *Amawite*, *Gereno*, *Melko*, *Gemese Ayedo*, *Zemute*, *Gotege*, *Engedi*, *Damu Genet*, *Negeniz*, *Aymelet*, *Meserete Wegeram*, *Firshi*, *Endebuye*, *Adele Keshitina Emibire*, *Dugida*, *fato* and others. A look at different literatures reveals that there is no consensus on the historic settlement pattern of the *Kistane Bete* Gurage for different scholars are with different arguments and suggestions.³³

To start from William Shack, the history of Gurage is very ancient as part of the history of the country. He provides that very name ‘Gurage’ and the historical movement of the people can be found within the written document of Ethiopian history which was written during the period of Amide Tsion. As evidenced within this document, according to William, the meaning of the name ‘Gurage’ represents the people who reside in the left side of the country.³⁴

There is no agreement between and among scholars and historians on questions of when, how and why the *Kistane Bete* Gurage people settled in the current Soddo *wereda*, Gurage Zone. Further, the oral traditions and researches also vary on these issues. However, most of the literatures relate the settlement history of *Kistane Bete* Gurage people with the campaign of *Azimach Sibhat* during the reign of Amide Tsion (1314-1344) whereas other speaks otherwise.

³²*Ibid.*

³³ Dinberu Aleme. Goggot: *Ye Gurage Bihareseb Bahilina Kuwankua*. Wolkite 1987. P23

³⁴William Shack. *Gurage: the people of Enset Culture*. London. Oxford University presses 1972 p9

According to the oral traditions found from the local elders the area was the campaign of *Azimach Sibhat* and before this campaign this area was believed to be resided by the *sidamo* Muslim.³⁵

Tesfa Gebreyes is one of the researchers who link the settlement pattern of *Kistane* people to campaign of *Azimach Sibhat* during the reign of Emperor Amide Tsion (1314-1344). He explains the settlement history within this area based on the campaign of *Azimach Sibhat* who comes from *Akal Guzay Gurage* and resided in Soddo area, specifically in the place called *Aymelet* area. However, the researcher has also recognized other historian's argument that the settlement history of the people of *Kistane Bete Gurage* was before the campaign of *Azimach Sibhat* in the South parts of *Aymälläl* area during the Aksumite Kingdom.³⁶

However, there is no evidence as to the exact identity of the first person/who has resided on the area before the reign of Amide Tsion. The date of their settlements and the reason for the settlement of these people to Gurage land and specifically on the place called *Aymälläl* is devoid of proof, yet. On the other hand, some sources have tried to relate the settlement of *Kistane Bete Gurage* with the historic population movement that was occurred in Ethiopia during the 13th-16th century though majority of them still inclined to believe that the *Kistane* people's settlement was during the reign of Amide Tsion.³⁷

In equal footing with the settlement history, the nomenclature of the Soddo Gurage area is also subject to different assumptions and suggestions mainly by oral traditions. According to oral traditions, during the ancient time *Kistane Bete Gurage* had two names; Namely, *Aymälläl* Gurage and Soddo Gurage. The first Name is said to represent the first peoples who came from Guray and settled in the *Kistane Bete Gurage* land specifically the place known as *Aymälläl*.

On the other hand, there are two assumptions on the second name of the area between oral traditions. The first assumption of oral tradition speaks that two individuals of the area were appeared before the official to pay tax and when the official asked them of their identity in which case one replied that 'I am Soddo' whereas the other said 'I am Gurage'. Hence, it is stated that

³⁵ Informant, Ato Tsegaye Tabor 8/8/2010.

³⁶ Tesfa Gebreyes. *Aymelete: ye Gurage Hizib Achir Ye Tarik Mastawesha*. 1986 p21

³⁷ Dinberu Aleme. *Sebat Gogot: Soddo Gorden*. 1993 p32

the area is named as ‘Soddo Gurage’ after these two individuals.³⁸ The second assumption is that the name ‘Soddo’ was the name of one of Oromo clan settled in and around *Kistane Bete* Gurage area. It is provided that gradually, the area has been settled by different clans of *Kistane Bete* Gurage and some Oromo clans. Some of the peoples of *Kistane* have Semitic origin and includes clans such as *Wacho*, *Amawite*, *Gereno*, *Ayimelel*, *Angete*, *Damu Genet* and others.

Some sources also suggest that the name ‘kistane’ is derived from their religion, Christian, as they are followers of mainly Christianity. And the Name of their language too is known as *kistanigna* which have dialectical link with Christianity because the name of the people also derived from their religion. In addition, it is stated that when *Abune G/ Menfes Qedus* Come to the area of *Midirekebid* from the Southern parts of Egypt, some of the forefathers of the area were called by Christian names.³⁹

The current populations of the area are said to come from different parts of the country during different periods of time. Mainly, they come from the west and central parts of the country such as *Menz*, *Yifat*, *Bulga*, *Minjar*, *Shenkora*, *Tegulet* and from different parts of *Shewa*, *Amhara* during the population movements of Ethiopia which happened during 13th through 16th Century. During the movement of Oromo population of 16th Century, for example, Oromo peoples have expanded and settled on the western part of Soddo Gurage area that gradually expanded their territory to the area of *Aymallal*, *Gereno*, *Artage* and *Wacho* areas of the region.⁴⁰

After this expansion, they started to create marital relationships with the Soddo Gurage or *Kistane* peoples and began to share their language, culture and other values with the *Kistane* peoples. Today, the name of the Oromo people who live in this area is known as *Soddo Oromo*. Regarding the number of clans that has been settling in Soddo Gurage area, Dinberu stated that they were about one hundred fifty and currently the area is inhabited by mainly semetic language family of *kistane* people speaking *Kistanigna* and Amharic language.⁴¹

³⁸ Informant. Ato Bekele Ayele. In 18/82010.ec

³⁹ Tesfa Gebreyes. Aymele: Ye Gurage Hizb achir ye Tarik Mastawesha 1986 p24

⁴⁰ *Ibid*.pp24-27

⁴¹ Megazin. *Gurage Zone limat Mahiber* 1998.p8

1.5. The Economic condition of the Soddo Gurage people

The majority of the people of Soddo *Wereda* reside in the most remote parts of the region. The area is endowed with many permanent Rivers. Some of these rivers are *Estafanos*, *Moldiya*, *Derek Wenzs* and others. The main economic bases of the society are Agriculture and Trade. Agriculture is the dominant economic base of Soddo Gurage people. The trend of modern agricultural system is not highly practiced and the majority of the people of the area use traditional farming system. The existing farming systems of the area are based on animal tracing and human labor. In addition to this, the society also uses both rain and irrigation farming system. On the other hand the societies of the area also practice mixed farming this are (Crop and livestock combination).⁴²

Using these valuable rivers for irrigation, fertile soil and favorable climate conditions of the area, the society use to produce different types of cereal crops such as Teff, Barley, Sorghum and wheat. They also produce other cash Crop products like Coffee and *Chat*. *Enset* is the most important and the major traditional food of the area. Moreover, *Enset* (false Banana) Cultivation is the main products of the area. Most of the society produces it from year to year. Each and every society either in the Town or in the rural area has the cultivation of *Enset*.⁴³

Trade is the second economic bases of the Soddo *Kistane* people. According to some sources, some of the societies exchange their product by moving in to the neighboring area. After they produce their Cereal Crop and other product they began to sell it to the surrounding areas of the *Wereda*. Most of the time, they travel to Kella, Tiya and Butajira and sometimes to Addis Ababa to sell their products. In addition to this some of the societies are pastoralists. They practice mixed farming Crop livestock Combinations. There are also a population who resides in the most highland parts of the area and usually not participatory with majority of the populations. Their source of income is also different from other part of the society. They generate their income mainly from pottery.⁴⁴

⁴²Megazin. Soddo Wereda Culture and Tourism Birro 2008. P3

⁴³*Ibid*

⁴⁴Informant. Ato Tsegaye Tabor in 16/9/2010ec

1.6. Table1: Lists of the main Cultural Heritage sites of Soddo Wereda in South Gurage Zone

No	Name of the Site	Specific area of the site	Km from the Capital of the Wäräda
1	Midrekebid Abo Monastery	Säwatən Kebele Gäbäre Mahəbär Midrekebid	22 km
2	The Archival center	Säwatən Kebele Gäbäre Mahəbär Midrekebid	22 km
3	The Megalithic Sites of Fato	Fato Kebele Gäbäre Mahəbär near Estifanos River	20km
4	The Megalithic sites of Firshi	Firshi specifically in Moldiya village of Tiya Town	17km
5	The Megalithic sites of Dachi	Dachi Kebele Gäbäre Mahəbär	13km
6	The Megalithic sites of Damu	Damu Genet area	11km
7	The intangible cultural heritages of Soddo Wäräda		

Chapter Two

Exploring Midrekebid Abo Andinet Monastery including the material culture and its Museum

2.1. Introduction

One of the facets of human history is Religion in which different society have twisted mammoth heritages in relation to their religious beliefs and practice which govern their behavior and conduct, from the cot to the grave, providing strong link between the nature and the individuals. These heritages related with religions comprises monuments and sites such as religious buildings, holy cities, sacrosanct landscape and pilgrimage routes, religious objects, archives, and documents and intangible values such as the rites, rituals and traditions.⁴⁵

Ethiopia is obviously the hub of cultural and natural heritages represented mainly via religious facets which comprises both tangible objects and intangible values. Among the religious practice within the country, heritages related with Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity (EOC) are very vibrant. This can be evidenced from the fact that the EOTC is the owner of enormous tangible and intangible heritages which have attracted the attention of international communities. Out of these heritages, attractive and historic monasteries within the country is the forefront aspect of the religion in which different religious objects, skills and arts can be found, provided that they are studied well.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Haggai Erlich. *Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Ethiopia: the Message of Religions*. The Fifth annual Levtzion Lecture. Jerusalem. 2013 pp8

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

2.1.1. The Introduction, Role and Expansion of Orthodox Christianity into Ethiopia in the Gurage Land

The study of Ethiopian history has clearly indicated that the history of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is the history of one of the oldest Christian Churches in Africa.⁴⁷ This portrays that the EOC is one of the oldest Christian churches in the world. The Ethiopian Orthodox church is considered as the Unique African Church deeply rooted in Ethiopian history, social life and ethics, having its own liturgy, educational system for clergy and laymen, monastic tradition, religious music, and an extensive tradition of commentary and exegesis of the Bible.⁴⁸

The Church and state though dissimilar institutions were so united that they were universally respected and feared as true sources of power and authority as well as of the national culture in Ethiopia.⁴⁹ Accordingly, EOC has succeeded in attracting the attention of scholars mainly due to its ancient historic record and complexity which is evident from the royal chronicles, theological works, poetry, religious exegeses, commentaries, and hagiographies of saints and holy men

Likewise, EOC has expanded to the southern part of the country in general and the Gurage land in particular. However, before the expansion of Christianity and Islam, the Gurage people were believed to have its own traditional religions called the ‘*Waq Baza*’ (Thunder god) and ‘*Dmayamit*’ (gods with the hearing power).⁵⁰ And the Christianity and Islam are the two dominant religions capable of shadowing over these traditional religions.

Regarding the expansion of Christianity into the land of Gurage, there is a consensus that it has spread from the north to the south with the expansion history of Ethiopian territory from the earliest to the medieval period. Currently, two positions are vibrant in dealing with the expansion and introduction of Christianity into the Gurage Land. The first holding is that the introduction of Christianity to the North parts of Gurage Land Called *Aymälläl* might have been before the

⁴⁷Baur John. *2000 years of Christianity in Africa* (Nairobi, 1992), p. 39

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹Atiyaaziz S. *A History of Eastern Christianity* (London, 1968). pp. 146-7 cited in Getnet Tamene, features of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Clergy. *Asian and African Studies*, 1998. p88

⁵⁰ Tesfa Gebreyes. *Aymelet. Soddo Gorden. The Gurage Hizb achir Tarik Mastawesha*. 1986. p18

11th Century with the coming of *Abunä G/ Menfes Qidus* from Southern Egypt and able to construct the monastery of *Midrekebid Abo Andinet*.⁵¹

The second holding on the expansion of Christianity to the Gurage land is expressed in relation to the expansionist policy of Emperor Amde Tsion during which the Christian armies were accompanied by the priests. This position is propagated by William Shack who concludes that Christianity was introduced by “*the priests who come to perform scarifies and prays to the Soldiers, on behalf invoking the Christian supreme being to bestow spiritual blessing up on them and to insure victory in battle.*”⁵² This holding can be substantiated with the Ethiopian Medieval tradition during which in their campaigns the kings used to be accompanied by a group of clergy who carried the Arch of Covenant (*Tabots*) and undertake a praying towards the victory.⁵³ For example, it is common for many Ethiopians to acknowledge the arduous victory of Adwa in 1896 to the intervention of St. George in which the clergy accompanied the king carrying the Arch of Covenant labeled as St. George. However, these two positions can be reconciled in the sense that Christianity is introduced in Gurage land long before the reign of Emperor Amde Tsion, as it can be evidenced by the establishment of monastery and churches by *Abune G/ Menfes Qedus* specially the establishment of *Midrekebid* and *Muhur Akilil* Monastery in Aymälläl and Muhur Akili respectively, and its expansion thereafter was intensified into the area with the soldiers of Amde Tsion.

Be this as it may, the Orthodox Christianity has succeeded in having its doctrine accepted by the majority of the population of Gurage, especially in Soddo Gurage and *Muhur Akilil* area. It is also imperative to know that Churches and monasteries though distinct from each other were often associated, for every monastery housed at least one church, while many churches had monks

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² William Shack. *Gurage. In Muslim People. A world Ethnographic series.* West part, Green Wood press. 1984. pp301-304

⁵³ Budge. *The Queen of Sheba and Her only Son Menyelek (Kebre Negest).* Cambridge, ON: In parenthesis Publications, 2000. p12

attached to them. And the main heritage that the EOC left in Soddo Gurage is the Monastery of *Midrekebid AboAndinet* which has its own museum found in the Soddo Gurage.⁵⁴

2.1.2.Origins of Midrekebid Abo Andinet Monastery

One of the cultural heritages with which Ethiopia is known with, is religious heritages of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, which is the dominant religion within a country both in its historic values and numbers of followers. Among these religious heritages have historic and scientific values, skills and artistic benefits and etc, for the society and the country at large. The monastic life, as one of important facets of Ethiopian Orthodox Church, is deeply rooted to the Biblical actions of Jesus Christ. Monastery is termed as *Gedem* in Ge'ez which plainly means wilderness, desert or uninhibited place. In Christianity, most of the righteous or the saints prefer to live solitary life in the wilderness of monasteries as an anchorite or hermit. The gist behind monastic life is the fact that Christian puritans follow a very simple way of life just like that of Jesus Christ. Biblically, Jesus Christ has choose the manger for His dawn and inhabited discretely in which its verse read as “And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn”,⁵⁵

Moreover, Jesus Christ Has spent forty days and forty nights in the wilderness with fasting.⁵⁶ Which is a good exemplary for monastic life. Hence, monks are tending to imitate the life of Jesus Christ; and examples of these monks can be Moses, Elijah, St. John the Baptist, St. Simon, St. Anthony and etc. These monasteries are open for several sects of the followers mainly for the people who are not engaged, widowed priests, deacons, and more importantly by those who ignored the worldly life also called Monks or *Moleksewoch*. These fellows have different signs which are different according to groups they belongs such as the girdle (*Kinat*), scapular with twelve crosses (*Askema*), T-shaped crutch (*Mekuamia*), hood (*Kob*), and cloth made of leather (*Daba*). There is also a division of function and power within monasteries between the members. The leader of the monastery is *Memiar* (Teacher), the one responsible for food distribution and property of the monastery is called *Megabi* (the feeder), the one who is in charge

⁵⁴ Richard Pankhurst. *Asociety History of Ethiopia*. 1992. P35

⁵⁵ Holy Bible Luke 2:7

⁵⁶ Mathew 4:1-11

of the monks is called Ardit, and those monks with no commitment and lead an isolated life are called *Bahitawiyan* (Anchorite).⁵⁷

The *Midrekebid Abo Andinet* monastery, which is 122km far from Addis Ababa, is one of the historic monasteries in Ethiopia. It is found in Gurage Zone, southern nations, nationalities and people's national regional states of Ethiopia. Specifically, it is found at Soddo Gurage *Wereda Sewatin Gedom Kebele Gebere Mahiber* at the place called *Midrekebid* Mountain. The climatic condition of the area is *Weina Dega* because of which it is surrounded by large and ancient trees. The followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian gives special attention to the monastery and many people in number visit it mainly and constantly twice a year.⁵⁸

Midrekebid Abo Andinet Monastery is believed to have been established during the periods of Emperor Endrias by the Egyptian Martyr *Abune G/ Menfes Qidus*. *Abune G/ Menfes Qidus* was born from His Mother Akilesia and His Father Simon in Southern Egypt at the place called Nehisa, in Upper Egypt, in the Province of Nimesoti, today Bahbit al-Hagara. According to hagiography (*Gedle*) of *Abune G/Menfes Qidus* the name of the son of Akilesia and Simon was named by Saint Gebreal. At the age of three, he entered into one of the Egyptian Monastery, which was at that time administered by *Aba Zemedet Birhan*, allegedly an Ethiopian.⁵⁹ After he entered into the Monastery he begins to study Church Education by the disciplines of *Enthors* like the study of *Asikema* and *Maerege Kisna* by Bishop Abunä Abirham, after which he began to evangelize the peoples of Egypt by moving into different Egyptian Monastery for 300 Years.⁶⁰

The hagiography of *Abune G/ Menfes Qidus* reads that he entered the Ethiopian land for the first time in 11th century by the will of the God to salvage and evangelize the people of Ethiopia during the reign of the Saintly King *Gebre Mariam* and also named as St Harbey.⁶¹

⁵⁷ *Gedile Abune G/ Mensfes Qidus Riese Bahitawiyan*. 2008. p6

⁵⁸ Informant. Ato Tsegaye. In 13/7/2010

⁵⁹ *Gedile Abune G/ Mensfes Qidus Riese Bahitawiyan*. 2008 p8

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Abate Gobena, *Importance of teaching and practices of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in*

According to this hagiography, He came to Ethiopia with sixty Lions and sixty Tigers through wind chariot by the navigation of God and firstly settled at the *Midrekebid* area specifically the place known as *Seregela Washa* (the cave of chariot), through which he has travelled to Jerusalem, Egypt and *Debiräe Zakuwala* and is the underground of *Midrekebid* Monastery.⁶²

His hagiography also reads that the whole parts of the body of *G/ Menfes Qidus* was covered with white hair and never eat throughout his life. That is to say, He was living without food and cloth with the grace of God and has been travelling to the Monastery of *Zikuwala Abopraying* to the Ethiopian people for hundred years after which He comes back to the Monastery of *Midrekebid*.⁶³ The hagiography continues to narrate that St *Gebrä Menfes Qidus* was patient enough to allow a flying eagle to suck liquid from his eyes.⁶⁴

The name '*Midrekebid*' is derived from two Ge'ez words- *Midre* (Land) and *Kebid* (strong, heavy and Rugged); hence, to mean the Lands of Saint or Lands of Honors. According to Aba Haile Mariam, the Administrator of the Monastery, the first Church of the Monastery was established by Abune Gebre Menfes Qidus during the time of King Endrais who gave 280 *Gasha* (40 hectares of Land) of land to the Monastery.

The Architectural design of the Church of *Midrekebid Abo Andinet* Monastery has triangular shape or *Gojo* bet Shape and it is the same from the past to the present. And the roofs of the first Church were made from grass and it was also made from Cedar Wood (*ye tid enchet*) and *Bahir zaq*.⁶⁵

According to Ato Tsegaye Tabor, who has administered the *Bue* town for 13 years, *Midrekebid Abo Adinet* Monastery was maintained and renewed for the first time in history during the periods of Emperor Menelik II by *Fitawirary* Habite Giyorgies without losing its original design and the first materials during which the compounds of the Church was fenced with Wood. In addition, the church was once again maintained and renewed for the second time during the reign of Empress Zewiditu. But, unlike the first maintenance, the second one was general and holistic

⁶² Ibid

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Tinsa'e Printing Enterprise. *Gedele Gebre Menfes Kidus*. The Book of Act of Gebre Menfes Qidus (Amharic). TZPP. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 2000.

⁶⁵ Informant, Aba T/ Mmariam. 22/7/2010

maintenance in which much of the materials were changed. For example, the roof of the church was changed from grass to corrugated Iron in 1920 by Empress Zewditu though without losing its first shape.⁶⁶

2.1.3. Physical Description of Midrekebid Abo Monastery

The historical monastery of *Midrekebid Abo Andinet* contains several heritages within it including the main church, cave, buildings giving different services, compound reserved for monks, the Bishops and other administrative personnel, the museum and etc. In general, the monastery is divided into four main compounds. The first compound of the monastery, which covers the largest area of the monastery, is the most wide and attractive consisting of five buildings including the main church of the monastery. The second compound, which is located in the west parts of the first compound having different buildings serving as the guest house for the Bishops and Evangelists.⁶⁷

The third compound of the monastery, which is found in the north part of the main compound is the residential place of religious teachers, evangelists and students of the Monastery. The last one is the compound of Monks which is located in the south parts of the main Church within which Monks of the Monastery are residing. The first compound of the Monastery, as noted above is the largest of all compounds and includes five important buildings. The first building within this compound is the main church of the monastery. The other building is known as '*Bethlehem*' (the house of Enjära) where the blood and body of Jesus Christ (Mass) is prepared and to which no one is allowed to enter except the priests and deacons. In the western part and in front of the main Church, there is the Archival place or Museum of the Monastery. Other buildings within this compound found in the north of the main church are devoted to the shops of the monastery and the *Deje Selam*.⁶⁸

As noted above, the first church within this monastery was made of woods and grass, and then maintained during the reign of Emperor Menelik II and Empress Zewditu in 1920s in which parts of the compound of the church was changed from woods to stone. And the church was also renewed in 1990s during which the materials used to renew were completely changed.

⁶⁶Informant. Tsegaye Tabor. 22/7/2010ec

⁶⁷Informant. Aba Fire Sibhat. 16/7/2010ec

⁶⁸Observation and informant D/ Mintesinot Tesfaye 18/7/2010 ec



Figure 1: The partial view of the Church of Midrekebid Abo Monastery, photo by Meseret Tilahun in 18/7/2010 ec

This picture depicts the partial view of the church of *Midrekebid Abo Andinet* Monastery as maintained and renewed during the reign of Empress Zewditu in 1920s after its part of compound is changed from woods to stone or cement made.

However, significant change has been made to the church in 1990s during which the materials of which the church is made was completely changed. Then after, progressive maintenance and change, and currently the church is well maintained and colorfully decorated and its doors and windows are made from metal and mirror.



Figure 2: The current maquillage of the Church of *Midrekebid Abo Andinet* Monastery, by Meseret Tilahun in 18/7/2010 ec.

This picture portrays the current makeup of the church of *Midrekebid AboAndinet* Monastery which is significantly different from the first view of the church in terms of the materials used and decorations made to it. And this is made by the financial and labor contributions of the local people and the followers of Orthodox Christianity who live in Jerusalem.⁶⁹

In design wise, like the first Church, the current design of the church has also triangular shape or *Gojo Bet* shapes. Ethiopian churches have different kind of architectural design usually in rectangular and triangular shape. And the triangular or round-shaped churches represent the most common form. This shape is said to be inspired by the conception of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. It has also been asserted that round-shaped churches are purely a reproduction of the customary southern Ethiopian habitation called *Gojo Bet*.⁷⁰

It has four doors and twenty four windows which are believed to represent 24 holy priests. At the upper parts of the Church there is one small triangular shape house which is called *Gulilat* (domes) encircled by seventy two small metals which indicates 72 *Ardiets*.⁷¹ At the top of the domes there is small and beautiful cross which, allegedly, represent the fact that Jesus Christ is the Head of Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahido* Church or the lord of every Christians.⁷² The internal roof of the Church is made from Cedar Tress (*ye tid Zaf*) which enabled it to be strong and stay for long periods of time.

The interior part of the church, like other Ethiopian churches, consists of three parts. The first one is called *Mekides* (a square sanctuary) or *kiduesee kidusan* (The Holy of Holies) into which only the priest can enter. It is also the place where the Ark (*Tabot* or *Tsilat*) and its container (mambara *Tabot*) are treasured. The second part is called *Qidist* (The Holy place) which the area reserved for those who receive the Holy Communion (*sega wedemu*) or Holy Eucharist. This Holy Communion is received by ritually clean people usually children and those devoted adults who are committed to the religious principles. It is in this part that the priest distributes the Eucharist to the faithful. It is given in memory of the bread and wine (*siga wedemu*) that Jesus Christ has given to His apostles and it is usually prepared by the deacon from dried graspes and

⁶⁹Informant. Ato Sudan muhidin. 23/7/2010ec

⁷⁰ Chaillot, C. the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Tradition, Paris, 2002, p. 207.

⁷¹Informant. Aba Fire Sibhat. 16/7/2010ec

⁷²Informant. Kesis Aweke Belachew. 20/8/2010ec

water before each service in a separate house called Bethlehem. The third part of the church is called *Kine Mahlet* which is the place where every Orthodox Christian adherents or mass congregation (*me'emenan*) undertake their worships. This part is reserved for the choir and the believers are always barefooted, men and women are separated by a partition.⁷³

The second compound of the Monastery located in the western side of the first compound is also composed of different constructions which are financed by the local society and individuals from Addis Ababa. Majority of these houses were built to serve as a guest house for the Bishops and Evangelists. The third compound is of the Monks which is located in the southern part of the main church and it is resided by the Monks of the monastery. And the majority of the works of the Monastery are made in this compound such as preparing food, hand craft work and cattle bread. The final compound serves as the residence of religious teachers, evangelists and students of the Monastery.

Another important heritage within this monastery is the historic Cave of *Abune G/ Menfes Qidus*. This cave is found in the east of main gates and is known as *Ye Abune G/ Menfes qidus Seregela Washa* (the Chariot Caves of *Abunà G/ Menfes qidus*).



⁷³ Informant Deacon Dejene Geremew. 5/8/2010ec

Figure 3: The partial view of the cave of Abune G/ Menfes Qidus, by Meseret Tilahun in 18/7/2010ec

Within this historic cave, no one was entering into, except *Abunä G/ Menfes Qidus*. And allegedly, this cave was used by *Abune G/ Menfes Qidus*, when he was in life, to travel to and from Zäkuwala Abo, Shewa, Oromia. The cave is very dark and literally it is difficult to enter into.⁷⁴

Besides, there are monuments having historical representations just in front of the main gates of the monastery. At the right side of the main gates there is a monument of three Lions and the monument of three Tigers at the left side. According to the legend of *Abunä G/ Menfes Qidus*, He came to Ethiopia with sixty Lions and Sixty Tigers. But, the monuments are three in number, allegedly representing that history. The burial place of Martyr *Abune G/ Menfes Qidus* is in the western side of the compound of the main church of *Midrekebid Abo Andinet* Monastery. And this surround is covered with different types of old and ancient trees such as *Tid*, *Zigba*, *Bahir Zaf* and etc, of which some of them date back to the establishment of the monastery.⁷⁵

The *Midrekebid Abo Andinet* Monastery has its own separate house of paintings which is found within the compound which has *Ye Bune G/Menfes Qidus Seregela Washa* (the chariot caves of *Abunä G/ Menfes Qidus*). Painting is one of the heritages with which the Ethiopian Orthodox church is rich with, most of which are made on stones and walls. Most of the Ethiopian Orthodox Churches have their own mural or other types of painting. However, unlike the other Ethiopian Orthodox Church painting, the painting of *Midrekebid Abo Andinet* Monastery is modern painting. It is painted by large and hard paper and posted on the wall of the painting houses. All painting which is found in this Monastery is painted by using bright colors. It is painted colorfully with color which is known as first color which are yellow, Red, Blue, Green and white color. Some of the paintings are painted by *Kidane Mariam W/ Aregawi* he is translation teachers of the Monastery.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Informant. Aba Haile Mariam. 8/8/2010ec

⁷⁶ Informant. Ato Bekele ayele. 19/8/2010ec

There are two separate painting houses within this monastery. There are five main paintings within the first painting house which is located at the right side of the cave. On the first painting, we found the image of *Abunä G/ Menfes Qidus*, the image of Aba Zemedet Birhan and saint Gebrael. This image shows the image of *Abunä G/ Menfes Qidus* when he was given to one of Egyptian monastery administered by Aba Zemedet Birhan at the age of three. The second painting within the first painting house is the image of *Abunä G/ Menfes Qidus* with sixty Lions and sixty Tigers. This image portrays the fact that sixty Lions and Tigers have accompanied *Abunä G/ Menfes Qidus* when he came to the Ethiopian land in 11th Century with the guidance of saint Gebrael through wind chariot. The third painting of this house depicts the image of *Abunä G/ Menfes Qidus* while praying for the Ethiopians for hundred years in Zikuwala Abo Monastery. Fourthly, there is a painting which illustrates when *Abunä G/ Menfes Qidus* was given one hundred twenty lightning by God. The last painting of this house is the painting of *Abunä G/ Menfes Qidus* twelve Crowns by God.⁷⁷

The second house of paintings, which is found the North parts of the cave of *Abunä G/ Menfes Qidus*, contains five paintings which are posted on the wall. The first painting depicts the image of *Abunä G/ Menfes Qidus* and three saints namely; Aba Samuel Zewaldiba, Aba Anibesa Zedebire Azelo and Aba Binyam zegibits when they came to Midrekebid by their lions. The second painting portrays the image of *Abunä G/ Menfes Qidus* with the three Saints and angel Fanuael when He was praying for these three saints so that the God give them a food. On the third painting, three images are painted which are the image of *Abune G/ Menfes Qidus* and God with the two Angels Saint Gebrael and Michael and the image of Gold balance. This painting describes when the God balance the sin of the Ethiopian people and the righteousness of *Abunä G/ Menfes Qidus* and shows that the holiness of *Abune G/ Menfes Qidus* is more than that of the sin of the people.⁷⁸

The fourth painting within this house incorporates the image of *Abune G/ Menfes Qidus*, the three Saints, the four Angels and the lions of *Abune G/ Menfes Qidus*. This painting represents when the Lions of the three Saints were eaten by the Lions of *Abune G/ Menfes Qidus* and He ordered His Lions to replay the lion of the three Saints by the will of God in which case four Angels

⁷⁷ Informant, Aba Haile Mariam in 8/8/2010ec

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

cover him by light curtain and he is encircled by his Lions. Many images are painted on the last painting which are the image of *Abune G/ Menfes Qidus* with many Angels, the image of God and Virgin Mary and the image of many prophets, Saints and righteous. The painting represents when God Promises him to salvage the people of Ethiopia by holding his Mother breast.⁷⁹

Another important asset of the *Medrekebid Abo Andinet* monastery is the church education provided within it. There is devoid of arguments against the fact that church education is the base for modern education in Ethiopia. According to some historian church education date back to the introduction of Christianity in the 4th Century and firstly started from the royal families and spread throughout countries in the meantime.⁸⁰ Further, one of the main features of monastic life by itself is religious education. The introduction of religious education in the *Midrekebid Abo Andinet* monastery is believed to be in 11th Century with the coming of *Abune G/ Menfes Qidus* from Egypt to Ethiopian specifically in *Midrekebid* area.⁸¹

The religious education starts from the study of Amharic and Geez alphabets and languages, then proceed to other religious education such as *wudase Mariam*, *Nibab Bet* (the House of Reading), *Zema Bet* (the house of music/song), *Qine Bet* (sacred hymans), *Aquaquam* (rhythmical movement) and etc. And currently, there are 32 religious students also called *ye Kolo Temari*. After finishing their education these students will serve the monastery and also engage in making different handcrafts.⁸²

2.2. The Archival center of Midrekebid Abo Andinet Monastery

Literally, museum is a building in which objects of historical, scientific, artistic, or cultural interest are stored and exhibited. The History of Museum date back to the earlier time when the European royal Families, Explorer, Merchant and travellers were collecting the materials which have special values put the object on their room to show their families and friends.⁸³ Its main objectives are acquiring, conserving, preserving, communicating, and

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Bahiru Zewde. *Poiner of change in Ethiopia: reformist intellectual of the early Twentieth century*. Oxford, James curries press, 2002. p20

⁸¹ Tesfa Gebreyes. *Aymelet Ye Gurage Hizib Achir Tarik Masitawesha*. 1986. P8

⁸² Informant. Aba Haile Mariam. In 12/7/2010ec

⁸³ International Council on monuments. 2004, p223

exhibiting for the purpose of study, education and enjoyment of the material evidences of people and their environment.⁸⁴

The Ethiopian Orthodox churches and monasteries, as a center of historical cultural heritages, have their own mechanism to keep the movables and immovable heritages. Within most of the churches and monasteries there is a separate house called *Eqa Bet* or *Gəmja Bät* (the archival house). Then, there is a tendency that these small archival centers of the church develop into Museum in which different historical, artistic, and traditional church objects and values are kept and conserved. These museums within the monasteries and churches are called *Bete Mezakir*.

However, unlike other churches and monasteries in Ethiopia, the *Miderekebid Abo Andinet* Monastery used to have no *Eqa Bet* or *Gimja Bet*. According to Sudan Ahimed, staff of soddo *Wereda* culture and tourism office, the religious objects of the monastery were being kept in different houses within the monastery and sometimes with individual monks and servant of the monastery.⁸⁵

The Museum of *Miderekebid Abo Andinet* Monastery was established in 2005 E.C. by an individual called Ehite Selassie and by the contribution of the local community.⁸⁶ According to informant *Aba Hile Mariam*, the administrator of the Monastery, Ehite Selasse came to the Monastery for she was very sick and stayed for thirty days around the Monastery's baptistery place to recover from her illness. She has promised to construct a museum by her own expense if she is cured from her illness. Then, she has freed from her illness after thirty days of baptism within the monastery and constructed the museum per her promise in 2005 E.C.⁸⁷ The building of the Museum is Modern Building in its makeup with Stone, Cement. Metal and Mirror.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

⁸⁵Informant. Sudan Ahimed, in 14/7/2010ec

⁸⁶Informant. Merigeta Amide Worik, in 3/8/2010ec

⁸⁷Informant *Aba Haile Mariam*. In 3/8/2010ec



Figure 4: The partial view of Midrekebid Abo Monastery Museum, by Meseret Tilahun in 18/7/2010ec

This picture portrays the museum of *Midrekebid Abo Andinet* Monastery. However, unlike other public museums of monasteries, this museum is not open for every individual and every days of the year. It can only be visited two days within the year- during the ceremonial celebration of *Abune G/ Menfes Qidu* in October 5 and March 5 E.C.

However, this museum has currently succeeded in conserving many religious and crown objects and values made of different materials, of which some of them were donated by kings and imported from abroad as well. Majority of these religious objects are very ancient and historic such as crosses, Manuscripts, ancient sacred books, ancient Cloths, and liturgical objects.



Figure 5: General overview of the objects within Midrekebid Abo Andinet Monastery Museum. By Mesret Tilahun in 18/7/2010ec

This picture depicts the main parts of the museum in which many objects are accumulated. Some of these objects are liturgical objects within a church, others are crown objects of the king and others are simply historical made of different materials mainly from Bronze, wood, metal, skin, and etc. To look at some of attractive objects within this museum, the first attractive, historical and admirable object is different types of crosses.

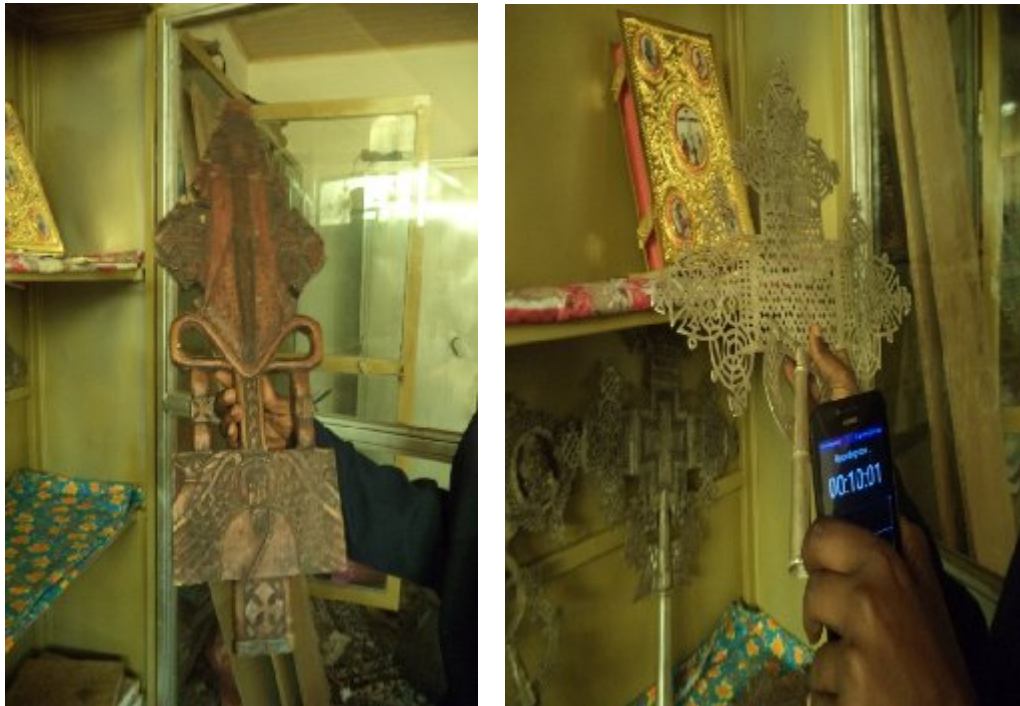


Figure 6: some of Crosses made from Wood and Metals, by Meseret Tilahun in 18/7/2010ec

These crosses are some of the crosses found within the museum of the monastery and which are donated and made by individual monks, local lords and king of kings.⁸⁸ However, one of the cross which is made up of Gold is kept within the main church, not the museum, for fear of marauder and other misconduct. One of these crosses called *Metsore Mesikel* was donated by Emperor Menelik II. This is evident from the fact that the writing in Ge'ez on the cross reads 'Ze Dagmawi Menelik ze wehawo le Midrekebid Abo' to mean donated by Menelike II to medrekebid Abo.

Another important religious object within this museum is ancient sacred religious books, though many of these books were looted during historical crisis within the country such as the war of

⁸⁸Informant.Aba Fire Sibhat. In 15/8/2010ec

Ahamed Gragn and Italian Invasion.⁸⁹ One of the gifts the Ethiopian Orthodox church rich with is Books including religious, historical, philosophical, astronomical, medical books, and etc.



Figure 7: some of sacred Books within the Museum, by Mesret Tilahun 18/7.2010ec

These are some of the books available within the museum of *Midrekebid Abo Andinet* monastery such as Hagiographies of Saints, *Tsome Diguwa*, *Diguwa*, *Gebre Himamat*, *Ye Kidase Metsaf* and *Metsaf Dawite* and etc. One of important book called *Sinkisare Metsaf* (the Book of Sinksar), depicted by the image at the right side and covered with Gold is also available within this museum. Majority of these books are stored in one standing box are not allowed to be touched and read, including for the researcher, for fear of plunderer.⁹⁰ There are also materials which used to facilitate the service of the church and used for the purpose of dining such as Cup and Dish made up of bronze and wood.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Informant. Deacon Haile G/ Kabtimer. In 23/7/2010ec



Figure 8: Cup/trophy, Casserole and Dish made up of Gold, Bronze, and Wood respectively, by Meseret Tilahun in 18/7/2010ec

These are some of the dining materials and trophy. The cup at the left side, called Wanicha, is made of metal and was used as an object by which the bishops, local lords and kings were drinking beverage such as *Tej*, *Tela* and etc.⁹¹ But, the trophy or Goblet in the middle is made of Gold and it was donated from Jerusalem, which shows the interlink age between this monastery and the monasteries in Jerusalem. Whereas the Dish or platter is made up of wood by one of the monks living within the monastery using local materials such as wood and knife. It was used to

⁹¹Informant.Aba Haile Mariam. In 23/7/210ec

eat foods. The casserole, which is made of Bronze, is donated by Emperor Menelik to the Monastery.⁹²

The museum has also treasured some ancient chairs and Bell which were used many years ago.



⁹² Ibid.



Figure 9: Ancient Chairs and Bell (Dewel) of the Museum, by Meseret Tilahun in 18/7/2010ec

The chair in the left side was made by one of the monks of the monastery out of wood, Cotton and skin and was serving as a seat when bishops of other churches and monasteries come to the monastery.⁹³ The chair in the middle was the seat of kings and lords and it was donated by Emperor Haile Selassie I. This chair, unlike the first one, is made up of wood, golden metal, sponge and animal skin. Moreover, at the two edges of this chair the images of lion is painted which may more likely represent the Imperial regime of Haile sellasie or the lions of *Abune G/ Menfes Qidus*. At the right side of the above picture is the Bell or *Dewel* made up of bronze used as a means of communication via the sound which is heard when waved. And this historic Bell was donated by Empress Zewiditu to the monastery.⁹⁴

Another historical liturgical object of the monastery found within the museum is censers (*Tsina*) which are found through excavation and from Jerusalem.

⁹³ Ibid

⁹⁴ Informant. Aba Fire Sibhat. In 15/8/2010ec



Figure 10: Ancient censers found within the museum, by Meseret Tilahun in 18/7/2010ec

Although censer is common in all churches and monasteries, these censers found in this monastery are of vital importance. The censer in the left, which have writing in Ge'ez, is said to be found via excavation made within the compound of the monastery.⁹⁵ This can be alert for the fact that there might be other buried objects around the monastery. And the second censer came from Jerusalem.

⁹⁵Informant. Aba Haile Mariam in 27/7/2010ec



Figure 11: The image of Mahädär, Atirons, ritual clothes and mesob, by Meseret Tilahun in 18/7/2010ec

The image in the left side is called *Mahider* (the bag of books) made from skin of animals and it is purely used to keep and carry sacred books. And the *Mahider* on the image is very old one. The second image depicts what is called Atirons, a material which is used to keep some Gospel

Books and unlike other Atrones found in other churches and monasteries which are made up of woods; this Atrons is made up of metal, skin and chain metal. The image in the middle is some of the ritual clothes of priests, deacons, and monks. And the image in the right side is called *Mesob* which provides different services in liturgy.

There are also other several small liturgy objects within the museum such as advent wreath, Altar, catechism, communion table, gospel book, lavabo, censers, crosier, crucifix, flagon, cruet, ecclesiastical ring, antependium, pulpit, chalice object, spear, spoon and etc. which are very ancient and historic.

2.3. The role of Medrekebid Abo Andinet Monastery within the society

As one of the cultural heritages, the cultural heritages sites of the Soddo Gurag wereda e have its own socio-economic and cultural values for the society. It is playing different roles within the society of the soddo Gurage wereda. Among others, most of the Monks who live in the Monastery have the skills of making different handcraft materials to the Monastery and the local society. They made materials like cultural Cloths, different types Crosses which is made from Wood and other handcraft materials to the monastery and the local community. Hence, a good habit of entrepreneurship can lessoned from these monks of the monastery.⁹⁶

In economic wise, the Monastery has its own grinding house which is serving the society. Before the construction of this house, the local society was going to a very distant place to grind their cereals and currently they are using the grinding houses of the monastery which is in their surroundings. Moreover, today the monastery is in the way of constructing water project by the contribution of the local society. This project is very important because of the absence of adequate water in and around the area. In addition to this, the road from *Bue* town to *Sewatin* kebele *Gebere mahiber* was constructed by the Monastery which has solved the prior problems.

The monastery is also being visited by many peoples throughout the years in which majority of the followers of Christian religion give several donations to the monastery and the monastery serve the community either directly or indirectly. They also buy materials which are found in the

⁹⁶ Informant, Ato Tsegaye Tabor 18/7/2010 ec

Monastery such as, Religious book, Cultural Cloths which is made in the Monastery and others.⁹⁷

2.4. History of vandalism on Cultural Heritages found in Soddo Gurage wereda

It is observed above that Ethiopia has a good record of deterioration of cultural heritages and it can also be understood that majority of the looting in history has targeted on religious cultural heritages and crown related objects, and manuscripts. Like the history of vandalism in Ethiopian context, the cultural heritages within Soddo Gurage *wereda* have suffered a lot from both foreign and national crises. Yet, the sabotage on the *medrekebid Abo Andinet* monastery due to internal and foreign crises was fundamental. Briefly speaking, the history of vandalism on *medrekebid Abo Andinet* monastery is similar with a looting on other Ethiopian churches and monasteries. However, the Italian Invasion and the war of the Adal sultanate, Ahamed *giragn* were surpassing history of damage on this monastery.⁹⁸

The first devastating vandalism to the cultural heritages within the monastery was during the war of Imam Ahimed Ibn Ibrahim in the 16th century. During this time, there was huge record of destruction in the Adal's attempt of forceful conversion of the local society into Islam in which several Christian churches within the area including the *Midrekebid Abo Andinet* monastery with its religious cultural heritages were destroyed and burnt. And it is believed that it is the invasion of Ahamed *Giragn* that introduces Islamic religion into the Soddo Gurage land.⁹⁹ It is revealed that there was brutal religious war between the Soddo Gurage and the Islamic society of Gurage such as *Muhur* with a view of expanding their dominance over the Gurage land in general. Hence, this war has claimed many cultural heritages mainly found within the *Medrekebid Abo Andinet* monastery such as sacred religious objects, manuscripts, books, historical, paintings and etc.

Another important intrusion to the wellbeing of the *Medrekebid Abo Andinet* Monastery was the 20th Century's Italian invasions, in addition to the historic damage caused by the Lowland Ahamed *Giragn* in the 16th Century. As discussed above, the Italian invasion has caused great destruction on the cultural heritages of the country in addition to the political defeat that the

⁹⁷Informant Aba Haile Mariam 27/7/2010 ec

⁹⁸Richard Pankhurst, Ethiopia, The Aksum Obelisk, and the Return of Africa's Cultural Heritage, African Affairs, 1999.p22, informant. Aba Haile Mariam . 22/7/2010ec

⁹⁹ Tesfa Gebreyes. *Ayimelel.Ye Gurage Hizib Achir Tarik Mastawesha*. 1986.p42

country has suffered from. This invasion has claimed the life of many religious persons including the then Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahido*, Abune Petros; destructed many churches and monasteries; the precious religious objects were vandalized and looted; and etc. At this time, the Italian invader was focusing on the religious institutions and persons due to the strong resistance that the Ethiopian Orthodox church was waging against the Fascist.¹⁰⁰

Further, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in general and the *Midrekebid Abo Andnet* Monastery in particular evangelize the people of the area about the unity of Ethiopia and independence from foreign invasion.¹⁰¹ They were also very curious and interested to loot different heritages and cultural materials of the monastery. According to oral traditions during this time more than one hundred Monks were killed, the church was burned out and many of the heritages of the Monastery was destructed and looted by them.¹⁰²

It is claimed that before the war of Imam Ahimed Ibn Ebrahim and the Italian invasion in Gurage zone in general and *Midrekebid Abo Andinet* Monastery in particular, *Midrekebid Abo* Monastery *Andinet Gedem* have had a lot of ancient and Historical Tangible Cultural heritage which were destroyed and a number of Monks were killed.¹⁰³

However, remedial measures were taken after the reign of EPRDF in which much destruction was recovered especially after 1992. Among others, the land of the monastery which was taken during the Italian Invasion and before, were returned back to the monastery.¹⁰⁴ Further, the majority of the collections of the Museum were collected back from the house of every individual who has taken the objects of the monastery during the time of crisis. Besides, the objects of the monastery which were buried were taken back through excavation undertaken by the Monks themselves on the surroundings of the monastery.¹⁰⁵

Besides to these crises by foreign countries, there were also national crises which have resulted in looting of cultural heritages of the country. The war of the Adal sultanet, Ahimed Ibn Ibrahim

¹⁰⁰Informant. Ato Tsegaye Tabor in 25/7/2010ec

¹⁰¹Informant . Aba Haile Mariam in 22/7/2010ec

¹⁰²*Ibid.*

¹⁰³Informant. W/r Yewibe Koreb . in 12/7/2010ec

¹⁰⁴Informant. Aba Haile Mariam in 12/7/2010ec

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

or Ahamed Giragn and that of Yodit Gudrit which has resulted in the destruction of several heritages, mainly of religious heritages are some exemplary of national crises which have caused gigantic damage. Further, the internal non-war looting is also a live challenge to the cultural heritages. Other challenges can also be attributed to the natural factors within the country and human made action in its interaction with the environment.

2.5. Existing challenges of *Midrekebid Abo Andinet* Monastery in Soddo Gurage Wereda

The value of cultural heritages for a given society and country in particular and the world at large is unequivocal and beyond doubts. It has been asserted and proved in the preceding chapters that southern Ethiopia in general and the Soddo Gurage *Wereda* in particular are endowed with plenty of cultural heritages. The Soddo Gurage *Wereda* in particular is the repository of several cultural heritages with significant historical and cultural values. Among others, the *midrekebid Abo Andinet* Monastery, megalithic stones and intangible cultural heritages such as *Mäsəkäl* Festivity and *Adebina*, are outshining cultural heritages within Soddo Gurage *Wereda*.¹⁰⁶

The value of these cultural heritages in perspective of cultural, historical, economic and social sector is very important to, especially the tourism sector of the country. And to ripe the fruit of these cultural heritages appropriate measure of preservation and conservation need to be undertaken by concerned bodies. However, a look at the cultural heritages found within Soddo Gurage *Wereda* reveals that they face different challenges which unless curbed out, might have the effect of deteriorating their whole essence. That is to mean, the cultural heritages in this area are currently in a perilous state of preservation and require pressing measures. Hence, this chapter is devoted to the discussions of the concept of cultural heritage management in general; the challenges of cultural heritage management in Ethiopia in general and in Soddo Gurage *Wereda* and the ways out by which these challenges can be curtailed out.¹⁰⁷

Despite the values that cultural heritages in Soddo Gurage *wereda* such as the *Medrekebid Abo Andinet* Monastery, the megalithic cultures, and the intangibles property such as *Mesikel* Festivity, *Adebina* and *Muyat* holidays, play to the historical, cultural and socio-economic aspect of the society and the country at large, currently, they are being threatened by various challenges. And these challenges are usually comes from natural and human made factors.

¹⁰⁶ Megazin. *Gurage Zone limat Mahiber*. 1998.

¹⁰⁷ Informat. W/r Yewibe Koreb . in 12/7/2010ec

To start from the challenges that the *Medrekebid Abo Andinet* Monastery is facing, the first challenge is lack of finance. The main financial source of the monastery is income collected from the followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox religion. Further, the monastery has also its own financial sources. This is because the monks of the monastery makes handicrafts such as cross out of wood and sold within the shop of the monastery. To this end, the monastery has two shops in which the first one is the shop of religious materials such as cross, Books, and etc. whereas the second is the shop of cultural clothes. In addition, the monastery has also its own mill house in which the local communities benefit from¹⁰⁸ Despite these financial sources, the revenue collected by the monastery is insignificant to administer and fill the need of the monastery. The monastery has a lot of expenditure for religious services, administration of the monastery, its promotion and maintenance, and etc. This is because the money collected from the above sources is very minimal to meet the need of the monastery and hence; the monastery has a chronic financial problem and is not able to cover its essential expenses.¹⁰⁹

The second main challenge of the monastery is poor infrastructural development within and around the monastery. In fact, the monastery contributes a lot to the community in the sense that the monastery has constructed various infrastructures which are serving the monastery and the community. For example, the main road from Bue town to *Midrekebid Abo Andinet* monastery was constructed by the monastery and now too, the monastery is on the way of building of water project for the peoples of the area and the Monastery.¹¹⁰

However, the monastery is suffering from chronic lack of infrastructure mainly the road, which, though constructed recently, couldn't give a service during summer time. The Monastery has the shortage of water due to which the monks within the monastery are given 10 litter of water per individual for the duration of one week and this has forced many monks to leave the monastery and change their destination into other monastery of the region.¹¹¹

Thirdly, the monastery is also suffering from lack of transportation service as the monastery is far from the Bue town, the center of the wäräda. The direct and immediate implication of this

¹⁰⁸Informant. Zeleke Engida in 11/8/2010ec

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*

¹¹⁰Bennet Tony. *The birth of Museum*. London. Routledge, Tayler and francies Group, 1995.

¹¹¹Informant. Aba Harege Weyin in 24/7/2010

problem is that many individuals are not interested to visit the monastery including the museum as there is lack of transportation service.

Further, as the museum of the monastery is not open to the public throughout the years for the threat of looting. Accordingly, it is only twice a year that the museum is opened for visitation and this affect the revenue of the monastery. Moreover, it is alleged that the property of the monastery is still not returned back to it from the hand of the individuals.¹¹²

Besides, the Management of the Museum is not organized like the other Museums of the Country. The supervision of the Museum is only controlled by the guider of the Monastery Aba Fire Sibhat and the Administrator of the Monastery Aba Haile Mariam. That is to say there is no strong administrative processes and structure governing the monastery in general and the museum in particular. Weak promotion of the monastery by the society and the tourism bureau is also another challenge affecting the value of the monastery. There is no significant practice of making the monastery available to the media via which the public at large can get information about the monastery so as to visit and help it. The absence of accommodation service is also another challenge from which this monastery is suffering from.¹¹³

2.6. Conservation and preservation practice of *Midrekebid Abo Andinet* Monastery

In today's archeological discourse, the issue of cultural heritages and its management (preservation and conservation) are inseparable. The whole kernel of heritage management is related with the preservation and conservation of heritages sites due to the fact that cultural heritage is not eternal.¹¹⁴ Heritages in general and cultural heritages in particular are subject to deterioration if not preserved and conserved wisely. And sometimes deterioration of cultural heritages might be at irreversible stage. This deterioration is because of a wide array of causes, ranging from neglect and poor management to increased visitation and vandalism, from inappropriate past treatments to deferred maintenance.¹¹⁵

¹¹²*ibid.*

¹¹³Informant. Ato Tsegaye Tabor in 12/7/2010ec

¹¹⁴ICCROM. 2006. P39

¹¹⁵ Frank G. Matero. Heritage, Conservation, and Archaeology: An Introduction, Archaeological Institute of America, 2014.p1

According to ICCROM, all cultural heritages are deteriorating mainly as a result of physical, biological and chemical changes that occur over time.¹¹⁶ Hence, a threat to cultural heritages might be either natural or human made actions. The natural factors include the geological, biological, hydrological, natural disasters, climatic factors such as solar radiations, temperature variations, direct rainfall impact, wind pressure and humidity whereas those human made actions arise out of the artificial conduct of the human being in its interaction with the environment and the specific cultural heritage.¹¹⁷

Preservation and conservation practice, accordingly react against what is perceived to be detrimental impact or malpractice at the other end of the scale.¹¹⁸ The primary objective of conservation is to protect cultural heritage from loss and damage and conservators accomplish this through both preventive and remedial types of intervention. The main cause behind the need for preservation and conservation practice is the fact that cultural heritages are not eternal in their nature in the sense that unless preserved and conserved they might be deteriorated due to natural and human made factors.¹¹⁹

As discussed above the cultural heritages need to be protected so that they play the historical, cultural, and socio-economic roles within the society and the country at large. To this end the Ethiopia government has enacted conservation and preservation laws and strategies. Coming back to the cultural heritages within the Soddo Gurage *Wereda*, the *medrekebid Abo Andinet* Monastery is the major one. And compared to other cultural heritages it can be said that the conservation practice of this monastery is relatively good in the sense that the monastery is very clean and the compound of the monastery is well controlled by the monks.¹²⁰

However, a close scrutiny of the *Medrekebid Abo Andinet* Monastery reveals that it is only the outer look of it that is relatively conserved and protected. Especially, the museum, which is

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹¹⁷UNESCO. *Preserving and Restoring Monuments and Historic Buildings*, 1972, Switzerland.

¹¹⁸Janette Deacon .*Rock Art Conservation and Tourism*. 2006. P381

¹¹⁹ Frank G. Matero. *Heritage, Conservation, and Archaeology: An Introduction*, Archaeological Institute of America, 2014. p3

¹²⁰ Informant, Aba Haile Mariam in 27/7/2010ec

composed of various cultural heritage suffer from poor preservation and conservation practice. An adequate evidence of poor emphasis for this museum is the fact that it is not open to the public unlike other museums within other churches and monasteries. To once surprise, as discussed in chapter two of this paper, the alleged reason for inaccessibility of the museum for the public is fear of looting or vandalism. And this reason cannot be taken for granted. This shows how much the museum is poorly regulated and controlled. Closing the museum cannot be a solution to protect the cultural heritages from plundering and sabotage.¹²¹

It is found that the museum is being supervised by only two individuals and there is no proper and coordinated administration system administering the museum. That is to say, there is no formal administration system that is directly responsible for the issues related to the museum and that can be accountable for any misdeeds. And this is non- under minable problem of the museum which has a direct negative consequence on the success of preservation and conservation of the museum.¹²² What makes this problem worse is the fact that these individuals in charge of the museum are not professionals of the heritage management. The immediate consequence of poor administration is the fact that the museum is suffering from poor handling system of religious objects. The religious objects are negligently and carelessly put on poorly structured boxes. Due to this poor handling practice, some of the religious objects are simply placed on the ground without any protection and care. And this kind of negligent protection for these objects might expose these objects for deterioration. The collections of the museum have on their own code and are not placed by order in respect of their types and name.¹²³

Another alarming problem within the monastery is the fact that the objects found within the museum and deteriorated through time are not being repaired. There are no mechanisms in which the objects being repaired and maintained due to absence of administrative system composed of responsible and professional persons. The museum is composed of collections within the standing box having small window. The standing box is not well articulated and is purely structured. And the whole building of the museum is not yet maintained and it is administered with the monastery in general. What exacerbate these whole problems is the fact that, unlike other cultural heritages, the *Midrekebid Abo Andinet* monastery's museum is not supported by the Office of Culture and

¹²¹*Ibid.*

¹²²*Ibid.*

¹²³ Informant, Ato Shimelis Ayele in 16/6/2010ec

Tourism which is found in the Wereda.¹²⁴The office is not supporting the museum either in cash or professionally.



Figure 12: The image of negligently placed religious objects, by Meseret tilahun18/7/2010ec



Figure 13: Image of an old book placed on the ground, by Meseret Tilahun18/7/2010ec

These pictures depict the negligent protection being given for the collections of the objects which are of religious type. And this can be an adequate evidence of the poor conservation practice

¹²⁴*Ibid.*

within the museum and at the same time call for the need of urgent attention for the monastery in general and its museum in particular.

Generally, one of the cultural heritages within soddoo Gurage *wereda* is the *Midrekebid Abo Andinet* Monastery which is believed to be established by *Abune Gebre Menfes Qidus*, an Egyptian martyr. Accordingly, the monastery is very historic in its age and rich in its heritages value as it is composed of important cultural heritages from the religious aspect of the society. The religious ritual objects within the monastery, the cave found within the monastery which beleieved to be a possible way for the martyr to *Zikuwala* monastery through Jerusalem. The physical makeup of the church, the liturgy objects such as the censers, clothes, trophy, dish or platter, sacred books such as book of sinkisar, chairs, and etc. which are made by the monks of the monastery, donated by lords and kings such as Menelik II, Empress Zewiditu and Haile Selassie I, donated from Jerusalem, contributed by the local society and etc. makes it distinct. Further, the monastery has its own monastery though established very recently in 2005 E.C. and succeeded in conserving the heritages of the monastery. These all can make this monastery possible heritage site of the country and the world.

Chapter Three

Investigation on the Megalithic Stone culture of Soddo Gurage Wereda

3.1. Introduction

In the preceding chapters, it is made clear that heritage, mainly cultural, is usually the result of interaction of human being with the environment. And one of cultural heritages which might be created by a human being is megalithic stones usually in relation to burial culture. The soddo Gurage wereda is also endowed with the megalithic stones. Out of plenty of megalithic stones within Soddo Gurage *Wereda*, it is only the *Tiya*'s megalithic stone that has got an international and national attention, even though other areas too are with many megalithic stones of cultural and historical values. These megalithic stones have a lot to speak with their shapes and symbols engraved on them. Hence, this chapter is devoted to survey of megalithic stones within the Soddo Gurage *Wereda* exhaustively so as to explore the unexplored.

3.1.1. Briefing the Essence of Megalithic culture and its place in southern Ethiopia

The international understanding and purpose of megalithic vary from region to region. For instance, in Europe the Megalithic stones were being used to territorial marker of borders whereas in Africa most of the time the Megalithic Stone used to represent the bench marks of the Burial places.¹²⁵ Describing the debatable and complex nature of study of megalithic culture in perspective of southeast Asia, Loofs has rightly stated that of all the enigmas of archaeology, the megalithic complex is probably the most intriguing; it is regarded today by some scholars as the first world-wide religious movement, by others as a well-defined stage of civilization, while still others deny completely its existence as an identifiable, meaningful cultural entity.¹²⁶

In study of history, prehistoric period is consists of Paleolithic Age, Neolithic Age, and Iron Age. And the megalithic age is corresponding to the Iron Age of the Prehistoric world (1500BC – 200AD).¹²⁷ And these megalithic cultures can be megalithic tombs and related to monuments

¹²⁵Childe V G. the distribution of Megalithic Culture and their influences on ancient and modern civilization. 1946 p13

¹²⁶H. H. E. LOOFS. *Elements of the Megalithic Complex in Southeast Asia*, Centre of Oriental Studies, 1961. p3

¹²⁷P. Chinnian. *Megalithic Monuments and Megalithic Culture*

constructed usually of large slabs or blocks of stone, either in their natural form or roughly quarried and trimmed.¹²⁸

The term "Megalithic" was used to describe a class of monuments in Europe consisting of huge undressed stones which were termed as Dolmens, Cromlechs and Menhirs.¹²⁹ A megalithic is stones which are larger in size and have been used to construct a monument or a structure and these monuments or the structure might have been built either alone or with other corroborative stones by the past societies.

Acknowledging the existence of various understanding on the purpose of megalithic stones, Joussaume R stated that megalithic stones in relation to tombs are;

‘.... a monument Commemorative of a person who dead from his Land of Birth and whose remains could not be returned to the family of Clan tomb or whose remain will be brought back a later stage; a stopping place for the funerary cartage of an important man: a figurative memorial of notable ancestor to the tomb where he is buried; a memorial of a feast given in honor of the dead of the family, Clan and tribe.’¹³⁰

Megalithic stones may have sepulchral and non-sepulchral purposes. They can provide much information about the lifestyle of the society who made it and their faiths and beliefs. And the sepulchral megalithic especially are not designed with the mere purpose of burying the dead; rather it help the current generations to remember where their ancestors were buried, which have a lot to speak about the background of a given society. In addition, these megalithic have also much to divulge the level of civilization of the past society, culture, beliefs, understanding; in general social, cultural, economic and political signs of the past society.

Broadly speaking, we can categorize Megaliths into Polyolithic and Monolithic the difference being the fact that monolithic megalith the megalithic structure is made out of single stonewhereas in case of polyolithic more than one stone was used to make the structure. Further,

in Tamil Nadu, 1983. p27

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰Joussaume. R. *Dolmens for the dead Megalithic: building through the world*. Translated by Anne and Christopher Chippendale from the *los dolmens pour Lesmorts*. London: B T Bats Ford Lit. 1985 p26

the Polyolithic megalithic structure can also be of different type; Namely, Dolmen, which is made in single hollow ossuary with three or more upright stones; Cairn, which is a human-made pile of stones usually having a conical form; Cist, which was used as encasements for dead bodies usually in the cairn or barrow and capable of indicating the wealth or prominence of the entombed person and etc. whereas the monolithic structure can also be Menhir, which is a stone monolithically standing vertically or stone circle which is a monument standing stones arranged in a circle in the form of an ellipse or an arc of circle.¹³¹

When we come to Ethiopia, archeologists have uncovered the fact that megalithic monuments are found throughout the country, regarded by some as a land of megalithic culture.¹³² The megalithic culture in Ethiopia consists of stele, dolmens, and tumuli which are extensively distributed throughout the country.¹³³ The stone monuments found in Ethiopia range from undecorated monoliths to elaborately dressed phallic and figurative stele. Some stele sites were cemeteries and include daggers, spearheads, geometrics, and zoomorphic representations, most of which predate the fifteenth century introduction of Islam or Christianity to the region.¹³⁴ Explorers in Ethiopia have long-acknowledged the existence of seemingly mysterious and prehistoric megalithic monuments and stone structures and although the more famous Ethiopian monoliths are those belonging to the pre-Christian Axumite cultures of the Northern Highlands, the stelae of Southern Ethiopia are invariably greater in number and in many instances do possess prehistoric origins, unlike many of their northern counterparts.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Rao, K.P. *Megalithic Anthropomorphic Statues: Meaning and Significance*, Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association Bulletin, 2000. p110-114

¹³² Tesfaye Habtamu, Mengistu Abebe. *Preliminary archaeological investigation in Gedeo Zone*. 2012. p12

¹³³ Worku Derara., *On the Megalithic sites of the Gurage highland: the study of enigmatic nature of engravings and Megalithic builder*. EJOSSAH.vol No 1&2. 2008-2009.p63

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Christopher Grant. *Stone, slab and stelae: the origin and symbolism of contemporary Oromo burial practice and grave art*. University of Chicago. 2006. P7-8

However, it is also recorded that the largest number and highest concentration of carved megalithic stele are found in the southern part of the Rift Valley Lake system of Ethiopia.¹³⁶

Currently, the data from the tourism bureau of SNNPRS, southern region has an enormous number of Megalithic stelae and is estimated to be about 10,000 stelae, some of which date back to the ancient and the medieval periods of Ethiopia and some of them namely, the stelae site of Tiya in Gurage zone, is registered as world heritage site.¹³⁷

Most of the megalithic cultures in Ethiopia in general and southern region in particular are a pan African phenomenon of burial traditions. According to Christopher, majority of the southern megalithic stones are found in *Soddo Gurage* and *Sidamo* region and asserted that the earliest accepted date of the Southern Megalithic Stone, except the Megalithic Stone sites of *Tiya* in Soddo Gurgae *wereda*, is believed to have been fall somewhere around the beginning of the ninth century.¹³⁸

The Gurage Zone, as part and parcel of southern region, is the main hub of the megalithic stones of the country. And currently study has exhumed the existence of a mosaic of megalithic culture within Gurage Zone, comprising tambourines associated with a tumulus and decorated flat stelae in Soddo, and dressed but undecorated stelae of such diverse shape as flat, rectangular, pentagonal and cylindrical in *Mehur-Aklil*.¹³⁹

Most of the megalithic stones in Gurage Zone have similar feature especially those in *Mesikan* and Soddo *Wereda* in their shape, form and styles and some of them carry symbols of sword, wooden, headrest and *Enset*. However, there is also an assertion that the symbolic representations of the megalithic stone found within the Soddo Gurag *Wereda* are related with a distinction in status between men and women. Further, the megalithic stones were erected to

¹³⁶Bekele Metasebia. *Notes on the megalithic sites of southern Ethiopia, with highlights on late Paleolithic occupation sites*.1997.pp.3

¹³⁷www.southtourism.gov.et>all. Bureau of culture and Tourism website SNNPR.

¹³⁸ Christopher Grant. *Stone, slab and stelae: the origin and symbolism of contemporary Oromo burial practice and grave art*.University of Chicago. 2006. Pp4-6

¹³⁹ Worku Derara.*On the Megalithic sites of the Gurage highland: the study of enigmatic nature of engravings and Megalithic builder*.EJOSSAH.vol No 1&2. 2008-2009.p.63-64

represent the social class of the past society in the sense that the type of megalithic stone which was erected for the royal families is different from other ordinary society.¹⁴⁰

Regarding the nomenclature of the megalithic stones in Gurage zone, especially those in Soddo, *Wereda* the popular view is that they are known as *Ye Gragn Dingay* (The stone of Giragn) in the sense that part of the society believe that these stones are stand by *Giragn Ahimed*.¹⁴¹ This is to refer the ruler of the sultanate of Adal called Imam Ahmad Ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi. However, recent archeological excavations made by different archeologists have proved the otherwise. One of a known archeologist, Rogger, has undertaken archeological excavations on megalithic stone of *Tiya*, in which he found that, unlike the popular view, the megalithic stones are the burial places of ancient society.

In his excavation, Rogger has concluded that the megalithic stones of the area represent the burial place of the men and women differently. That is to say, there was different class between the society, specifically between the royal families and the ordinary subjects. In addition, he has also found material cultures of ancient society especially of the upper class of society.

Majority of the megalithic stones of Soddo *Wereda* are found in the remote area of the town of the *Wereda* except the Megalithic Stone of *Tiya* site.¹⁴² These unexplored megalithic stones of the Soddo *Wereda* found in the remote area are discussed as follows. The distribution, nature, shapes, symbols and historical values of the megalithic culture found in Soddo Gurage *Wereda* have got detailed discussion in the coming section.

¹⁴⁰ Informant Ato Tsegaye Tabor

¹⁴¹ Addis Alem Melese. *Ethno archaeological study of Megalithic tradition among Hadiya in Southern Ethiopia*. University of Addis Abeba . July 2009. P6

¹⁴² Rogger Jouis. *Dolmen for the dead megalith: building through the world*. Translated by Anne and Christopher Chippendale from the last dolmen pour lessmorts. London: B T Bast Ford lit. 1985.p

3.1.2.Distribution, Nature, and historical values of Megalithic culture in Soddo Gurage Wäräda

Under the demographic and geographical description of the, it is found that the Soddo Gurage *Wäräda* is composed of 21 administrative kebeles. It also found that southern region of the country and specifically the Soddo Gurage *Wereda* consists of plenty of megalithic stones of different nature, shapes and symbols.

However, a look at the distribution of megalithic culture within the Soddo Gurage *Wereda* reveals that the megalithic stones are found within four main administrative kebeles; namely the *Fato*, *Firshi*, *Damu* and *Dachi* kebeles. Although the megalithic stones within these kebeles have their own distinct and peculiar feature in their shapes and symbols, most of them share common features. Yet, despite the cultural and historical values of these megalithic stones found within these kebeles, only some of them have got the attention of the researcher and archeologists. Hence, what comes is the investigation of these megalithic stones in *Fato*, *Firshi*, *Damu* and *Dachu* sites with their shapes and symbols and the message they used to represent.

One of the megalithic stones site within the Soddo *wereda* is those which are found in *Fato* site. *Fato* kebele is one of administrative kebele of Soddo *wereda* found in the place known as *Gäräno* village, one of the rural villages of Soddo *Wereda* in south Gurage Zone. The Megalithic Stone of *Fato Gebere Mahiber* is found 20km far in the west parts of Bue Town which is the Center of Soddo Guarge. This megalithic stone is surrounded by the farming lands and by *Estifanos* River. It is estimated that there are more than one Hundred Megalithic Stone in the site of *Fato Gebere Mahiber* and the ages of these Megalithic Stone date back to the twelve and thirteen century like other sites within the *wäräda*.

Majority of the standing stones of *Fato Kebele Gebere Mahiber* were being used in the ancient time primarily as a grave marker and also for the commemoration of the past society and like other megalithic stones in the the *wereda* megalithic Stone of *Fato Kebele Gebere Mahiber* is the burial places of the Ancient society who were the most influential and the most powerful in the area. It is also the memorial places of ancient Soddo *Kistane* people. According to oral traditions,

the area is believed to be the grave of the ancient war leader and some ancient local people who knows by their contribution of Socio cultural and political Aspects of the *Wereda*.¹⁴³

In similar fashion with other megalithic stones within the Soddo *Wereda*, the megalithic stones within the *Fato Kebele Gebere Mahiber* share much communality and most the shape, form and size of the megalithic stones within this site are somewhat different from other sites within the area.

In general, the Megalithic Stones of *Fato* sites have three types of shapes; namely, triangular shape, Cross shape and phallic shape steals. Yet, majority of the megalithic stone found in this site are Triangular in shape. And this site has large numbers of megalithic stones compared to other site of the area.

One of the megalithic Stone of *Fato* is standing without engraving the Stone which is a kind of stele erected on the Grave of a person without any engravings. It has triangular shape and sharp at the tips of the Stone. These types of Megalithic Stone are found only in the Megalithic sites of Tiya among the other sites of the *Wereda*.



Figure 14: The Triangular shape Stele of Fato Megalithic sites, by Meseret Tilahun in 20/7/2010ec

¹⁴³Informant. Ato Tsegaye Tabor in 12/8/2010ec

This picture depicts one of the triangular shape steles of *Fato Kebele Gebere Mahiber*. It is stated above that the megalithic stones within this region has a lot to speak about the lifestyle, tradition and the level of civilization of the past society. And it is also believed that it is possible to identify the sex and the social status of the person buried under the stele. However, it is difficult to identify sex and status of the person who were buried under the megalithic stones with triangular shapes, unlike other shapes.¹⁴⁴

Another features of megalithic stones found in *Fato* Megalithic site are those which have phallic shape stele.



Figure 15: The phallic shape stele of Fato Megalithic sites, by Meseret Tilahun in 20/7/2010ec

These pictures portray another form of megalithic stones within Soddo *Wereda*, *Fato Kebele*. Unlike those stones with triangular shapes, these megalithic stones have Phallic shape Stele. These steles with phallic shapes are also common in *Tiya* and *Damu* megalithic stones. However, unlike phallic stele found in other area of the *wäräda*, these steles within *Fato Kebele* are not

¹⁴⁴Informant. Ato Shimelis Ayele in 20/7/2010ec

engraved by single ring. Further more; these steles are not cylindrical unlike other phallic shapes steles in other areas. They do have an oval shape at their peak.

On the messages and representations that these phallic shapes stele portrays, there is a believe that they describe the sex of a person buried under these megalithic stones. It is also believed that the social status of the person can be easily identified. These issues will be discussed thoroughly in the coming section of symbolism.

Other important types of megalithic stones within *Fato kebele* is those megalithic stones which have a shape which seems a Cross or “T” shape stele.



Figure 16: The megalithic stones having a shape which seems Cross or T shape Fato kebele, by Meseret Tilahun in 20/7/2010ec

This is one of the megalithic stones found within *Fato Kebele* having a shape which seems a Cross or T shape. There are also the Stones which are found circling these megalithic stones without engraving any symbols. And the presumption is that there was a tradition of circling the megalithic stele with slab.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

However, the shape of these megalithic stones steles is controversial. Some consider it as a Cross whereas other read it as the shape of a human being which can be either male or female, although the majority incline to consider it as a symbol of Cross.¹⁴⁶ However, directly looking at this megalithic stone, it is not such a controversial that its shape is of the Cross. And a possible presumption and conclusion from this shape is that these kinds of stones describe the religion of the person. Likewise, according to Ato cherinet, a guider in *Tiya* megalithic sites, the society too has the same feeling on this presumption. Accordingly, the person buried under this megalithic stone was Christian in his/her religion, as a cross is the symbol of Christianity.

However, what is odd with the megalithic stones in *Fato kebele* is that their representation is subject to different understanding. This is due to the fact that unlike the megalithic stones in other sites, the megalithic stones in *Fato* do not carry any symbolic representations. And this problem is exacerbated due to the fact that no archeological excavation is undertaken yet on these megalithic stones.

Firshi kebele (Moldiya) of Soddo *Wereda*, which is located in *Tiya* town specifically in *Moldiya* village, has also got another historical megalithic stones. This specific area is found 17km far from *Tiya* and 11 km from *Bue Town*, which is the center of Soddo Gurage and this area too is surrounded with farm lands. The *Moldiya* river which is found in the northern part of the kebele has made this kebele to be covered with very large and old forest such as Cedar (*Tid*), Bamboo (*shembeko*) and Yellow wood (*zigba*), especially in the northern and east parts of the area. Like megalithic stones in other area of Soddo *wereda*, the megalithic stones within *Firshi kebele* also represent the burial place of the past society with their remains.¹⁴⁷

As stated above, these megalithic stones, like other steles within the soddo Gurage, were dated back to 12th and 13th century. And the megalithic stones within *Firshi kebele* consist of both decorated and undecorated ones. The front sides of the megalithic stones of *Firshi kebele* are decorated with different kind of symbols. Hence, unlike the megalithic steles in *Fato kebele*, the steles in *Firshi* are engraved with different symbols. The shape of the Megalithic Stone of *Moldiya Kebele Gebere Mahiber* in *Firshi* is rectangular shape. Like the other megalithic Stone

¹⁴⁶Informant. Ato Tsegaye Tabor in 14/8/2010ec

¹⁴⁷Informant. Ato Shimelis Ayele in 14/8/2010ec

of Soddo *Wereda*, the Megalithic Stone of Firshi was used to the bench marks of the dead person who were the most influential or leaders of the area.¹⁴⁸ The Megalithic Stone of *Firshi* which is found in the east part of *Tiya* Town is a single dwarf decorated stele with rectangular shape. The decorated Megalithic stone which found in *Firshi* have the Height of 63cm and 83cm Width.



Figure 17: The Stele of Firshi Megalithic Stone site, by Meseret Tilahun in 17/8/2010ec

This picture portrays one of the megalithic stones within *Firshi* Megalithic sites. Unlike the megalithic stones in *Fato kebele*, this megalithic stones in *Firshi kebele* is much decorated with different symbols. That is to say, as discussed above the megalithic culture within *Fato kebele* are with no symbols which made them subject to different interpretation on what they actually represent whereas the megalithic stone of *Firshi* is with clear and understandable symbols.

Regarding the nature of symbols on the megalithic stones in the Soddo Gurage *Wereda*, Addisalem Melese has suggested that symbols of the megalithic stones found in this wereda are almost similar in nature and usually they portrays the symbols of sword, *Enset* and head rest.¹⁴⁹ Hence, although the megalithic cultures within this wereda have their own peculiar nature

¹⁴⁸ Informant Ato Zeleke Regasa in 17/7/2010ec

¹⁴⁹ Addis Alem Melese. *Ethno archaeological study of Megalithic tradition among Hadiya in Southern Ethiopia*. University of Addis Abeba . July 2009. P6

and shapes, they share several communalities in the symbol they represent. The symbols which we can read from the megalithic stele of the *Firshi* too are symbols of sword, *Enset* and head rest.

In addition, the upper parts of the Megalithic Stone of *Firshi* are decorated by *Zigzag* line. And the left and the right parts of the stele is decorated by “X” symbol. On the central parts of the Megalithic Stone of *Firshi*, the symbol of Sword, Head rest and *Enset* symbols are engraved on the stone. The symbol of *Zigzag* line and the “X” shapes seems to represent the right and the left Bone (Ribs) of a person who was buried under the Stone. This assertion has been proved by the archeological excavation of *Tiya* sites by Rogger in which he has concluded that the symbol of *zigzag* line indicate the ribs of the person who buried under the stone.¹⁵⁰ The issue of representations and the messages that these symbols engraved on these megalithic stones will be discussed in detail in the coming section of symbolism.

Another hub of megalithic stones in Soddo Guragwereda is the *Damu kebele*. The stele site of the *Damu Kebele* is found 11km in the southern parts of the Bue town and on the way from *Bue* to *Butajira*. This site is found in residential compounds of the area surrounded by many *Enset* plants. In similar vein with other megalithic cultures in Soddo *Wereda*, the megalithic stone of *Damu Kebele* is the burial place of the ancient society. The number of the Megalithic Stone which is found in this area is four. However, unlike other sites in the Soddo Gurage *Wereda*, the megalithic stone in *Damu kebele* is not well known.¹⁵¹ The shapes of the Megalithic Stone sites of *Damu Kebele* are megalithic stones with Phallic Shape stele. The Phallic stele sites of this area have also a cylindrical shape. The peak of phallic shape steles within *Damu kebele* are engraved with one small ring. And it has been proved that, according to Rogger, the phallic shape of the Megalithic Stone sites of *Damu* represent the symbol of male sex who buried under the Stone.

However, it should also be known that these types of stelae are also found in the sites of *Tiya* and *Fato*. Yet, it differs from this site by its ring which is engraved on the peak of this stele. In addition to this one of the phallic shape Megalithic stone of *Damu* is engraved by the symbol of chest. There is also a believe that stelae sites of *Damu* having the phallic shapes with the ring on its

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Informant. W/r Sihin Regasa in 15/8/2010ec

peak suggest that the sex of the persons who buried under the stone was male and the warrior or some local leaders of the area.



Figure 18: The phallic shapes Megalithic stone of Damu Genet Kebele, by Meseret Tilahun in 15/8/2010ec

This picture depicts the megalithic stones of *Damu Kebele* which have the phallic shapes and ring at its peak. But, as stated above the megalithic stone of this kebele is not well known and there is no such abundant information on it, unlike other area of the *wereda*. Finally, a somewhat peculiar type of megalithic stones in Soddo Gurage *Wereda* is found in *Dachi kebele*, which is found in the western part of the *Wereda* 13 km far from the Bue town and resided by the soddo Gurage or *Kistane* people. But, unlike other megalithic stones within the area, the stele of *Dachi kebele* is found within the private house or compound. The shape of the Megalithic stone of *Dachi* is oval at the tip of the stone and it has also rectangular shape at its lower parts. In addition to this, at the left and the right sides of the anthropomorphic stelae of *Dachi* have two small circles interstices. The *Dachi* Megalithic Stones are standing without engraving any symbol. But, the shapes of these Megalithic Stones are very distinct from the other Megalithic Stones of the *Wereda*. These kind of megalithic stones are found only within this site. But, surprisingly, a review of literatures on megalithic culture reveals that the same type of megalithic stones having

the same shape is also found in India which is known as anthropomorphic stelae.¹⁵² An anthropomorphic stele means the types of Stelae which were erected as a memory to the honored dead and are found in the context of burial and funeral sanctuaries.

Besides, some megalithic stones in *Tiya* site are engraved with the symbol of human face or other body parts. But, the anthropomorphic Megalithic stone of *Dachi Kebele* are standing without engraving any symbol. Instead the shape of the stone by itself portrays the shape of a human being. A direct look at the stele seems the shape of “*ፆ*”, one of Ge’eez alphabet. According to Ato Zeleke Regasa, historian and journalist within the Soddo Wereda culture and tourism, there is believe that the shape of the megalithic stones of *Dachi Kebele* depicts the shape of a human being.¹⁵³ Despite this fact, the representation of this megalithic stone could not be exactly known for the stones are not engraved by any symbol unlike other megalithic stones of the area.



¹⁵²Mayank N. Vahia, *Megalithic in ancient India and their possible association to astronomy*,

¹⁵³ Informant Ato Zeleke Regasa in 10/7/2010 e.c

Figure 19: the anthropomorphic megalithic Stones of Dachi, by Meseret Tilahun in 10/7/2010ec

These pictures represent the megalithic stones of *Dachi kebele* whose shape is believed to be of a human being and whose representation is not plainly known as no symbol is engraved on these stones. But, the shape of these stones is dramatically different from other megalithic stones within the soddo Gurage *Wereda*.

Most of the Megalithic Stone which is found in Soddo *Wereda* in Gurage Zone are found the most rural area of the *Wereda*. The area of the Steal is not easy for visiting. And currently, most of the Megalithic Stone of the Wereda is not studied before except the Megalithic Stone of *Tiya* Town.

3.2. Symbolism in megalithic culture of Soddo Gurage *Wereda*

One of challenging job of archeologists and historians within the study of megalithic culture is interpreting and defining the meaning of the symbols engraved on megalithic stones. In addition to the shapes of megalithic stele, there are also steles which are engraved with different kind of symbols. And what is very certain is that these symbolizations were made to convey some kind of messages or representations. In addition to the direct meaning of these symbols, they can also speak a lot about the beliefs, culture, traditions, civilization, skills/art, social structure/classes, administration, and etc. of the society. It is common for any society to show these values using certain kind of symbols on different materials including stones.¹⁵⁴

The megalithic stones of Soddo Gurage *wereda* were also engraved with certain types of symbols. It has been stated above that megalithic stones within soddo Gurage wereda have different kind of shapes which includes, rectangular, phallic, cross and etc. And some of these megalithic stones are engraved with symbols whereas others are devoid of any symbols. However, those megalithic stones which were engraved with symbols share some communality in the sense that the symbols they were engraved with are of similar nature and feature one of the tiresome jobs in the study of symbolization of the megalithic stones is identifying what these symbols really represent. Equally tedious job is searching for the actual and potential meaning of

¹⁵⁴Christopher Grant. *Stone, slab and stelae: the origin and symbolism of contemporary Oromo burial practice and grave art*. University of Chicago. 2006. Pp4-6

these symbols. Although the universal nature of grave makers may prove much communality to be merely superficial, the ways in which symbolic leitmotifs have been read and interpreted by scholars may provide insight into methodologies applied.¹⁵⁵

The stelae of Southern Ethiopia, although not thoroughly explored by means of excavation, have received a considerable degree of academic interpretation; the work on the *Tiya* stelae being an important piece in the archaeological puzzle of Southern Ethiopia.¹⁵⁶ To identify and locate the exact and accurate meaning of the symbols engraved on the megalithic stones undertaking archeological excavation and digging out the social, cultural and economic history of the society residing there is vital. However, the practice of archeological excavation in megalithic culture of Ethiopia in general and the southern region in particular is very mysterious or enigmatic. The only citable archeological excavation in the southern region in general and the Gurage zone in particular is the excavation made in *Tiya* sites. As stated in the above section, the common symbols engraved on megalithic stones of Soddo Gurage wereda are seemingly that of sword, Enset, human face, human body and heading rest. And these symbols need to be interpreted so as to found what the past society wanted to convey using these symbols. In addition to these symbols the shape of the megalithic stones by themselves need to be interpreted.¹⁵⁷

To start from what the shapes of megalithic culture may represent, it is stated above that the megalithic stones of Soddo Gurage wereda have the shapes of mainly triangular, phallic, cross or 'T', anthropomorphic and rectangular. Megalithic stones with triangular shape are found within *Fato kebele*. Whereas the megalithic stones with phallic shapes are found in *Fato* and *Damukebele* and megalithic stones with rectangular shape are found within *Firshi kebele*. Finally, those with anthropomorphic shape are found within *Dachi Kebele*. Other than the symbols engraved on these megalithic stones, their shapes by themselves are said to convey some representations or meaning.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Rogger Jouis. *Dolmen for the dead megalith: building through the world*. Translated by Anne and Christopher Chippendale from the last dolmen pour lessmorts. London: B T Bast Ford lit. 1985.p

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

One of the meanings that can be read from the shapes of the megalithic stones is the sex of a person buried under the stele. However, the megalithic stones with triangular, rectangular, and cross shape are said to speak nothing about this.¹⁵⁹ Hence, it is only the megalithic stones with phallic shapes that speak about the sex of the person buried under the stele. On the messages and representations that these phallic shapes stele portrays, there is a belief that they describe the sex of a person buried under these megalithic stones. Accordingly, the sex of a person buried under megalithic stones with phallic shape represent is that of Male and this person could be an ancient war leader of the past society. And the society can simply guess these facts by looking at the shape of these megalithic stones.¹⁶⁰

Another important meaning that the shapes of the megalithic site can speak about is the religion of the person buried under the steles. The megalithic stone which can represent the religion of the person buried under it is the megalithic stone of *Fato kebele* which have a shape which seems a Cross. And a possible presumption and conclusion from this shape is that these megalithic stones describe the fact that the person buried under them was Christian in his/her religion, as a cross is the symbol of Christianity. Likewise, according to Ato cherinet, a guider in *Tiya* megalithic sites, the society too has the same feeling on this presumption.

However, what is odd with the megalithic stones in *Fato kebele* is that their representation is subject to different understanding. This is due to the fact that unlike the megalithic stones in other sites, the megalithic stones in *Fato* do not carry any symbolic representations. And this problem is exacerbated due to the fact that no archeological excavation is undertaken yet on these megalithic stones.

Coming back to the representation and interpretation of symbols on the megalithic stones found within Soddo Guragewereda the common symbols are sword, Enset, human face, human body and heading rest. And the interpretation made to these symbols need to be identified so as to understand what the past society wanted to portray with these symbolizations which requires examinations of literatures and the attitude/beliefs of the present generations.

¹⁵⁹Informant. Ato Shimelis Ayele in 20/7/2010ec

¹⁶⁰Informant. Ato Sudan Ahimed in 6/8/2010ec

According to worku Derara the symbols on megalithic stones of the Soddo Gurage *Wereda* were being used to represent the regulation and the organization of the past society as well as the material world. Accordingly, he argue that the ancient society used different types of symbol to recognize their power, social statues, belief system and their economic level for the local society and for their descendants.¹⁶¹

One of the symbols engraved on some of the megalithic stones of soddo Guragewereda is the representations of artillery, most likely a sword. And it is believed that the symbol of the Sword represents the fact that the person who buried under the stele has been a soldier or warrior. And in addition, it is also found that the number of swords possibly represent the number of individuals killed in battle by the buried warrior.¹⁶² Further, another possible interpretation that can be derived from these symbols of sword on these megalithic stones is the sex of the person buried under the stele. Accordingly, the symbol of sword on this stele is believed to show that the sex of the person buried under it was male. This is because in ancient period, it was only the male that could be a war leader and further, they use to hunt wild animals by using their sword. Besides, one more interpretation that can be derived from this symbol is the use of metallurgist by the past society in the sense that the then society has been used the material which was made from Metals.

The second common symbol engraved on the megalithic stones of Soddo Gurage *weredais* the Symbol of *Enset*, which is the traditional food of Gurage people. This is because *Enset* is one of the traditional foods of Gurage People as it is a food crop cultivated only in the southern and south western Ethiopia though growing wild widely distributed in Africa.¹⁶³ And the Gurage people too give especial attention for the cultivation of *Enset* in the area. The symbol of *Enset* painted on the stele can also be an evidence for wide acceptance of *Enset* as a food starting from the past society still now. However, the fact the symbol of leaf represent the *Enset* plant is not accepted for granted. Rather, there is also another speculation on what this symbol of leaf

¹⁶¹ Worku Derara. *On the Megalithic sites of the Gurage highland: the study of enigmatic nature of engravings and Megalithic builder*.EJOSSAH.vol No 1&2. 2008-2009.p63-64

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ Zippel Karina. *Enset (Ensete ventricosum(Welw.) Cheesm.)in subsistence farming systems in Ethiopia*.2002. p1

represents. It has been also suggested that their presence may be meant to serve as a symbol indicative of peaceful resting, as has been similarly noted on wooden headrests throughout Southern Ethiopia.¹⁶⁴

The third kind of symbols engraved on the megalithic stones of Soddo Gurage *wereda* is heading Rest. The heading rest represent the material cultures that have been used by the ancient society of the area. Yet, the nick rest which is carved out of Wood were used in different region of Ethiopia. And this fact is also proved by Rogger in his excavation of the area in which he concluded that before the introduction of modern Pillow, the nick rest which was made from wood was used by the ancient society of Soddo and the surrounding area.¹⁶⁵

Further, it is also the indicator of the fact that the Soddo Gurage people was known by its handicraft traditions in which they were making different materials using their art without using any modern technology. Most of the times in Gurage Zone House hold materials are found engraved on the Megalithic Stone of the area. It is important to know the pre historic material cultures which was made and used by the earlier society of the region.¹⁶⁶

And currently, the heading rest which is curved out of wood are being used in different regions of Ethiopia especially in the Eastern part and some of the Oromia Region. Finally, some of the megalithic stone, specifically that of *Firshi* is decorated with *Zigzag* line the left and right parts of the stele being decorated with “X” symbol. And the symbol of *Zigzag* line and the “X” shapes seems to represent the right and the left Bone (Ribs) of a person who was buried under the Stone. This assertion has been proved by the archeological excavation of *Tiya* sites by Rogger in which he has concluded that the symbol of *zigzag* line indicate the ribs of the person who buried under the stone.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴Christopher Grant. *Stone, slab and stelae: the origin and symbolism of contemporary Oromo burial practice and grave art*, University of Chicago. 2006. p16

¹⁶⁵Rogger Jouis. *Dolmen for the dead megalith: building through the world*. Translated by Anne and Christopher Chippendale from the last dolmen pour lessmorts. London: B T Bast Ford lit. 1985.p9

¹⁶⁶*Ibid*

¹⁶⁷*Ibid*.

3.3.The Current Challenges of the Megalithic Stone Sites of the Wereda

Likewise, the megalithic culture of the Soddo Gurage *wereda* is also suffering from variety of challenges which mainly are due to the absence of researches on the area. It is well discussed in this paper that the megalithic stones of Soddo Guragewereda are not well studied except the megalithic stones of *Tiya*. Further, as these megalithic sites are far from the center of the *wäräda*, there is lack of comfortable transportation due to absence of infrastructure.¹⁶⁸

Secondly, majority of these megalithic sites are unknown by the society and the country at large due to absence of appropriate concern or emphasis. The majority of the local people don't have enough knowledge about the cultural Heritages of the area. The professionals too have conducted no meaningful activities of promoting the sites and there is poor habit of documenting the historical and cultural values of these megalithic stones. Yet, currently, there is a plan to study the Megalithic Stone sites of the *Wereda* with the cooperation of some regional and foreign organization.¹⁶⁹ The researchers too have been limited to the study of the megalithic site of *Tiya* and other sites are almost neglected in spite of the historical and cultural values of these megalithic sites which left these sites unknown except some committed individuals. The other challenges of the Sites are lack of accommodation service in and round the site. This is because some of the megalithic sites of the *wereda* such as that of *Fato kebele* are found in the remote part of the *wereda* which are not easily accessible.¹⁷⁰

Besides, the valuable intangible cultural heritages found within the Soddo Gurage *wereda* are also facing different challenges that have the effect of threatening their existence in whole or affect their original color. The festivity of *mesikel*, *Adebina* and *Muyat* were being practiced for a long period of time within the Soddo Guragewereda in their pure cultural form. However, currently these intangible Cultural Heritages of the *Wäräda* are losing their original identity, especially the celebration of *Adabina* and the *Muyat beal* are on the way of disappearances. The main reason for these deterioration of original culture might be attributed to the issue of Globalization in which almost the indigenous culture of the society are being forgotten and

¹⁶⁸Informant. Ato Remedan Zeyinu in 28/7/2010ec

¹⁶⁹*Ibid*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*.

changed towards the northern culture which are influencing the whole planet of the south directly and indirectly.¹⁷¹

3.4. The conservation practices of the Megalithic Stone Sites of the Wereda

Conservation is the overall safe guarding protecting and promoting valuable cultural Heritage and it is multi-disciplinary orientation that uses direct or indirect measure and action to avoid or to minimize future deterioration due to Cultural and Natural factors. It is well proved that unless conserved, cultural heritages are subject to deterioration. And Ethiopia, though rich with cultural heritages, has no good record of preservation and conservation. And the act of preservation and conservation require the effort of heritage management professionals, the local communities and government officialaltogether to contribute for the conservation and the wellbeing of the past society's cultural heritage record of artifacts and sites for the next generations.

Like any tangible cultural heritages, megalithic culture requires appropriate preservation and conservation so that they could have endurance they should have and speak what they were made to speak by the past society. The megalithic sites can be adversely affected by natural and human made factors. Unlike other cultural objects, megalithic stones are very exposed to the climatic factors such as rainfall, heavy hot, and etc. Due to this reason an appropriate protection should be given for these sites by applying proper study and research.

A look at the preservation and conservation practice of the megalithic culture of the Soddo Gurage *wereda* reveals that most of them are even unknown by the society and the professionals let alone getting appropriate preservation and conservation measures. Among others, the megalithic site of Fato kebele seems to be fully neglected at whole. This site has no its own separate compound. Instead, it is surrounded by the land of a single influential individual.¹⁷² Some of the Megalithic Stones of the site are broken and fallen on the earth. They didn't get any attention from any concerned bodies like the culture and tourism office of the area, although there is an alleged plan to excavate the site with the cooperation of regional and foreign organization.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹Informant. Tsegaye Tabor. 9/8/2010ec.

¹⁷²Informant. Dagne Nigusu. In 13/8/2010ec

¹⁷³Informant. Cherinet Gezahagn in 5/8/2010ec

The megalithic site is not well fenced whereas some of them are out of the fence and due to this reason the megalithic stones are exposed to different attack from outsiders such as animals and human made actions. And some of the megalithic stones are covered with grasses which have hided the stones view and might have an adverse effect on the stones. Besides, some of the megalithic stones are taken away by the farmers to use them as a demarcation or border of their farm land. And this, no doubt, will expose the megalithic stones for deterioration and smashing.



Figure 20: The partial view of the phallic shape stones serving as border of farm lands and animals entering within the compound of the sites, by Meseret Tilahun in 20/7/2010ec



Figure 21: the images of the phallic shape stele which is fallen on the Ground, by Meseret Tilahun in 20/7/2010ec

These pictures can be an adequate evidence of poor and negligent preservation and conservation practice of megalithic stones. These kinds of exposures might automatically deteriorate these stones.

These kind of poor preservation and protection practices are common in almost all megalithic sites of the Soddo Gurage *Wereda*. And the society within the area is the primary threat to these megalithic stones as it can be seen in the above picture for they are using them for personal use without giving due regard to the protection of these stones. For example, the megalithic stones sites of *Firshi* are found mainly within the compound of individual persons as visualized in the preceding sections in the manner that they are exposed to personal use which can damage the existence of these stones and at least degrade their original features.

Besides, some of the megalithic sites found in other areas of Soddo Gurage *Wereda* are found near to the rivers which is another threat for the wellbeing of these stones. In addition, these stones are also being surrounded by large trees which are affecting them via their roots and leaf.

The least effect of these things is the fact that the symbols engraved on the megalithic stones is becoming non-readable for something else like grasses are being growing on them.

It is also believed that some more megalithic stones are also found within private house of the society and the owners are not interested to subject them for visit and they use it for personal purpose within their house and compounds.¹⁷⁴

What can be understood from these discoveries is the fact that the society itself is the primary threat to the wellbeing of the megalithic culture of the *Wereda*. And this can be due to lower awareness that the society may have about the socio-economic, cultural, and historical values of the megalithic stones. However, what exacerbate this problem is the fact that the culture and tourism office of the *Wereda* is not giving an adequate emphasis for the preservation and conservation of these valuable historical and cultural stones.

The same conclusion can be reached with regard to the preservation and conservation of intangible cultural heritages of the *Wereda* such as *Adabina* and *Muyat Beal*. This is because the original nature of these cultural heritages is fading out through time. And especially the *Muyat Beal* can be considered as if it is on the way of disappearing for no one is taking a responsibility to preserve it.¹⁷⁵

Generally, one of the cultural heritages found within the Soddo Gurage wereda is the megalithic stones. This area is rich with different kinds of megalithic stones. Yet, it is only the *Tiya* megalithic stones that were given an attention still now. Researches and emphasis on other megalithic sites is negligible both from the government and the society, although these megalithic stones have potential cultural, historical and archeological values for the society or the country and the world at large. The shapes of these megalithic stones differ from the site to sites. But, the shapes of these megalithic stones are mainly rectangular, triangular, phallic, shape of cross and etc. And these shapes, though some of them, have a lot to speak about the person buried under those megalithic stones. For example, the megalithic stones with phallic shape is said to represent the fact that the sex of a person buried under them was male and has been a soldier or warrior.

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.* Observation

¹⁷⁵Informant. Sudan Ahimede in 3/8/2010ec

Besides, the difference in shapes of the megalithic stones found within this area, they also carry some communal kind of symbols. And these symbols certainly were made to provide some kind of information or messages that the past society wanted to portrays via them. A thorough study of these symbols is important to identify the historical background, beliefs, culture, social organization and classes and level of civilization of the society that has made those megalithic stones and engraved them with certain kind of symbols.

However, in spite of the difference in shapes of the megalithic stones found in Soddo Gurage, the *wereda* Symbols engraved on them are very related and common. Accordingly, the usual symbols that can be found engraved on the steles are the symbol of sword, *Enset*, Headrest, human face, human body and symbol of cross. And these symbols are said to represent and portrays different kind of messages as discussed above. Most of the Megalithic sites of the area are suffered by several challenges and also the conservation practices of the area are very poor.

Chapter Four

The Intangible Cultural Heritages of Soddo Gurage Wereda

4.1. Introduction

The preceding chapters have testified the existence of fountain tangible cultural heritages within the soddo Guragewereda, the vibrant ones being the *medrekebid Abo Andinet* monastery with its museum and the megalithic stones with their engraved symbols. These tangible cultural heritages have their own historical, cultural and socio-economic values for the society, the region and the country at large. They are important to speak the level of civilization, the belief, culture, economic, social and religious status and circumstances of the past society and the identity of the present society. However, the soddo Gurage wereda is also a warehouse of several intangible cultural heritages of historical, historical, economic, and social importance. Out of these intangible cultural heritages within the soddowereda, the vivacious ones are the *Mesikel* Festivity, *Adabina* and *Muyat Beal*. Although the *Mesikel* festivity is one of the common holidays throughout the country, its manner and procedure of celebration and the emphasis is very bold in Gurage zone in general and the Soddo Guragewereda whereas the *Adabina* and *Muyat beal* is unique to the soddo Gurage. Hence, the *wereda* is chapter is devoted to the identification and discussions of intangible cultural heritages within the Soddo Gurage wereda.

4.1.1. Reiterating the Essence of Intangible Cultural Heritages

Leave alone the intangible cultural heritages the term cultural heritage in general has changed content considerably in recent decades, partially owing to the instruments developed by UNESCO. It is agreed currently that the cultural heritages does not end at monuments and collections of objects; instead it also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to the present descendants such as festive events, social practices, performing arts, oral traditions, rituals, knowledge and practices concerning nature and universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.¹⁷⁶ According to Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO, intangible cultural heritages are

¹⁷⁶<https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003> accessible on June, 2018

living heritages, practices, knowledge and skills that are transmitted from generation to generation expressing the values and culture of the community.¹⁷⁷

UNESCO has briefed the concept of intangible cultural heritages using four important elements. The first element is that the cultural heritages are traditional, temporary and living at the same time, in the sense that they do not only represent inherited traditions from the past but also contemporary practices and rituals. Secondly, intangible cultural heritages are inclusive they do not give rise to questions of whether or not certain practices are specific to a culture. Thirdly, intangible cultural heritages are not merely valued as a cultural good, on a comparative basis, for its exclusivity or its exceptional value. It thrives on its basis in communities and depends on those whose knowledge of traditions, skills and customs are passed on to the rest of the community, from generation to generation, or to other communities. Finally, intangible cultural heritages are community based in the sense that they can be heritage when it is recognized as such by the communities, groups or individuals that create, maintain and transmit it.¹⁷⁸

Hence, the above discussions are evident on the fact that cultural heritages are not limited tangible ones only; rather they also include intangible heritages such as festivity and rituals. In addition to magnificent and ancient tangible cultural heritages, Ethiopia is acknowledged to be the hub of variety of intangible cultural heritages in which some of them are registered by UNESCO and others are on the process. The southern region of the country, as a home of more than 56 nations and nationalities, is composed of several intangible cultural heritages. Coming back to the Soddo Gurage *wäräda*, it is also a hub of intangible cultural heritages. Some of the energetic intangible cultural heritages within this wereda are the *Mäsäkäl* festivity, *Adabina* and the *Muyat Beal* to be discussed below.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* by UNESCO, 2003

¹⁷⁸ *What is intangible cultural heritage?* by UNESCO, 2011

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

4.1.2. Mesikel Festivity

Mesikel festivity is one of the intangible cultural heritages in Ethiopia and it is an Ethiopian Orthodox church annual religious festival commemorating the legend of finding the true cross of Jesus Christ comprising of celebration consists of different procedures and festivities, singing and displaying colorful parade.¹⁸⁰ Literally speaking *Mesikel* means Cross, an Emblems which symbolize the redemptions through the day of Jesus Christ both in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and other Churches of the Regions.¹⁸¹

Mesikel commemorates the discovery of the true cross of Jesus Christ by the Roman Empress locally called Eleni (Saint Helena) in the 4th century. And it is believed that the right hand of the Cross come to Ethiopia during the reign of king Dawit in (1381-1411). At the national level, the celebration of meskel starts from *Mesikerem* 16 (sept.26) through sept.27 G.C. In its content wise, the *Mesikel* festivity includes burning a *Demera* (very large bonfire). And this is made with the belief that Queen Eleni had a revelation in a dream in which she was told that she should make a bonfire and that the smoke would show her where the true cross was buried. Accordingly, Helena did per her dream in which huge amount of wood was collected and take lit after which the smoke rise high up to the sky and returned to the ground, exactly to the spot where the cross had been buried.¹⁸²

There are also various beliefs with regard to the meaning of *Demera*. Among others, there is that the *Demera* marks the ultimate act in the cancellation of sins. In addition, there is also a belief that the direction of the smoke and the final collapse of the heap indicate the course of future events.¹⁸³ *Mesikel*, which is the commemoration feast of the finding of the true Holy Cross of Christ, is inscribed in 2013 on the representative list of the intangible heritage of humanity by the UNESCO.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰Yohannes Mamo, *Meskel*, Ethiopia. 2014.p2

¹⁸¹ Tarike Negest Written in 1382-1411p42

¹⁸² Amanuel Sahle. *The Byzantine Origin of Meskel*. 2005. p.3

¹⁸³Ullendorff, Edward, *Ethiopia and the Bible*.Oxford University press, 1968.p23

¹⁸⁴ See <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/commemoration-feast-of-the-finding-of-the-true-holy-cross-of-christ-00858>, accessed on may, 2018

Being this the national image of the *Mesikel* festivity, its celebration, manner, procedure and days of *Mesikel* festivity take a little bit a unique and bold feature before the Gurage people in general and the Soddo Gurage people in particular. What give this celebration a very warm feature and bold color is the fact that the Gurage peoples, as majority of them resides in different part of the country for trade and other work, will turn back to their homeland/birth place.¹⁸⁵

The Soddo Gurage (*Kistane*) people give highest honoraria and reverence for the celebration of Meskel Festive than any other Holidays of Ethiopia. The festive of *Mesikel* is the most colorful and great festive of the area. During the celebration of *Mesikel*, the people who live outside their home will back to their original home for the celebration of *Mesikel* festive. And these guests come back to their family with several kinds of gifts helpful for the celebration of the Mäsəkäl.¹⁸⁶

What makes the *Mesikel* festivity very unique in Soddo Gurage is the fact that the groundwork of meskel festive starts on August 13 E.C which is also the day of celebration of *Debre Tabor* in which the children prepare a *Demera* (Torches). The other important landmark groundwork for the *Mesikel* festivity is the preparation of *Kocho*, cultural food which is prepared from *Enset*. The Gurage Women starts to prepare this food before the coming of New Year as its preparation takes many times and consist of elongated procedures.

Unlike the celebration of meskel at national level throughout the country, the celebration of meskel in Soddo Gurage *wereda* lasts for five days. It is celebrated from sept.13 through sept.17 E.C. But, each day of celebration has its own discipline and features, the first day being the day of washing the cloth and cleaning their own house and of those who are disabled and elders. The second day is called the *Dengesat* whereas the third day is called slaughtering day. The fourth day being the day of *Demera*, the final day is called *ye ketfo ken*. What comes is the discussion on the manner of *Mesikel* festive within these days.

¹⁸⁵ Informant aba Harege Weyin in 15/7/2010ec

¹⁸⁶ Megazin. Gurage Limat Mahiber. Butajira in 2006 p5

4.1.3. Dengesat

Dàngesat is the second day of *Mesikel* festive in Gurage area which is on sept.14 E.C. The word *Dengesat* is said to come from two kestone words which are *Denga* (children) and *Esat* (fire); hence, the Fire of the children. But, there is also the belief that the word *Dengesat* describes the food which is eaten on this date.¹⁸⁷ The food which is eaten on this day is prepared from *Kayisa* (cheese), *Ambel* (cabbage) and *Chisara* (Kocho). In preparing this food the Gurage women firstly separate the cheese from its liquid and mix it with Butter and pepper. They also mix the cabbage with the butter and pepper. Once it is prepared, this food will be provided to the whole families by laying it on *Tabat*, which is a thing made up of clay.¹⁸⁸

On the same date the youth of Gurage began to prepare the *Demera* which was standing as of August 13. Once it is prepared, the whole families will circle round the *Demera* singing *Demera* songs and dance. The elder give blessings to the children and the whole families and at the end the prepared food will be eaten in order to reveal joy and happiness.¹⁸⁹

4.1.4. Ye Erd Ken (Slaughter Day)

This is the third day of *Mesikel* celebration in Soddo *Wereda* or *Keistane* people. The name of the day is *Ye erd qen* (the day of Slaughter). On this day the women wake up very early and prepare breakfast for the whole families. After finishing their Breakfast the whole family visit their relatives by saying ‘*Enquan Aselanehim*’ (which means expressing their wish of Happy *Mesikel* Celebration day).¹⁹⁰

If there are youth within the specific society they will buy an ox and if not, the society will buy it by their own. Once the Ox is bought, before slaughtering the Ox the whole family will be gathered together drinking beverages such as *Tela*, *Tej* and *Aräke*. And at the same time the elders give a blessing for the whole family wishing peace for the society in particular and the country in general. When the elders bless, the whole family reply to the blessing saying ‘*Amen* or *Kare* (which mean peace).¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Informant Ato Tsegaye Taborin 13/8/2010ec

¹⁸⁸ Informant. Ato Shemisu Adem in 27/7/2010ec

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁹⁰ Informant. Ato Abebe Sileshi in 18/8/2010ec

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*.

After the blessing, the young people slaughter the Ox and the woman automatically starts to work on the meat. In doing this they select and cut the red meat and mix it with Butter and pepper. Then, it will be provided for the family at lunch and afterwards invite their relatives, elders and the vulnerable groups within the society. In the evening, the elder undertake an act of mediation on those persons who were in conflict and the peace and love will triumph on this day and this day is known as the day of peace.¹⁹²

It can be reiterated that the celebration of *Mesikel* is the most beautiful and great before the people of Gurage area especially in *Kastane* people. It is stated above that the memory of the finding of the true cross by Saint Helena (locally called *Elleni*) and it is celebrated by lightening the *Demera* (Torches) throughout the country on this date. This day is called the date of *Demera* at the national level. On this day, after eating their lunch, all Christian followers go to the church called *Egziabher Ab* (God the Father) to light the *Demera* by bringing *chubo* (Torch). And the followers sing the song of *Mesikel* by encircling round church *Demera*. The shape of the *chibo* (torch) seems pyramid shape and at its top there is small cross which is made from yellow flower, which is locally is known as *Adey Abeba*.¹⁹³

4.1.5. Ye Kitfo Beal (the day of chopped meat) Meskerem 17

This one is the last day of *Mesikel* festive in Soddo Gurage area, which is celebrated on meskerem 17. The day is known as *Ye Kitfo Beal* (the Holiday of Chopped Meat). The main reason to call it the *kitfo* beal is that on this day, the people of the area eat only *kitfo* (Chopped meat) and nothing else.¹⁹⁴ On this date, the elders go to the place where the Church *Demera* was lighted and anathematize the person who makes a mistake and their enemies. Afterwards, they will back to their home and eat *Kitfo*, which is made from red meat by cutting it by pulverizes and separating it from the blood by mangles and mixing it with butter and pepper.¹⁹⁵

Then, it will be put on *Tabat* (traditional material which is made from clay Soil) and then on the *Mesob* (traditional material which is made from grass). And the *kocho* will be provided with *kitfo* to eat together with the *kitfo*. In Ethiopian History the festival of *Mesikel* is celebrated one day

¹⁹² Informant. Ato Remedan Zeyinu. In 13/8/2010ec

¹⁹³ Informant, D/ Mezigebeu 18/12/2010ec

¹⁹⁴ Informant. Ato Abebe Sileshi in 27/7/2010ec

¹⁹⁵ Tesfa Gebreyes. *Ayimelel Ye Gurage Hizib Achir ye Tarik Mastawesha*. 1986p28

once in a year. The only region that celebrating the festival of *Mesikel* four/Five day is Gurage Region Specifically in the area of Soddo Gurage(*Kistane*) peoples. The majority of the people of the area celebrate *Mesikel* Festive by supporting each other. The Soddo Gurage(*Kestane*) people give especially attention for the celebration of *Mesikel* by for two reason.¹⁹⁶ Firstly, the Food which is eaten during the time of *Mesikel* is different from the foods which are usually eaten. The Food culture of *Mesikel* Festive in Gurage zone especially in Soddo *Wereda* is completely different from the other region of Ethiopia. The especial food which is eaten during this time is, *Kitfo*(chopped meat), *Kayisa*(cheese), *ambel*(Cabbage) and *Kocho*(the traditional food which is produced from *Enset* plants).¹⁹⁷

The second thing that made the celebration of *Mesikel* to be the most beautiful and memorable is the culture of Music. The most important thing during the celebration of *Mesikel* festive is Music. It makes the celebration the most colorful and great festive. During this time the people of the area meet together and they began to sing some *Mesikel* song and they will dance together. When they began to sing they may sign about their country, their family and their friends.¹⁹⁸

Generally, the *Mesikel* festivity is one of the vibrant and colorful holidays in Soddo Gurage *wereda* compared to other holidays of the country, having its own socio cultural aspects. It can be the day of peace and love in which the people of the area gathered together, eat and dance together. The persons who were not residing with their families will also return back to their original homeland and families. There is also a culture of supporting the vulnerable such as elders, children, women and disabled persons of the area. More importantly, there is also an act of undertaking a mediation of the persons who were in conflict.

4.2. Adabina

The other important and effervescent intangible cultural heritage of Soddo Gurage *Wereda* is the Festival of *Adabina*. The name of the festive is said to be derived from the place known as *Adabina Meda*. The festival of *Adabina* is celebrated a week after *Mesikel* festival. Unlike other holidays, the celebration of *Adabina* is the day of Boys and girls. Before the beginning of

¹⁹⁶Informant. W/r Mesikerem alemayehu in 13/8/2010ec

¹⁹⁷Megazin. Soddo Wereda Culture and Tourism office in 2006 p6

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

Adabina they began to buy new Cloth and they will clean their body.¹⁹⁹ On this date, the youths of the area go to the celebration place by holding different Musical instruments such as drums, harmonica and etc. Then after, they make some group and compute each other by dancing and by singing some holiday songs and the songs of *Kistane* peoples. The celebration of *Adabina* is the most beautifull and it is the day of Freedom especially for the women.²⁰⁰



Figure 22: Adabina Meda, where the Festival of Adabina is celebrated, by Meseret Tilahun in 13/8/2010ec

This is a demarcated place known as *Adabina* that the festive of *Adabina* is celebrated. This area is found in the place known as *Fato kebele Gebere Mahiber* in Soddo *Weredain* the western parts of Bue Town.

The celebration of *Adabina* is also known as *Ye Mätächacha Kän*. During the celebration of *Adabina*, theboy canchoice a girl that he wants for marital relationship. And if he loves her, he gives a Lemon and candy for her secretly and expresses his feelings by dancing with her. And if

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*

he wants her for marriage the boy unfold his feelings about the girl to his families via his uncles and aunts.

By making a group, the boys play a game which is called *Saba* and all participants irrespective of their sex play the game freely without feeling any fear for this day is considered as the day of freedom, especially for the women.²⁰¹ Another game that these youths play on this date is the game of giving and taking Boll in which one of them handle the neck of the other one and jump above the head of the first boy and takes the Boll. At the end of the of the celebration of *Adabina* Festive the boy will begin screening the profiles of the girl that he wants to marry and the girl that he has selected from the celebration of *Adabina* Festive. If the boy like the whole profile of the girl and decided to marry her he will contact his family and the family send elders to the family of the girl and if they are interested or consented to the marriage, the process of wedding will start by deciding the day of marriage celebration and different procedure that precedes it.²⁰²

It is said that the *Adabina* is the unique culture of Soddo Gurage people and is celebrated once a year. The social aspect of the *Adabina* is vital especially from the perspective of gender equality as on the day of *Adabina* is considered as the day of freedom and equality which is the evidence of the social status of the women within the society. And this can be taken as an asset for the struggle everyone is making towards gender equality.

4.3. Ye Muyat Beal (the Holidays of Muyat)

The blessing of the Soddo Gurage *wereda* with the intangible cultural heritages is not limited to the above values only. Instead there is also another important holiday which is called *Ye Muyat Beal*. The name *Muyat* is the name of the people or a group of people who are living in Soddo *Wereda* specifically in the highland areas of the *Wereda*. They have their own local name which is known as *Fuga*. It is alleged that these groups of people are neglected section of the society within the Soddo Gurage or *Kistane* peoples. The economic bases of the *Muyat* society is based on pottery they made different things such as Pot, China, Tandoori and etc.²⁰³ On this day, these people go out of their home and get together to dance and sing the songs of with their own

²⁰¹Informant. Ato Tsegaye Tabor. In 13/7/2010ec

²⁰² Tesfa Gebreyes. *Ayimelel Ye Gurage Hizib Achir ye Tarik Mastawesha*. 1986p28

²⁰³*Ibid*.

languages. The *Muyat* put Yellow flower on their hair and they beg some money from the Soddo *Kistane* people by dancing and by singing their songs.²⁰⁴

Another important asset of this celebration is that on the day of *Muyat beal* a man jump over donkeys and if he couldn't they support each other. The *Muyat* celebrated their festive by moving into different area of the Soddo Gurage region or different area of *Kistane* people.²⁰⁵ The socio-cultural values of this holiday are very vital. The main features of the *Muyat* people is that they do have lower social status before the society and this day is the day on which they prove that they do really have equal status with the society. It can be considered as the day on which these peoples strive for their equality with the peoples of *Kistane*. It is very ancient and historic evidencing its cultural values which is found only within this area, although its original color is being faded up today.²⁰⁶

Generally, in addition to the tangible cultural heritages, the soddo Gurage *wereda* is also the home of various intangible cultural heritages. Among these the *mesikel* festivity, the *Adabina* and the *Muyat Beal* are the most outshining intangiblke cultural heritages. And these heritages have their own value for the society in particular and the country in general. During the celebration of these intangible heritages many peoples meet together and undertake various activities in favor of love and peace and show the culture and identity of the people of the area. Hence, their socio-cultural aspects are an asset for the country and the world at large.

²⁰⁴Informant. W/r Alemnesh Kinfu in 13/8/2010ec

²⁰⁵*Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ Informant, Aregahegn Tamirat 13/11/2010ec

Chapter Five

Conclusion and recommendation

5.1. Conclusion

Ethiopia, as the home of many Linguistic and ethnic society, is also the home of different cultural Heritages. It makes her the leading among the other African Country. According to many sources Ethiopia contribute a lot to the world in preserving the valuable historic cultural heritages for the world. It has registered various tangible and intangible cultural heritages before the UNESCO and many more are in process to be registered. The southern region of the country, as a hub of more than 56 nation nationalities with their own language, beliefs and culture, is gifted with several cultural heritages although not given little emphasis from academicians and researchers unlike their northern counterparts. And again, the Soddo Gurage *Wereda* within the Gurage zone has various cultural heritages (both tangible and intangible) of historical and cultural values for the society and the country at large.

The *medrekebid Abo Andinet* monastery is one of the tangible cultural heritages found within the Soddo Gurage *Wereda*. It is one of the oldest monasteries within the country established by *Abune Gebre Menfes Kidus*, an Egyptian martyr, who came to Ethiopia to evangelize the Ethiopian people. The *medrekebid Abo Andinet* monastery was established during the 11th and 12th Century, which makes it very historic and ancient. The Monastery also has its own Museum which was established in 2005 by a single individual. The museum is composed of several cultural and religious objects which are very ancient and historic. And this monastery is playing a huge role within the society. Another important tangible heritage of the Soddo Gurage *wereda* is the megalithic culture found within it. And the period of these megalithic cultures of the area are said to be dated back to the 12th-14th Century. And it is agreed that most of the Megalithic sites which are found in this area are the burial places of the ancient society. These megalithic steles have different kinds of shapes such as triangular, phallic, cross, and etc. What is more, some of the megalithic stones are engraved with different kinds of symbols mainly the sword, *Enset*, Human body and etc. And it is said that the shapes of these stones with their symbols convey several messages that the past society wanted to convey. They speak a lot about the beliefs, level of civilization, social structure and classes of the past society and the identity of the current generation and the future too. In addition to the tangible cultural heritages, the Soddo

Gurage *wereda* is also a hub of several intangible cultural heritages. Among these, the *mesikel* festivity, *Adabina* and the *Muyat Beal* are the lively and outshining intangible cultural heritages found within the area. The *mesikel* celebration, although it is celebrated throughout the country on September 17 E.C, the manner and procedure and the days of celebration of the *mesikel* festivity in soddo Gurage *wereda* is a little bit unique and bold. It is celebrated starting from September 14 through September 17; each day having different activities and rituals. *Adabina* is also another socially important intangible cultural heritage found within the soddo Gurage *wereda*, which is the holiday of the youths. On this day, the youths get together, play different games, sing and dance freely without any fear for the day is considered as the day of freedom especially for the girls. The *Muyat beal* too is one of indigenous and unique culture of the soddo Gurage *wereda* in which the *muyat* people or *fuga* people, which are considered neglected, get out of their home, sing and dance with intent of showing their equality with other part of the society. It is also found by this paper that the Ethiopian cultural heritages in general and those within the soddo Gurage *wereda* in particular have passed through several challenges. And the existing preservation and conservation practice of the cultural heritages of the soddo Gurage *wereda* are very poor for majority of these heritages are on the eve of deterioration and disappearance.

5.2. Recommendation

On order to improve the well being of the cultural heritage sites of the Wereda and to reduces the above mentioned problem of the area and to protect sites, approprat measurement should be taken.

- An appropriate protection should be given for these sites by applying proper study and research.
- The society should also be given awareness about the values of these heritages and the ways by which they can overlook these heritages as any cultural heritage management will not be effective without the participation of the society.
- Appropriate heritage management professionals should be hired by the government to conduct and manage the preservation and conservation of these cultural heritages. In addition,
- Urgent attention both from the society and the government should give to the cultural heritage sites of the area. So as to enable these cultural heritages play the role that they are supposed to play within the society and the country.
- All cultural heritage sites of the area should be acciseble for the society and the visitors.

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List of Informant

No	Name	Age	Sex	Date of interview	Place of interview	Remark
1	Aba Fire Sibhat	74	Male	27/7/2010ec	Sewatin Kebele	<i>Ye Mestaf Memihir</i> in Midrekebie Abo Monastery and he is well know about the Monastey
2	Aba Harege Wetin Tsige	68	Male	24/7/2010ec	Sewatin kebele	The Guider of the Monastery including the Museum and he has a good knowledge about the cultural heritages of the Monastery including theb Museum
3	Ato Abebe Sileshi	53	Male	27/7/2010ec	Butajira	He works in Gurage <i>limat mahiber</i> and he has many information about the sites
4	Ato Belaye Beyene	46	Male	15/7/2010ec	Bue	Administrative office of Bue town he have good information about the cultural heritage sites of the Wereda
5	Ato Bekele Ayele	82		3/8/2010ec	Bue	He was thAdministrater of Butajira town, he is the most infulencial person in the area and he has a potenical of known the Wereda in

						general and sites in particular
6	Ato Chernet Gezahagn	34	Male	5/8/2010ec	Tiya	A guider in Tiya Town and he was graduated bt History ands heritage management in Mekelle university, he has enough information about every sites of the Wereda.
7	Ato Dagne Nigusu	49	Male	13/8/2010	Bue	Culture and Tourism Office in Bue Town. He is well Know about the sites
8	Ato Demelash Yirgu	31	Male	23/7/2010ec	Butajira	History Teacher in Preparatory and he is well know the history of the people of the area and the sites
9	W/r Genet Mulat	45	Female	21/7/2010ec	Bue	He is worked Government Communication office in Bue Town and he moere related information about the sites
10	Aba Haile Mariam W/ Mesikel	44	Male	6/8/2010ec	Sewatin Kebele	The leader of Midrekebid Abo Monastery, he was comes to the area in 1992. And he is well

						worked in the Monastery and he is well know about the Monastery .
11	Haile Gebrael / Kabitimer	29	Male	23/8/2010ec	Sewatin Kebele	Deacon In Midirekebid Abo Monastery and he is also likea Deacon and he know about the area in general and the material culture of the aite in particular
12	Ato Mengistu Maru	57	Male	12/8/2010ec	Bue	He is worked in Culture and Tourism Office in Bue Town and he well know the cultural heritage sites of the Wereda
13	w/r Mesikerem Alemayehu	34	Male	13/8/2010ec	Fato Kebele	She was Graduated by Tourism Management in 2002 from Jimma university and she is worked in communication office
14	Merigeta Amide work	48	Male	3/8/2010ec	Sewatin Kebele Kebele	Merigeta in Midrekebid Abo Monastery and he also ye Mestaf Memihir
15	Ato Remedan Zeyinu	38	Male	28/7/2010	Bue	Journalist in Bue Town and during the time of data collection, he was well explain the sites from the begging antil

						the present
16	Ato Shimelis Ayele	31	Male	26/7/2010ec	Bue	He was Graduated by History and Heritage Management, he well know about the sites
17	Ato Shemisu Adem	42	Male	27/7/2010	Butajira	Journalist he know About the Cultural Heritage sites of SW and the Surroundinhg area
18	w/r Sihine Regasa	38	Female	15/8/2010ec	TIya	Teacher in Damu Kebele, and he has enough information about the Damu sites
19	Ato Tatek Getaneh	54	Male	22/7.2010ec	Butajira	He is worked in Government Communication Office in Butajira Town and he has more information about the sites of Wereda
20	Ato Tsegaye Tabor	58	Male	9/8/2010ec	Bue Town	He was the Administrater of Bue Town for 13 Years and he is the most infulenical person in the area specially the Fato area. he can speak more than 3 language
21	W/r Yewibe Korb	44	Female	16/8/2010ec	Bue Town	The Head of Soddo Wereda Culture And

						Touism Offices, she is hardworker in the Town and she has agood personality with well known her works and she is The most infulencial women in the area
22	Ato Yohannes Yirgu	33	Male	27/7/2010ec	Tiya Town	History Teacher in Preparatory School of the Wereda and he is well know about the History and the cultural heritage sites of the Wereda