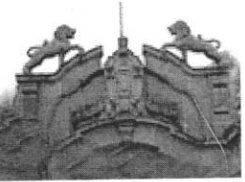


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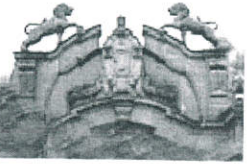
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**BY: YEMANE BERHE G/LIBANOS**

**July 2011**

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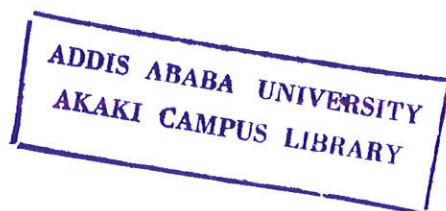
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A Thesis Submitted to the College of Development Studies of Addis Ababa University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Masters of Arts in Development Studies, Tourism and Development.

**By: Yemane Berhe G/Libanos**

**Advisor- Dr. Mulugeta Fiseha**



**July 2011**

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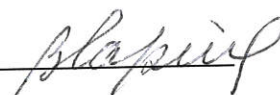
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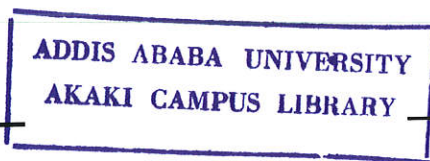
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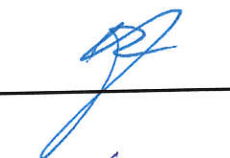
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INTERNAL EXAMINER



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## **List of Abbreviations**

AD	Anno Domino (After the Birth of Christ)
AU	African Union
CBE	Community Based Ecotourism
CBT	Community Based Tourism
ETO	Ethiopian Tourist organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
IES	International Ecotourism Society
IYE	International Year of Ecotourism
KI	Key Informant
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
R	Respondents
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organization
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
USD	United States Dollar
WTO	World Tourism Organization
WTTC	World Tourism and Travel Council

## **Abstract**

*The main objective of this study has been to explore the potentials for ecotourism and understand how ecotourism can serve as a livelihood option in Aksum district; Tigray province of northern Ethiopia. This study also assesses community perception in tourism and/or CBE. Community perception in a given tourism project influences the level of tourism development in Aksum. If communities have positive attitude towards a given ecotourism project, the chance of sustainability becomes high. The issue of community participation and empowerment is also assessed. CBE is conducted in community owned lands where local participation plays significant roles of success. Participation in this context means involving the community as a collective group in a given CBE and/or tourism projects. There are also many issues that can determine the level of community participation. One of it is empowerment. Empowerment is considered as one mechanisms of participating Aksum's community in a given CBE and/tourism projects.*

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of The Study

'Tourism' is a complex phenomenon and there is no universally agreed definition of tourism. The World Tourism Organization (hence forth, WTO) has taken the concept of 'tourism' beyond stereotypical image of "holiday making." The officially accepted definition is: 'tourism' comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one year and not less than 24 hours for leisure, business and other purposes (Goeldner and Richie, 2009:7).

Tourism has an immense economic significance globally though it is difficult to measure. World Travel and Tourism Council ( hence forth, WTTC) notes that travel and tourism is the largest industry in the world which contributes direct and indirect economic activity. Tourism accounts for 10% to the global GDP in 2002; 7.8% of global employment or approximately 198,668,000 jobs, or one in every 12.8 jobs. In the same year, 704.6 million international tourist arrivals were recorded world-wide and the receipts from these tourists were 474 billion USD (Pender and Sharpley 2005:2-3).

The report of WTTC in 2008 shows that travel and tourism has grown at the fastest rate; it generated 5.89 trillion USD and created 238.3 million jobs of direct and indirect employments or 9.2% of total labor force with 1 in every 11.9 jobs<sup>1</sup>. WTO forecasts that international tourist arrivals to reach over 1.56 billion by 2020. Of these, 1.18 billion tourist arrivals will be inter-regional and 377 million will be long-haul travelers (*Ibid*).

Coming to the Ethiopian scenario, tourism in Ethiopia, historically, dates back at least to the Aksumite civilization. During the Aksumite Empire, travel for trade and religious purposes was frequent. Be that as it may, tourism in its modern and institutionalized form was introduced in the early 1960s. Tsegay Berhe notes that the establishments of international organizations such as the Organizations of African Unity (OAU); presently replaced by the African Union (AU),

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.world-tourism.org/market-research/facts/highlights/Highlights.pdf](http://www.world-tourism.org/market-research/facts/highlights/Highlights.pdf)

United Nations Economic commission for Africa (UNECA) and others regional organizations have contributed for the development and promotion of tourism (Tsegay, 2005:2).

Ethiopia has a long way to go to benefit from tourism. For instance, according to WTTC and WTO (2002), the share of Ethiopia from tourism sector was just less than a miniscule. A total of 156,327 international tourists visited Ethiopia and accounted for 77 million USD in revenue, with 5% growth rate compared to 2001. In 2005, international tourist visiting Ethiopia showed considerable growth although not upto expectations. The projected international tourist arrival was 227,398; while income generated from these tourists amounted 135 million USD. Upto the present, Ethiopia's share from the international tourist's income is very petite. In 2008, Ethiopia received only about 157 million USD. That amounts to less than two tenths of the 2008 total international tourist arrivals world-wide. But, in the last three consecutive years, tourists arrival is growing at an average rate of 7% per year (Ethiopian Tourism Commission, 2008 cited in Ayalew Sisay, 2009:161).

Despite the current realty, Ethiopia hosts multiple tourist attractions and a visitor friendly people. In this regard, the UNESCO has so far recognized eight national attractions as world heritages. These includes: the town of Aksum (see annex 3), the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, Castles of Gondar, stone megaliths of Tiya, Upper Awash, Semien Mountains National Park, the walled city of Harar, and the Lower Omo Valley<sup>2</sup> (Tsegay, 2005:2). Such immense potentials encouraged Ethiopia to launch tourism as an important development sector.

This research deals particularly with Aksum, the capital city of powerful kingdom, which dominated the southern Red Sea in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium A.D. It is one of the birth places of ancient Ethiopian civilization. The remains of the ancient kingdom are now serving as the logo of tourist attractions in Ethiopia. The historical city of Aksum is still the most important religious center of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and a very important symbol of Ethiopian cultural identity. At present, Aksum is one of the major archaeological areas in Ethiopia and a registered world heritage. The main attractions of the areas are the giant stelae with varying sizes and weights;

---

<sup>2</sup> It is to be noted that Ethiopia is also trying to register in UNESCO many other outstanding tourist attractions.

burial grounds, impressive architectural heritages and splendid tombs of several kings, palaces, churches and museums (*Ibid*).

Tourism related activities have their own challenges and promises. In the recent decades, many new dimensions of tourism are introduced that attempted to address community concerns related to the environment, culture and the economy. One of these newly coined terms is 'ecotourism', a new form of tourism found and debated at different levels by interest groups. The International Ecotourism Society defines 'ecotourism' as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people" (Wood, 2002 cited in Mulugeta Feseha, 2010:13). Ecotourism was gradually embraced by different International organizations and agencies. The year 2002 was even declared as the International Year of Ecotourism (IYE).

Ecotourism may take different forms. One of them is community-based ecotourism (hence forth, CBE). This term stands for the type of ecotourism where the local community has substantial control over their lands, and involvement in its development and management. The major proportions of the benefits remain within the community (*Ibid*). CBE particularly applies to the tenure of community-held lands and to rights in relation to tourism, conservation and other uses on these lands, enabling the community to influence activity and earn income from tourism. CBE requires an understanding, and where possible a strengthening of the legal rights and responsibilities of the community over land, resources and development (Denman, 2001:10).

Against this backdrop, this paper will deals with community based ecotourism as livelihood option for the community of Aksum.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Ethiopia is endowed with varieties of tourism resources with high aesthetic values. The country is also home to suitable climate throughout the year. As cited above, institutionalized tourism sector is a recent phenomenon in Ethiopia dating back to the 1960s. This means half a century has elapsed since the advent of modern tourism. Despite this, Ethiopian tourism sector is suffering from structural problems such as the absence of CBE practices.

In fact, ecotourism is just a current issue not only in Ethiopia but also at the international arena. Studies show that Ethiopia is not getting significant benefits out of tourism in general let alone from ecotourism. Aksum is one of Ethiopia's principal attractions of historical, cultural, natural and archaeological tourism which lacks robust CBE activities. The incomes that Aksum's local communities obtained from tourism are still negligible. Communities are not adequately participating in the process of planning, decision making and development of tourism. Any development that ignores the indigenous community can't be realized up to the expected level and hence, can't be sustainable.

Taking the host-tourist relationships as a case in point, the benefit is not mutual; rather there are tendencies of lose-win relationships. This in turn paves the way for resentment and hostile attitude towards tourists by the host communities, such a negative perception is considered to be the main obstacle for the sector's development in general and CBE in particular.

Another related limitation for CBE activities is that the host communities are not fully aware of the benefits of tourism. That advantage due to the communities is taken over by the tourists and very few rich individuals. They consider the sector as simply hosting foreigners telling fancy story and getting all the money. Probably as a result, many poor people tend to spend their time begging at the main roads and tourist sites instead of imitating activities that could respond better to tourism development and CBE.

The other problem that motivates the writer to study on CBE in Aksum is that community identities and values are simply taken as commodities that suit the interests of tourists. This suggests that tourism resources are not properly delivered to the target market; if so negative consequences tend to outweigh than the positive ones. Such and other related problems are solved only by involving the host community in tourism and tourism related activities. This can partly be realized by improving community participation.

## **1.3 Hypothesis**

The research hypothesis is that tourism does not adequately participate the host community in Aksum. The sector is not strongly linked with the local development, conservation and management of the untapped tourism resources or opportunities.

**The research will attempt to answer the following major research questions:**

1. Why is not tourism integrated to the local livelihood of the community to its maximum potentials?
2. Why endeavors for environmental conservations and community development programs are not participatory?
3. What are the major constraints of community participation in CBE?

**The specific research questions of the thesis includes**

1. Why are not communities benefiting from tourism?
2. What development model fits better to integrate tourism to community livelihood of the Aksum area?
3. How can tourism contribute to heritage conservation efforts of the people of Aksum?
4. What are the impacts of ecotourism for Aksum community?

## **1.4 Objectives of the study**

### **1.4.1 General objective**

The general objective of this study is to investigate ways in which CBE could contribute to community development and empowerment through the provision of alternative income and employment.

### **1.4.2 Specific objectives**

1. To explore the perception of local communities towards ecotourism development.
2. To identify the diverse tourism products that would enable the local community to develop their own livelihood.

3. To identify the possible mechanisms of community involvement in CBE/CBT projects.
4. To identify how tourism can serve as a means for sustainable development.
5. To identify the possible positive and negative impacts of CBE.

### **1.5 Significance of the study**

CBE is the most recent phenomenon in Ethiopia. As cited above, CBE means most of tourism activities conducted on the community owned land and their resources is the main target of tourists. But the communities have garnered little or no benefit from the sector. Communities are even ignored from the activities conducted on their land and their voices remains unheard with regard to the development and management of tourism. It is obvious that the local community in Aksum has no proper understanding of CBE. Even the term 'CBE' is a strange term for them. No wonder, CBE activities are not yet practiced in Aksum. This study has considerable significance for different parties:

- It assists different stakeholders to have a clear understanding and reciprocity to share the benefits and burdens of tourism. It also helps to improve the knowledge and understanding of the host community on CBE and sustainable use of resources so as to develop a sense ownership.
- It contributes to improve local community participation to utilize their tourist resources.
- It is important for officials and community leaders as a guide to develop and implement CBE business
- It can also help policy implementers to mobilize local resources and improve the economy for the well being of local communities.
- It can serve as an input for the researchers who would like to conduct a further research on CBE development.

## **1.6 Limitation of the Study**

This study is an assessment of the practical scenario of ecotourism in Aksum and its contribution to the local livelihood for the community of the town. To such effect, the writer employed both primary and secondary sources. However, with respect to the former, the writer was unable to get comprehensive first hand information to a satisfactory level which may have its own impact to the study due to, mainly two reasons. First, during the field survey, the writer faced some challenges in collecting data. For instance, the target groups were less cooperative in filling the questionnaires mainly because of cultural and religious reasons. Secondly, the writer found some of the respondents to be less committed to give all the necessary information for the study.

## **1.7 Scope of the Study**

As can be discerned from the very title of the study, the geographical scope of the research is in Aksum town. Even in that case, the study doesn't cover the whole town. The writer took representative samples from different localities and assessed the practice of ecotourism in the town. In taking the samples, the writer will take geographical vicinity to tourist attraction sites as a primary factor for selection.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, analysis of the relevant literature on the area under consideration will be made. Broadly, it deals with historical, philosophical and socio-economic features of ecotourism in general and community based ecotourism in particular.

#### **2.1 Ecotourism: Conceptual Analysis**

##### **2.1.1 Definition of Ecotourism**

In this section, the writer deals with the meaning of ecotourism and its differences from ordinary tourism. Generally speaking, there is no universally accepted definition of ecotourism as different scholars define the concept differently. There is even lack of consensus in the literature regarding the etymology of the term ecotourism. For our purpose, the term “eco” is derived from a Greek word “*Okios*”, which refers to ‘house’. In this sense, ecotourism implies to ‘making guests feel at home’ (Pender, 2005 cited in Mulugeta Feseha 2010:13). Ceballos-Lascurain define ecotourism as

...travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1987: 14; 1991a, b cited in Diamantis and Dimitrios,1999:97-98).

This definition emphasizes the natural attraction of a site though it ignores the historical and cultural contexts.

A further definition of ecotourism is given by Ziffer (1989). Accordingly,

Ecotourism is a form of tourism inspired primarily by the natural history of an area, including its indigenous cultures. The ecotourists visit relatively undeveloped areas in the spirit of appreciation, participation and sensitivity. The ecotourists practice a non-consumptive use of wildlife and natural resources and contributes to the visited area through labor or financial means aimed at directly benefiting the conservation of the site and the economic well-being of the local residents. (Ziffer, 1989: 6).

Boyd & Butler (1993, 1996) also define ecotourism as “a responsible nature travel experience that contributes to the conservation of the ecosystem while respecting the integrity of host communities and, where possible, ensuring that activities are complementary, or at least compatible, with existing resource-based uses present at the ecosystem” Boyd & Butler(1993:13, 1996a:386). In 1991, the International Ecotourism Society (henceforth IES) defined ecotourism as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people” (Deman, 2001:2; Megan cited in Mulugeta, 2010:13).

From these definitions, we can discern that one of the essential features of ecotourism is that it helps towards an effective market penetration in terms of, say, product packaging, positioning and branding. Viewed from this angle, the definition provided by IES is bolder than others in terms of tone at, least, implicitly.

Along with the definition, IES urges those who participate and implement ecotourism activities to follow the following basic principles:

- minimize impact
  - build environmental and cultural awareness and respect
  - provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts
  - provide direct financial benefits for conservation
  - provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people
- 
- Raise sensitivity to host countries’ political, environmental and social climate ([www.ectourism.org](http://www.ectourism.org)).

## **2.2 Ecotourism: Development and Principles**

Some researchers (like Scace et al. 1992) have contended that the term "ecotourism" was first coined in 1983 by Ceballos-Lascurain. Over the past 30 years, ecotourism has become one of the fastest growing sectors of tourism industry, growing three times faster than the industry as a whole. At the same time, ecotourism is being increasingly viewed by local and indigenous

communities as an important tool for promoting sustainable livelihoods, cultural preservation, and biodiversity conservation (Honey, 2006, cited in S. Blangy and H. Mehta, 2006:233).

Because ecotourism was originally just an idea, not a discipline, business and governments promoted it without proper understanding of its basic principles. Establishing internationally and nationally accepted principles, guidelines and certification approaches evolved throughout the 1990s but at a modest pace, because the process involves stakeholders from many regions, disciplines and backgrounds. Each region affected by ecotourism should develop its own principles, guidelines and certification procedures based on internationally available materials. This process of creating international certification guidelines is far from being completed (Wood, 2002). Wood also notes that the IES based on the results of stakeholder meetings since 1991, has developed certain principles accepted by a growing constituency of NGOs, the private sector, governments, academia and local communities. The following are principles of ecotourism adopted from Wood:

- ❖ Minimize the negative impacts on nature and culture that can damage a destination.
- ❖ Educate the traveler on the importance of conservation.
- ❖ Stress the importance of responsible business, which works cooperatively with local authorities and people to meet local needs and deliver conservation benefit.
- ❖ Direct revenues to the conservation and management of natural and protected areas.
- ❖ Emphasize the need for regional tourism zoning and for visitor management plans designed for either regions or natural areas that are stated to become eco-destinations.
- ❖ Emphasize use of environmental and social base-line studies, as well as long-term monitoring programs, to assess and minimize impacts.
- ❖ Strive to maximize economic benefits for the host country, local business and communities, particularly peoples living in and adjacent to natural and protected areas.
- ❖ Seek to ensure that tourism development does not exceed the social and environmental limits of acceptable change as determined by researchers in cooperation with local residents.

- ❖ Rely on infrastructure that has been developed in harmony with the environment, minimizing use of fossil fuels, conserving local plants and wildlife, and blending with the natural and cultural environment (Wood; 2002:13-14).

Based on these principles specific guidelines can be developed that will help to define the market's best possible performance. Such guidelines should offer practical approaches to achieving sustainable development results, as gleaned from survey research on best practices and stakeholders meeting. International review finalized the guidelines processes, helping to assure that a wide variety of view-points are incorporated (*Ibid*).

### **2.3 Ecotourism and Sustainable Development**

Ecotourism is the segment of sustainable tourism that applies the sustainability principles to its tourism activities, operations, establishments and projects. The advent of mass tourism in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was paralleled by the rise of global environmental movements. Five basic principles of sustainability came into being:

1. The idea of holistic planning and strategy making
2. The importance of preserving essential ecological process
3. The need to protect both human heritages and biodiversity
4. The need to develop in a manner that foster long-term productivity sustainable for future generation.
5. The goal of achieving a better balance of equity among nations (Bram and Lane 1993, cited in Dowling and Fennel, 2003).

Sustainability in tourism development concerns harmonizing tourism development with ecological and social responsibility. It aims at meeting the needs of the present tourists and hosts while protecting and enhancing environmental, social and economic values for the future. According to GLOBE 90 (1990:2), the goals of sustainable tourism are:

1. To promote greater awareness and understanding of the significant contributions that tourism can make to the environment and economy

2. To promote equity in development
3. To improve the quality of life of the host community
4. To provide a high quality of experience for visitors
5. To maintain the quality of the environment on which the forgoing objectives depend (Dowling and James, 1996).

Ecotourism enhances both sustainable development and community empowerment. If managed and monitored by a well-organized community, ecotourism can generate revenue while protecting natural and cultural resources of a given area from distinctive forms of development (Cusack et al. 2006). As such ecotourism contributes not only to sustainable development but also to the long and difficult process of its implementation in tourism system (Hall and Lew (1998) cited in Christof Poffer, (2001)). As already cited in section 2.2, sustainable ecotourism means that the project fulfils the principles of sustainability. For instance, ecotourism at the community level should be developed within the context of sustainable development which includes ecological, social, economic and cultural dimensions of sustainability. It seems proper to provide a brief note of each components of sustainability.

1. **Ecological Sustainability** ensures the compatibility of development with the maintenance of essential ecological process, biological diversity and biological resources (Dowling and James, 1996). This type of sustainability must maintain a stable resource base, avoiding over-exploitation renewable resource system or environmental sink functions, and depleting non-renewable resources only to the extent that investment is made in adequate substitutes (Jonathan M.Harris, 2000:5-6).
2. **Social Sustainability** ensures that development increases people's control over their own lives is compatible with the social values of people affected by it, and maintains and strengthens community identity (*Ibid*). A socially sustainable development must achieve distributive equity, adequate provision of social services including health and education; gender equity, and political accountability and participation (*Ibid*).

3. **Economic Sustainability** fosters development that is economically efficient, so that resources are managed in such a way that it can support future generations (*Ibid*). It is a continuing and manageable development.
4. **Cultural sustainability** refers to the ability of people to retain or adapt elements of their culture which distinguishes them from other people (Mowforth and Munt (2003) cited in Alexandra Ayotte (2009)).

Ecotourism can also have the opportunity to present and protect natural and cultural resources of an area, promoting a unique identity. It can create new and exciting tourism experiences, promote excellence in tourism, benefit local communities and encourage commercially successful and environmentally sound tourism operation (*Ibid*).

## **2.4 The Impacts of Ecotourism**

Unlike other goods and services that are marketed, the developer and marketer of ecotourism packages must not only be sensitive to the needs of the final consumer but also to the needs of the local or host area, as well as practice good environmental management. Ecotourism is extensively accepted as a strategy with the potential to provide ecological, economic, and social benefits at the local and national levels. Although a set of explicit objectives or standard principles of ecotourism do not definitively exist, clearly the aim of ecotourism is to channel economic benefits to local communities thereby creating a greater incentive for continued local involvement that would likely enhance biodiversity conservation. The following sub-sections elaborate the positive and negative environmental, economic and social impacts on the affected natural area as well as the local population.

### **2.4.1 Environmental Impacts**

Environmental impacts considered here include both the direct and indirect impacts on the natural environment. Another assumption of ecotourism is that it can lead to increased concern for the environment, both by tourists and locals. The tourists can contribute to the preservation of an area through entrance fees and donations. When villagers recognize that the potential exists to receive continuous income from tourists without an unsustainable use of their natural resource

(e.g. logging), they will understand the importance of preserving the natural area (Goodwin, 1996).

Positive and negative environmental impacts of ecotourism are listed down in Table 1 below. The severity of impacts depends upon the type of activity as well as the type of ecosystem affected. With the exception of obvious impacts such as trampling of vegetation and changes in wildlife habits and patterns, little research has been done that addressed the less obvious ecological impacts such as noise disturbance or wildlife population dynamics (*Ibid*). Although ecotourism has brought awareness to the conservation and preservation of pristine areas and unique biological resources, it has its own drawbacks. Like any other tourist, an ecotourist uses a huge amount of natural resources and disturbs natural environment using huge trucks and vehicles.

**Table 1 Environmental impacts of ecotourism**

<b>Positive impacts</b>	<b>Negative Impacts</b>
Creation of wildlife reserve/sanctuary	Disruption of breeding habitats
Justification for park protection	Change in wildlife migration patterns
Habitat restoration	Water pollution by sewerage disposal
Less incentive resource use option	Visual impacts (litter, facilities)
Reduce incentive for other more resources intensive uses	Compaction of soils causing increased run-off and erosion.
Environmental education	Over-exploitation of biological resources (over-fishing).
Increasing stewardship	Land use changes in primary production areas
Impetus for private conservation efforts	Destruction of vegetation
Community building which promotes conservation	

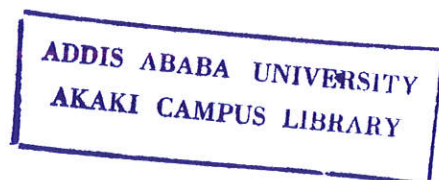
Source: Adapted from (Buckley, 2001; Green and Hunter, 1992; Boo, 1990 cited in Elizabeth Joy Matthews, 2002)

### 2.4.2 Economic Impacts

Ecotourism has the potential to deliver multiple economic benefits including foreign exchange earnings, increased employment opportunities, infrastructure development, and a more diversified local economy (Lindberg, 2001; Wight, 1994). Direct and indirect economic benefits of ecotourism will be realized if the resource capacity is not exceeded by the tourism demand. Direct impacts include revenues from initial tourism spending such as food and lodging. Indirect impacts accrue to the local communities when, for example, restaurants and lodges buy local goods and services.

Although ecotourism has positive economic impacts, it has also negative impacts on the host communities. It causes uneven distribution of revenues, reduce access of local community over their resources, and lose of income from resources, inflation or increase the price of goods, services and land. Large amount of profit generated in local communities eventually end up with local elites, external operators, or government agencies (Scheyvens, 1999). Revenue leakage accounts for a significant percentage of income that would otherwise be directed towards the local community. The amount of leakages occurring depends upon the local economy and the level of self-sufficiency. A few sources of leakages include the continual need to import foreign goods and services, repatriation of profits from foreign-owned hotels and restaurants, and advertising and marketing efforts abroad. Lindberg and Enriquez (1994) estimated that 55% of every tourist dollar spent in developing countries leaks back into developed countries.

The economic impacts are difficult to capture in a single table since economic benefits are received on numerous levels. Additionally, whether the impacts are positive or negative depend on one's attitude. For example, people desiring to sell land would benefit from increased land prices while those buying land would oppose increased prices (Lindberg, 2001).



**Table 2: Economic impacts of ecotourism**

<b>Positive Impacts</b>	<b>Negative Impacts</b>
Increasing employment opportunities	Leakage of revenues
Increase household income	Uneven distribution of revenues/income inequalities
Funding for infrastructure	Reduce access to resources (i.e. wood, medical plants)
Funding for protected areas	Locals lose income from resources because a public protected area
Revenue-sharing	Foreign ownership of business
	Inflation-increased prices for goods, services and land

Source: Adapted from Lindberg (2001) and Lindberg and Huber (1993) cited in Mathews (2002)

### **2.4.3 Socio-cultural Impacts**

Lasting success of ecotourism development project depends on participation of local people in all phases of planning and implementation. However, ecotourism development is often imposed from the national level while the local communities are being excluded from the planning, preparation, and implementation phases of ecotourism development projects (King and Stewart (1996) cited in Mathews (2002:15)). The main secret for the long-term success of ecotourism depends on the level of agreement and support of the adjacent local community. More often, however, the residents of these areas do not fully understand the potential environments, economic and socio-cultural impacts of ecotourism and thus may not support ecotourism development.

Social impacts include capacity building opportunities, such as cooperatives and training, increased cultural prides as a result of ecotourism, and increased government support such as protection and the reduction of illegal practices (Wearing, 2001). It should also be noted that economic impacts have profound influences on society. For instance, ecotourism can lead to increment in prices of goods and services, rendering the locals unable to remain in the area.

One of the most significant influences of ecotourism on local communities is “the commodification” of their culture whereby people and their cultural artifacts and symbols are treated as commodities that can be bought or sold (Scheyvens, 1999). This often occurs when a desire for short-term economic benefits outweighs a desire to maintain long-term local support (Wight, 1993). King and Stewart (1996:296) cited in Matthew (2002) states that “for indigenous people, the commodification of nature implies a change in the meaning of their environment from sources of direct sustenance with a use of value to a commodity with an exchange value.” Other impacts include the loss of indigenous knowledge and change in social structure whereby people start to emigrate and shed traditional practices in order to cater to tourists.

The Quebec Declaration asserts that ecotourism should contribute to the cultural integrity of host communities, and states that this is central to sustainable development. Certainly, the IYE emphasizes the importance of culture and traditional knowledge in ecotourism (Micheal, 2008:20).

**Table 3: Socio-cultural impacts of ecotourism**

<b>Positive impacts</b>	<b>Negative impacts</b>
Increased interest in traditional practices/ceremonies	Changed in family economies
Government protection of cultural resources	Shift away from traditional practices; loss of indigenous knowledge
Preserved cultural identity and pride of local community	Move away from self-sufficiency to dependency
Promotion of cultural exchange	Change in cultural landscape, housing, and employment
Development of local cooperatives	Restricted access to resources
Training and education	Increased exploitation of local people
Funding for protection/maintenance of natural and cultural resources	Injury to residents, livestock, crops by wildlife within protected areas
Reduction of poaching or other illegal activities	Local obligation to perform traditional dances/activities
Increased market for development of local foods	Growth of vandalism, prostitution, crime
Increased used of local labor and expertise	Commodification of culture
Community empowerment	Change in family structure

Source: Adapted from (Bradon, 1996; King and Stewart, 1996; Wearing, 2001)..

#### **2.4.4 Impact Evaluation**

Change is inevitable regardless of whether it is due to economic, environmental or social impacts. When considered collectively, the impacts elaborated above raise several questions. What degree of change is acceptable on local economies and the environment? Which changes are unacceptable? What strategies should be implemented to manage changes or impacts? Who should be involved in managing impacts? These questions concern the burgeoning tourism industry and its influence upon local indigenous communities. Answers have been sought in numerous studies.

Ecotourism is especially aimed at preventing adverse effects that could threaten the very foundation on which it depends. If the principles/standards stated above were achieved and adverse impacts minimized, ecotourism development would encourage individuals, the private industry and governments to protect environmental and cultural resources and plan for long-term resource use. A critical determinant of the success or failure of an ecotourism project apparently depends on the participation of indigenous communities in all phases of planning and management of a project (King and Stewart, 1996). However, a full reflection of the ecological, economic and social consequences of ecotourism raises fundamental uncertainties regarding its sustainability.

#### **2.5 Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE)**

The term 'community' covers a wide range of meanings. For the purpose of this study, a community is defined as "a group of people, often living in the same geographic area, who identify themselves as belonging to the same group" (Sproule 1998 cited in Anucha Leksakundilok, 2004:55). One of the main concerns of ecotourism is the level of community participation in its activities, which include development planning, decision making and control. Local community need not be neglected no matter how tourism is heavily reliant on state market and resources such as national parks that mostly fall under government controls. Integrating local communities in development requires putting various efforts into the management, knowledge, negotiation with other stakeholders and external support. In reality, local communities have access to natural resources that can be used to attract ecotourism. They also have a wealth of cultural resources. Thus, community based tourism can access a wide range of resources that locals are able to manage and interact with. Tourism managed by the community is called

'Community Based Tourism' (henceforth CBT). If that CBT is managed by applying ecotourism concepts, then it is called 'Community Based Ecotourism' (CBE) (Anucha Leksakundilok, 2004:32-33).

CBE denotes tourism that is based on a combination of both cultural and natural attractions. It is a form of community-based natural and cultural resources' management and a popular choice of activities in an enterprise-based strategy for biodiversity conservation and integrated cultural and development projects<sup>3</sup>. CBE is a growing phenomenon throughout the developing world. It implies that the communities have substantial control and involvement in the ecotourism project, and hence retain the majority of benefits. Three main types of CBE enterprises have been identified. The purest model suggests that, the community owns and manages the project; all community members are employed by the project using rotation. The second type of CBE enterprises involves family or group initiatives within communities. The third type of CBE is a joint venture between a community or family and outside business partners (Wood, 2002:41).

CBE also takes the social dimensions of ecotourism as a further stage. It requires an understanding, and where possible strengthens the legal rights and responsibilities of the communities over land, resources and development. This should apply in particular to the tenure of community held lands and to rights over tourism, conservation and other uses on these lands, enabling the community to influence activity and earn income from tourism. It should also apply to participation in land use planning and development control over private property (Deman, 2001:10).

It is important to remember that CBE is a business as well as community-led initiatives. Private enterprises and investment should be encouraged where appropriate, within a structure which enables the community to benefit. There are various methods of integrating and benefiting a local community. For example, there are some initiatives in Amazon where lodges built by the private sector offer a concession to the community an agreement to hand the business over to them after a specified period and a provision for local people employment program (*Ibid*).

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<sup>3</sup> [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

## 2.6 Community participation

CBE gives consideration to the rights, roles and responsibilities of communities to manage and control tourism development in order to maximize benefits for the local people. Hence, 'participation' has been claimed as one of the critical components of success (Pretty, 1995 cited in Leksakundilok, 2004:249). It is part of all development projects and the main theme of all agencies concerned with community development including ecotourism, i.e. NGOs, government agencies, private sector, and the funding agencies. Participation goes far beyond consultation. Although participation is theoretically sounding, its practice remains so controversial. Stressing the paradoxes that may occur due to discrepancies in interpretations, Leksakundilok notes that paradoxes may occur because it is interpreted differently by different people:

*The term 'participation' has become used to justify the extension of control of the state as well as to build local capacity and self-reliance; it has been used to justify external decisions as well as to devolve power and decision making away from external agencies; it also has been used for data collection as well as for interactive analysis (Leksakundilok, 2004).*

Participation often means the involvement of people (as individual) or community (as collective group of people with the government or state (*Ibid*). Thus, terms 'people's participation', 'citizen participation' and 'community participation' may be used interchangeably. However, this study emphasizes the participation of the community as a collective organization. It seems proper to review the issue of local participation and its applications to tourism and/or CBE development.

The term "community participation", like sustainability, has become a mantra for development agencies in less developed countries. This was particularly due to the fact that increased stakeholder participation is now being demanded by international donor organizations and NGOs (Dalal-Clayton, et al, (2003) cited in Hussin Rosazman, 2006:7). "Local participation" can be defined as "the ability of local communities to influence the outcome of development projects affecting their lives such as ecotourism that have an impact on them. The concept of "local community" here means "a group of people who share a common identity such as geographical locations, class and/or ethnic background. The local community also shares a special interest or

dependence, for their livelihoods, on natural or cultural resources to sustain their increasing population (Wearing (2001) cited in Rosazman, 2006:8).

### **2.6.1 Basic Steps of Community Participation**

According to Connell (1997: 250 cited in Okazaki, Etsuko 2008), participation is ‘not only about achieving the more efficient and more equitable distribution of material resources: it is also about the sharing of knowledge and the transformation of the process of learning itself in the service of people’s self-development’. It is power redistribution, thereby enabling society to fairly redistribute benefits and costs. In the context of tourism planning community participation is ‘a process of involving all stakeholders (local government officials, local citizens, architects, developers, business people, and planners) in such a way that decision-making is shared’ (Etsuko, 2008).

Here are some basic steps listed below that shows community participation in CBE projects adapted from Wood;

- **Understand the community’s role:** Communities should exercise control over their growth and development. They will in many cases need technical assistance to make appropriate decisions and should be given adequate information and training in advance. Care should be given to avoid letting communities feel powerless to influence patterns of development.
- **Empower communities:** Participation is a process that goes beyond benefiting communities in ecotourism project. Even if jobs are an important benefit, they cannot replace empowerment. Communities must genuinely participate in the decision making process.
- **Urge local project participation:** Project managers must identify local leaders, organizations, key priorities of the community, and ideas, expectations and concerns of the local people. Information can be gathered for and by the community; the opinions gathered should be disseminated and discussed with the community along with other relevant information such as government market statistics or regional development plans.

Training opportunities must be formulated at this phase to help community members gain planning skills and also the entrepreneurial skills required to run small business.

- **Create stakeholders:** Participation can be encouraged at two levels for individuals and for local organizations. Investment in project development areas should be encouraged either in cash or in kind resources.
- **Link benefits to conservation:** The links between ecotourism benefits and conservation objectives need to be direct and significant. Income, employment and other benefits must promote conservation.
- **Distribute benefits:** Ensure that both the community and individuals benefit from projects.
- **Identify community leaders:** Identify opinion of community leaders and involve them in the planning and execution of projects. Identify leaders that represent different constituents to ensure that a cross-section of society is involved.
- **Bring about change:** Use existing organization already working in community to improve its social well-being through economic development. Development associations or local cooperatives are good prospects.
- **Understand site-specific conditions:** Be aware that authority structures vary greatly in each region. Consensus is not always possible, nor is the full participation of all sectors of society (women are often excluded).
- **Monitor and evaluate progress:** establish indicators in advance to track tourism's positive and negative impacts. Goals such as employment and income levels are only one type of indicator. The project should track negative impacts such as evidences of rapidly escalating prices for local goods, inflation in land prices, antagonism towards visitors, frequency of arrests, change in youth activities, etc (Brandon (1993) cited in Wood, 2002:39).

### 2.6.2 Community Empowerment

Leksakundilok (2004) emphasizes the critical need for participation leads to empowerment by distinguishing between four types of empowerment in the context of ecotourism development: economic, psychological, social and political empowerments.

Economic empowerment refers to the local community's ability to make and take opportunities for economic development through the development of ecotourism. It may also refer to the local community's access to the productive resources that are being targeted by ecotourism. An economically empowered community is one where the economic benefits of ecotourism development are shared equitably among the community as a whole, and where the local community retains access rights to the community's resource base (*Ibid*). Lasting employment tend to enhance empowerment.

Psychological empowerment refers to the attitudes of the local community towards the development of ecotourism. A community that is psychologically empowered is one where local people are comfortable with the role played by ecotourism in their community, and are optimistic about its potential to continue to generate further benefits. Ecotourism is sensitive to local norms and is respectful of local traditions, empowers local people to contribute to the development of ecotourism (*Ibid*).

Meanwhile, Social empowerment refers to the ability of the local community to determine the social impacts of ecotourism development. Social empowerment will result in ecotourism making a contribution to the social cohesion and integrity of the local community, rather than detracting from it (*Ibid*). It is most likely to be found in those communities where parts of the net returns from ecotourism are recycled back into the local community in the form of investment in local infrastructure or the funding of social projects.

Political empowerment refers to the ability of the local community to express their concerns to have a genuine impact on the direction, format and speed of ecotourism development. A local community is politically empowered when diverse interest groups, including the traditionally disenfranchised groups (such as young people and the poor) are able to contribute effectively to the planning and management process of ecotourism (*Ibid*). Political empowerment is best achieved when power is decentralized from the national to the local administrative level.

# CHAPTER THREE

## DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

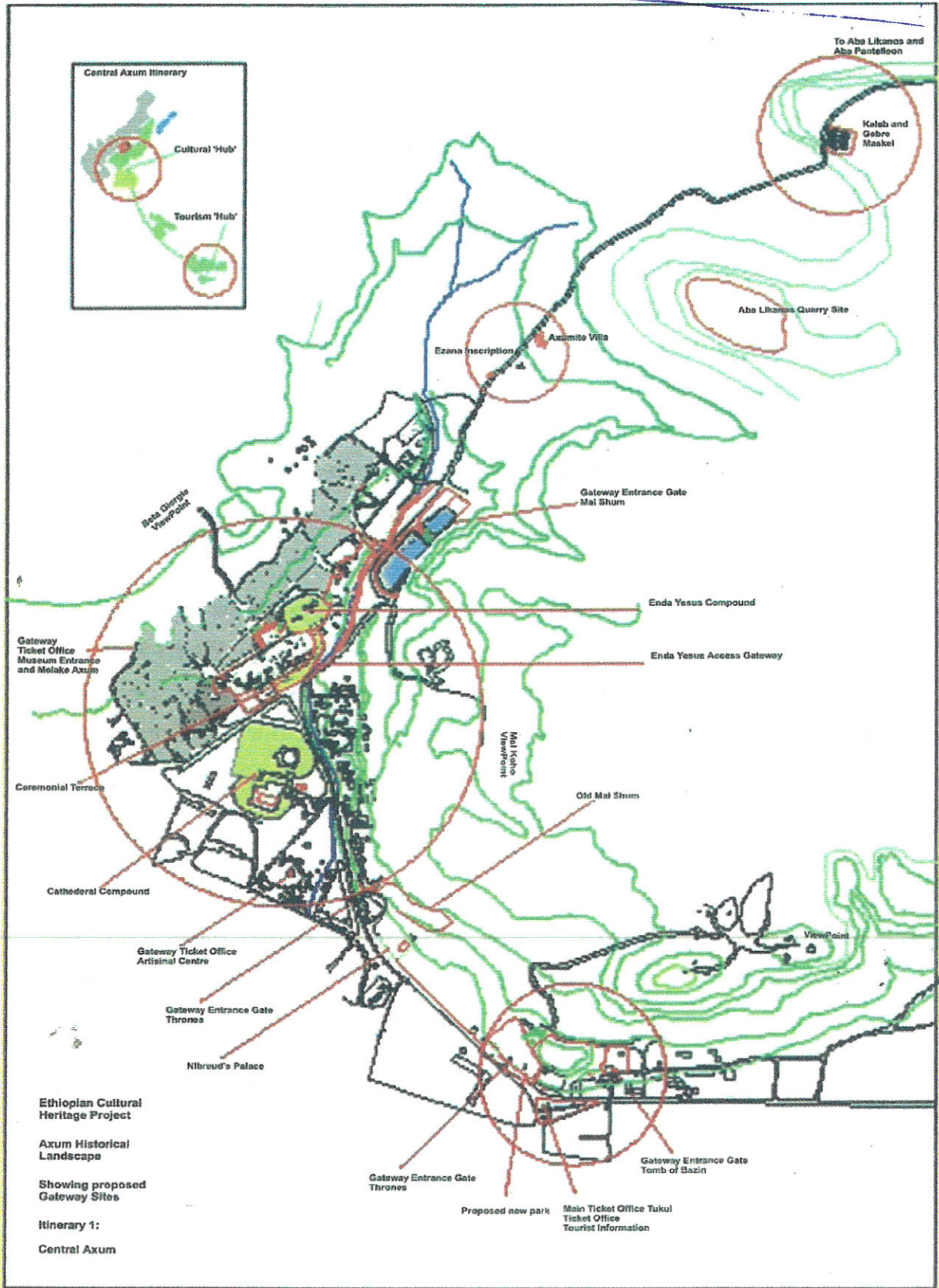
### 3.1 Geographical Survey of the Study Area

Tigray National Regional State is one of the newly structured regional states under the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Tigray is situated between 12° 15' N and 14° 57' latitude and 36° 27' E and 39°59' longitude (Tsegay, 2005:24). It has an area of 53, 638 km<sup>2</sup> which accounts for about 6% of Ethiopia's total area. Situated at the northern tip of Ethiopia, Tigray lies between two extremes; Semien Mountain-also called the 'Roof Tower of Africa'-(4620meters above sea level), and the 'Dalul depression' (126meters below sea level). This makes Tigray unique for its ecological expositions and climatic variations (*Ibid*).

Mekele is the capital city of Tigray with a total population of 170,000. Tigray has its own constitution, regional parliament, and regional cabinets. Administratively, Tigray is divided into seven zones, 46 districts, and 650 sub-districts. There are also sub-sub-districts called *Ketena*, which constitute the lowest administrative bodies of the Tigray government (*Ibid*).

This study focuses on the town of Aksum, the capital city of the central zone of Tigray. Aksum is situated at about 250 kilometers west of Mekelle, the capital of Tigray Regional State. It has a total population of 46,887 and 13,790 households. Out of Aksum's population, 36% (17,109) belong to the age ranges of 0-15; 60% (28,068) are between the age ranges of 16-64 and 4% (1,716) are 65 and above age groups (C.S.A 2007). Aksum covers one *wereda* (district); divided into 4 *Tabiyas* (sub-districts), each having four *Ketenas* (sub-sub districts) except *Tabyas Hawelti*, which has five *Ketenas*. Nowadays Aksum is a small town with a shadow of its golden past (Paolo Chiari, 2009).

Figure 1 Map of Central Aksum



Source: Aksum Discovery and Memory Travel Sketches Guide

### 3.2 Aksum: A Historical Survey

Tigray is endowed with a rich collection of artifacts, megaliths, tombs and rock-hewn churches along with a unique landscape. A large number of the notable artifacts of Tigray are apparently concentrated in Aksum<sup>4</sup>. Historians and archaeologists divided Aksum's evolution into two periods: Pre-Aksumite and Aksumite. Aksum's pre-history goes back to the Early Stone Age, when humans inhabited the area, about 500,000 years before the present. Flakes, cores, scrapers dating back to Early and Middle Stone Age as well as Late Stone Age pottery have been found in the area north of the present city, east of Bete Gyiorgis, Southern flanks of Gobedra hills and Mount Liqanos. Very little is known about how human occupation of the area moved out of the Stone Age through the introduction of farming economies and began to develop the Aksumite civilization (Munro-Hay,1991).

In the Pre-Aksumite phase an urban society appeared on the Tigrayan plateau where, to date, archaeologists have found ninety sites including towns, ceremonial centers, village and camps. Here lived sedentary agro-pastoralist communities as well as traders who had acquired enough power to divert commerce from the ancient kingdom of Dama't contributing to its dissolution into new towns such as Melazo, Kaskase and Matara. Goods like gold, silver, and ivory were traded for cloth, tools and jewelry. It was within this cultural, political, and socio-economic context that Aksumite civilization had once flourished (*Ibid*).

According to historical evidences, Aksum was one of the ancient and historical towns in Ethiopia. More importantly, it was the seat of one of the most powerful city states in the history of ancient Africa. Together with Egypt and Meroe, the Aksumite kingdom was amongst the greatest African civilizations. It flourished in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC and its rule encompassed part of present day Ethiopia, Eritrea, and the Sudan and parts of the Southern Arabian Peninsula (*Ibid*).

The Aksumite period covers more than thirteen centuries. Aksum becomes the centre of an autonomous polity created by the Semitic-speaking people called Aksumites, or Habashat, from which the name 'Habesha' is derived. There is no agreement among scholars on the meaning of Aksum. One research claims the word Aksum is derived from the Semitic root *aksum*, meaning green and dense garden. The second research claims Aksum to have originated from the Agaw word *ak* and the Semitic suffix *sum*, which refers to the water of the chief, like the Mai Shum

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<sup>4</sup> [www.factsoftigray.com](http://www.factsoftigray.com)

reservoir to the north of the city (Sergew Hable Sellassie,1972:68). The third version relates 'Aksum' with the legendary emperor Aksumawi; or, family, from a Geez root meaning the site of diamond (The Book of Aksum, cited in Sergew, 1972).

The earliest documentary reference to Aksum was found in a first century A.D text, *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* where it is cited as one of the biggest center of ivory trade (*Ibid*). The city of Aksum and the kingdom of the same name enjoyed great fame during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. According to a contemporary observer Mani, Aksum was "the third largest empire in the world", next Rome and China (Munro-Hay, 1991).

Very little evidence exists regarding the initial development of Aksum. According to the 17<sup>th</sup> century document called the Book of Aksum, the town had three different locations in its initial phase, until the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. The first was Mazber, a place probably located not far from the tomb of King Kaleb and Gabre Maskel, a few kilometers north east of the present city centre. The first founder of the city was reported to be Aksumawi, great-grandson of Noah, grandson of Kush, and son of Iytopis, whose tomb is reported by the Book of Aksum to be at Mazber. Later on, the book says, the Queen of Sheba had rebuilt Azeba, or Asfa, a place most likely identified with the top of Bete Gyorgis Hill, traditionally known as Dabra Makedda, the mount of the Queen of Sheba. Finally, kings Abreha and Atsbeha built the church of St. Mary Zion in the mid 4<sup>th</sup> century AD and the town centre evolved around it (Girma Elias, 1997).

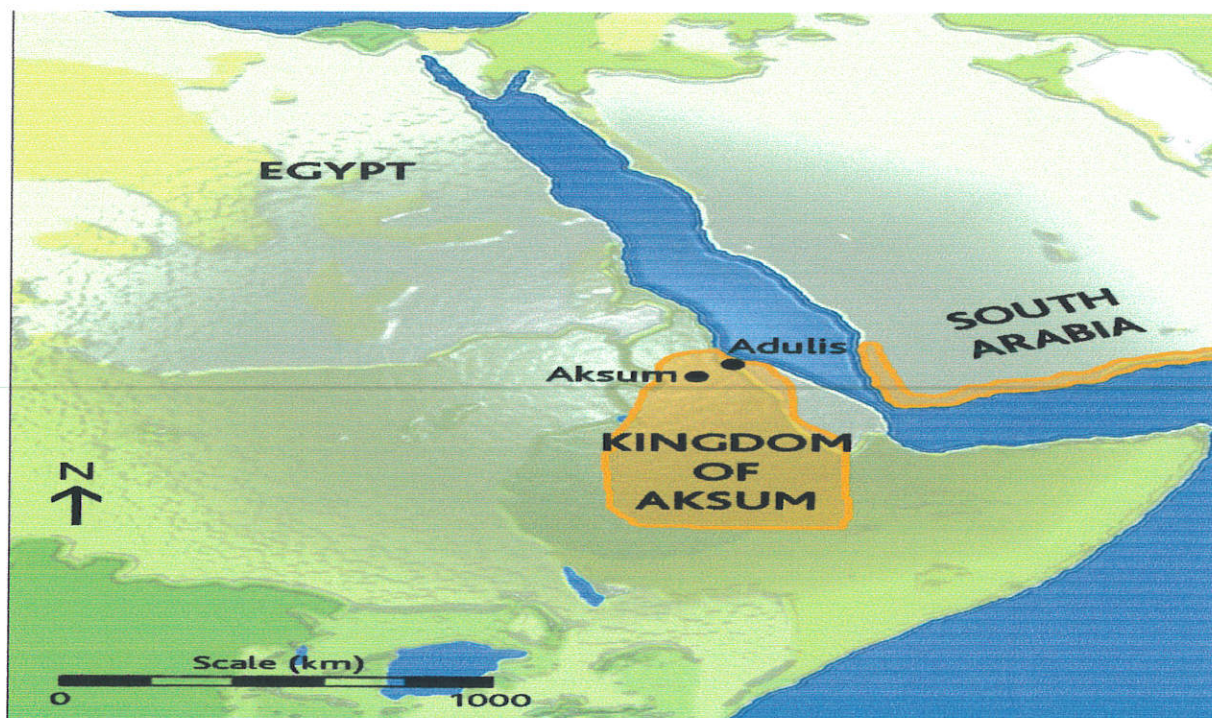
During this long history, Aksum greatly contributed to human development. The stelae, the rock tombs, the temples, the palaces, stone thrones and sculptured stone monuments are a witness for its resourcefulness. With all its golden treasures and underground mysteries, Aksum is situated in a region of mild temperature conducive climate.

Religiously, the city has embraced Christianity in the 4<sup>th</sup> c AD. It was the cradle of Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Currently, there are three affiliated churches, namely: the cathedral of Maryam TSION, Arba'eatu Ensesa, and Endayesus. All these churches administrated by the head of

churches, called 'Nebure-id<sup>5</sup>', as Aksum is the centre of all education in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (Sergew, 1972).

The Aksumite state bordered one of the ancient world's great arteries of commerce, the Red Sea, and through its port of Adulis, Aksum participated actively in international trade. Aksum's links with other countries, whether through military campaigns, trading enterprise, or cultural and ideological exchange, made it part and parcel of the international community of the period. It was peripheral perhaps from the Romano-centric point of view, but still directly involved with the nations of the southern and eastern spheres of the Roman Empire and beyond. Aksum's position in the international trade and diplomatic activity linked it with the Roman provinces around the Mediterranean via the Red Sea with South Arabia, Persia, India, Sri Lanka, and even China (Munro-Hay, (1991). The picture below shows Aksum territory during its civilization and with its trade outlets.

**Figure 3.2 Aksumite territories during its heydays period (from 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century A.D)**



Source: [www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org)

<sup>5</sup> Is a title given to a person who administers the three above cited churches

The town of Aksum is better renowned for its large monuments, and a considerable quantity of material relics that preserve the memory of a great historical age. There are several groups of giant steles in Aksum. One of these stelae measures about 33m high and is the largest obelisk ever quarried, transported, carved and erected in the world. There are also enormous stone tables, thrones carved out of stone blocks, numerous fragments of columns, royal tombs, etc. which join with legend and tradition in evoking for the visitor a glorious past (Tekle Hagos, 2001).

In general, Aksum's remarkable archaeological, historical and environmental achievements in arts, religion, architecture and literature earned recognition as a global heritage. Much of Aksum's current ecotourists importance was a product of its magnificent past achievements which inspired the current study. The tenacity of the story of the 'Ark of The Covenant' also involved no less curiosity on many tourists. There is a strong legend that credits Aksum as the home of the Ark of The Covenant.

### **3.3 Methodology of The Study**

The research strategy was field survey conducted in Aksum *Woreda* where the magnificent historical, cultural and archaeological attractions are concentrated. The study area was selected for its profound significance in tourism development and as a destination of multiple attractions. It also has an immense potential for the development of community based ecotourism. The study specifically refers to the sub-districts (*Tabias*) of *Hawelti* and *Kindeya* out of the four *Tabias* of Aksum *Woreda*. The survey was designed to obtain information dealing with general socio-economic condition of the study area.

#### **3.3.1 Data Collection**

In the course of the study, the writer employed mixed approaches though predominantly of qualitative research approach. An in-depth personal observation of the study area was made so as to know how the host communities are involved in tourism related issues, their awareness on the concepts of tourism and CBE. While an intensive interview of key informants was made using snow ball sampling, qualitative questionnaires are also forwarded to selected respondents. The writer equally involved women and men in the data collection, but women are reluctant and few respond to the the raised research issues.

Document analysis related to CBE was another source of data. Both primary and secondary sources such as published and unpublished documents were carefully reviewed and analyzed. Therefore, the methodology that is employed by the writer is a combination of both primary and secondary sources. In the quantitative approach, the writer has employed some close ended questionnaires and these questionnaires are measured and analyzed using simple percentage frequency.

### **3.3.2 Sample Design**

Sample design refers to the technique or the procedure the writer adapts for selecting sample from the population. This is very helpful to decide the sample unit to be included in the sample, i.e. the size of the sample from the sample frame. In this respect, the writer has employed cluster sampling. A convenient way in which a sample would be selected was to divide the area in to a number of smaller non-overlapping areas and purposely select a number of such smaller areas. In the process, the ultimate sample would consist of all the units in these small areas or clusters. Thus, the total study population is sub-divided into numerous relatively smaller subdivisions which in themselves constitute clusters of still smaller units. Within cluster sampling, *area sampling* is best fitted because the primary sample unit is undertaken in the form of geographic area.

As mentioned above, the study area covers one *wereda* (district) that has 4 *Tabiyas*. For the purpose of this study the writer will take two of the four *Tabiyas* (*Hawelti* and *Kindeya*) which cover the major population: two *Ketenas* from *Hawelti* and one *Ketena* from *Kindeya* were taken as samples. These *Ketenas* are selected based on their proximity to the principal tourist attractions. Accordingly, a total of 50 respondents were purposely selected to fill the questionnaires based on their knowledge and interests on issues raised by the writer. The respondents are selected from different stakeholders including tour guides, crafts men and hotel owners etc. From those respondents, the questionnaires of 35 respondents are chosen for further analysis. The writer selected these respondents whose responses best fitted for the purpose of the study. Redundancy of information on the part of the respondents led me to drop the questionnaires of 15 respondents.

The writer also conducted an intensive interview by purposely selecting 10 key informants selected from different institutions, local and federal government offices, higher institutions and private business. Accessibility and their knowledge on the study were the basic criterias for the selection of key informants.

### **3.3.3 Research Design**

In the undertaking of this research, descriptive research design was applied mainly in the format of a close and open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews for the purpose of data collection. The collected data are analyzed using document analysis. So this study highly depends on document analysis. Data collected in the study area are analyzed against review of literature and contextualized to the study area.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the findings and results of the study. Many issues are analyzed such as community awareness on tourism and CBE, ecotourism features of Aksum, community participation, community empowerment, and models of community participation in CBE development. In addition to this, it also discusses CBE as a means of livelihood and sustainable development.

History and cultural heritages are increasingly becoming crucial tourist products or commodities. In Ethiopia, no other town occupies a more privileged position in the national history does Aksum. It is one of birth places of ancient Ethiopian civilization. Several kings and queens reigned there. The Aksumites hoped to attain prosperity through tourism. The remains of the Aksumite kingdom are now serving as important tourist attractions for Ethiopia. The holy city of Aksum is still the most important religious center of Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and a very important symbol of the Ethiopian cultural identity.

The history of development of tourism in Ethiopia was intimately linked with the development of tourism in Aksum. The first national organization to look after tourism activities has been setup in 1964 by Emperor Haileselassie I, order No36 of 1964, with the name “Ethiopian Tourist Organization (ETO)” (Tsegay, 2005:20). This organization also focuses on the “historic routes” of Ethiopia of which one was Aksum. The historic route assumed priority areas of tourism.

#### **4.1.2 Characteristics of the Respondents**

The age structure of the respondents in the study area is diverse. About 78% of the total respondents fall within the age range of 21-30 years. Another 10% of respondents are between the age of 31-40 while the remaining 10% are within the age ranges of 41 and above. Coming to the sex composition of the respondents, 20% are female and 80% are male. The reason for gender imbalances was that I found women less cooperative during the data collection<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> It is not only women who are not cooperative to fill the questionnaires but also many of the target group failed to do so because they said that religious leaders ordered them to not fill such things which might be the works of

Concerning to the educational profile, 20% of the respondents attended from grade 1-8 while 30% of the total respondents attended secondary school. About 36% of the respondents attended college education. The remaining 14% have no formal education though some of them are priests and deacons who had access to religious education.

An intensive interview is conducted by selecting 10 key informants using snow ball sampling from different stakeholders. However, the writer forgets to ask the age of informants which apparently ranges between 28-35.

**Table 4 Personal profiles of key informants<sup>7</sup>**

No	Name of key informants	Position	Sex	Interview date	Interview place	Code given
1	Shewit Asefa	Supervision in tourism cluster of Aksum	female	27/07/2003	Aksum	K1
2	Tewodros Abraham	Coordinator of tourism cluster of Aksum	Male	27/07/2003	“	K2
3	G/tsadikan Yohannis	Instructor in Aksum Business and Service College	“	26/07/2003	“	K3
4	Alemshewit G/wahid	Instructor in Aksum Business and Service College	“	26/07/2003	“	K4
5	Wedeselama Tesfay	Tourism Expert in Aksum Archaeological museum	“	27/07/2003	“	K5
6	Girmay Kahsay	Tour guide in Aksum	“	25/07/2003	“	K6
7	Dawit G/selassie	Tour guide in Aksum	“	25/07/2003	“	K7
8	Sisay Belay	Souvenir shop owner	“	25/07/2003	“	K8
9	Weldegebrial Berhe	Marketing expert in ministry of culture and tourism	“	24/07/2003	Addis Ababa	K9
10	Muluberhan	Tourism Expert	“	26/07/2003	Aksum	K10

Source: Field Survey (2011)

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religious missionaries belonging to Muslim and Protestant back ground. The writer faced the perception of great challenges to find the right respondents to fill the questionnaires. The writer also found it difficult to involve communities who are not direct participants of tourism related sectors.

<sup>7</sup> All years and dates listed above in table 4.1 is in Ethiopian calader

## 4.2 Community awareness on Tourism and Community Based Ecotourism

It has been indicated that Aksum is one of the principal tourist attractions in Ethiopia. It is relatively well known and promoted to the outside world (Tsegay, 2005:20). The city of Aksum and the kingdom of the same name enjoyed great fame during the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium. However, the town has not made an effective use of its magnificent history and heritages partly for lack of scientific and systematic tourist promotions.

Knowledge in tourism and the availability of basic facilities have a direct correlation with the level of participation and involvement of the local communities. Local communities should be aware of the concept of tourism. The current study found that 80% of the total respondents claimed to have adequate knowledge on the concept of tourism, though they fail to differentiate the tourist from excursionist, traveler, and visitor. Another 20% of the respondents claimed to have inadequate knowledge on the concepts and benefits of tourism. One may safely deduce that most respondents lacked adequate knowledge about tourism.

**Table 5 Community Awareness on Tourism**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid percent</b>	<b>Cumulative percent</b>
Yes	28	80	80.0	80
No	7	20	20.0	100
Total	35	100	100	

Source: Field Survey (2011)

This writer has consulted some key informants to assess their reaction on community awareness on tourism. One key informant K4<sup>8</sup> claimed that Aksum community lacks adequate awareness on the concepts and benefits of tourism. He added that communities have not yet participated in tourism related activities such as in planning, decision making process and management of the

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<sup>8</sup> K4 is a code given to Ato Alemshewit is tourism professional and instructor in Aksum Business and Service College

sector. This in turn yields weak tourist- host relationships. Supporting this idea, another key informant K2<sup>9</sup> said that the local community lacks basic awareness on tourism simply link tourism with the flow of white people to their areas.

Community awareness on CBE is also the other issue that the writer would like to assess. It is obvious that community plays active role on CBE developments and their awareness is very important. From the selected respondents 50% said that they have knowledge on the meaning of CBE; but fail to differentiate CBE with that of community-based tourism, ecotourism, nature based tourism and other terms of alternative tourism. The remaining 50% of the respondents said that the term CBE is rather new for them.

Concerning community awareness, the writer observes that the community lacks proper and adequate knowledge on tourism and CBE. The respondents claim that Culture and Tourism Agency of Tigray regional state and Tourism Cluster of Aksum didn't help them to build their capacity. The community also shows their readiness to participate in training so as to benefit from tourism and improve their livelihood option. The writer's discussion with the office's expert shows trainings were already conducted to the selected community members in collaboration with higher educational institutions to build up their capacity. However, such trainings are lacked in up scaling.

Another major issue to fill the gap, K2 points on that tourism cluster of Aksum is preparing tourism awareness creation programs in churches, schools, and markets; preparing and distributing leaf lets to the community; establishing local tour clubs; and preparing trainings in collaboration with the higher education and World Bank projects to build the capacity of the community.

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<sup>9</sup> K2 is a code given to key in formant Ato Tewedros Abreham

**Table 6 Community Awareness on CBE**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid percent</b>	<b>Cumulative percent</b>
Yes	18	51.42	51.42	51.42
No	17	48.58	48.58	100
Total	35	100	100	

Source: Field Survey (2011)

### **4.3 Some Aspects of Ecotourism in Aksum**

Aksum is endowed with great potentials of ecotourism resources that can promote to the world ecotourism market. It is highly gifted with historical, cultural, archaeological and natural heritages. Some of the most important heritages will be discussed below.

Natural resources endowments of a given area can be an important potential for ecotourism development. Regarding natural ecotourism potentials of Aksum, most of the respondents assume Aksum to have limited natural potentials that can attract the attention of ecotourists. The writer also shares this idea and he observed that in the study area there is limited natural features such as the panoramic view of the city its water reservoirs Mai Shum<sup>10</sup>, the hills of Mai Qoho, the plateau of Bete Gyiorgs, and the landscapes of Aksum and its surroundings.

In terms of cultural potentials, all of the respondents said that Aksum is endowed with immense cultural wealth that can attract millions of tourists. The respondents even stressed Aksum assumes immense wealth of cultural resources in Ethiopia that can draw the attention of domestic and international tourists. The writer also observes that Aksum is home to diverse cultural, historical and archaeological tourist resources. So far, very little archaeological remains have been uncovered while much more heritages awaiting further investigation<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> 'Mai' means water in the local language while 'Shum' means leader. So it means the chief's water

<sup>11</sup> It is to be noted that little is known concerning the wealth of Aksum including its history and culture.

The study area has a host of cultural, historical, and archaeological features that can contribute to ecotourism development. Complete discussions of these resources are beyond this study. However, based on written documents, writer's personal observation and informants' one may briefly review major tourist products of Aksum including the stelae parks, royal cemeteries, churches, and museums<sup>12</sup>.

**Stelae Park:** The town of Aksum is home to over 1,000 stelae in four stelae fields most of which being fallen on the ground. These stelae (obelisks) were apparently erected as funeral monuments. Spatially the smallest group is located to the south of *Mai Qoho*<sup>13</sup>, in the vicinity of the Tomb of Bazen. The largest group is situated to the immediate north of the town along a riverbed; part of which is called *Mai Hejja*. This group can be roughly divided into two sections, a northern group of monoliths in the area named *Geza*<sup>14</sup> *Ugmai*<sup>15</sup>, and the southern main group of stelae where the large carved ones are found. The fourth stelae field is located to the west of the town south of Dengur Palace ruins, and known as the Gudit Stelae Field (Alaud, 1985).

The Aksumite stelae can also be further classified roughly into three categories according to the technology of their workmanship. The first type is roughly hewn and oblong in shape with plain surface. The second type of Aksumite stelae consists of hewn slab with smooth surface and rectangular section with around top up to 21m high. The last type stelae are seven in number and are the most sophisticated and decorated ranging between 15 and 33m high (Tekle Hagos, 2001). In general the steles range from very rough and simple stones to massive sculpted towers which represent high multi-storeyed palaces. Such huge monuments represent an enormous outlay of labor and skill, particularly in the most elaborate specimens (Alaud, 1985).

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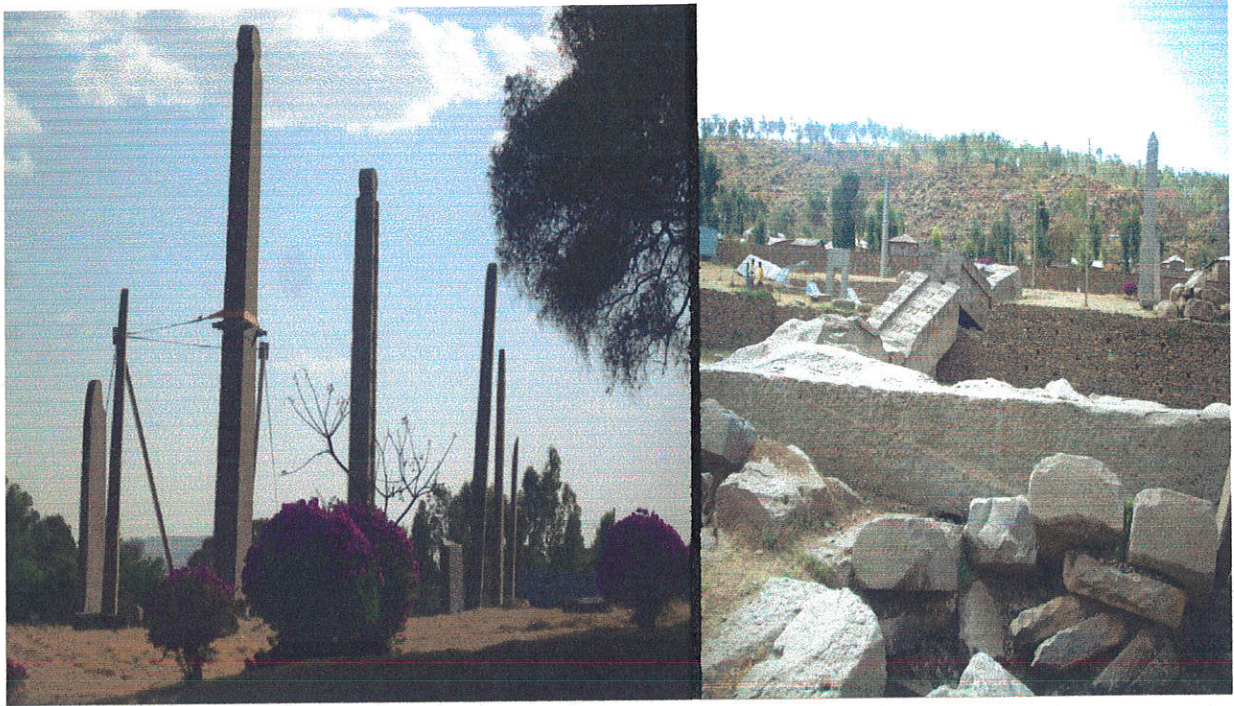
<sup>12</sup> It is important to know that these mentioned below are not the only resources but it is a bird's eyes view on some of the resources.

<sup>13</sup> Mai Qoho is a mountainous place found in the east of main stelae park

<sup>14</sup> Geza means house in the local language

<sup>15</sup> It is a name of a person given for place because there was a person lived there according to legend

**Figure 2 Stelae Park**



Source: Field survey of 2011

**Royal Cemetery:** now called the Temple of Winds (*Nefas Mewcha*), its capstone is some 11x 6.5 by 1 to 1.5 meters, and weights about 360 tones (Girma, 1997). The corridor size is 1.9 by 16.7m. Archaeologists call as Mausoleum to appreciate its design and artistic style. This was excavated by David Philipson (መ·ሉ·ወርቅ , 1996: 114).

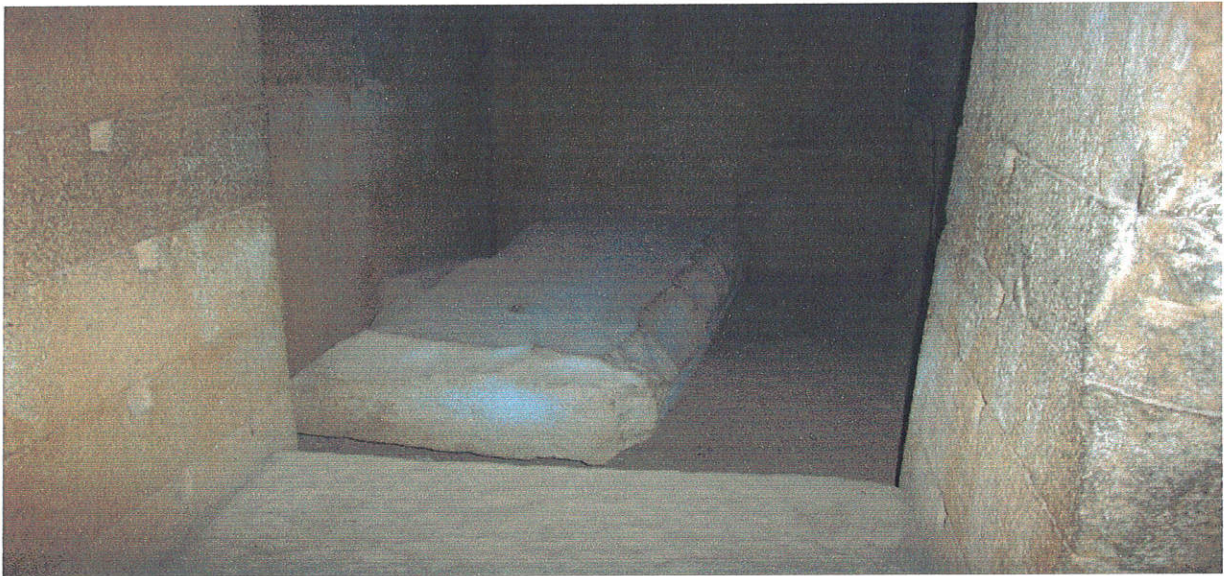
**Figure 3 Temple of winds (Nefas mewcha)**



Source: Field Survey of 2011

**The Cemetery of Romhay:** (Tomb of the False Door), is discovered during the excavations of 1974 and its door is a single sculpted stone portal. It is located 65meters west of the tomb of the royal cemetery. A local legend around Aksum held for years that there are rooms and a place beneath the fallen stelae. This proved right in 1993 when an excavation was conducted and discovered a tomb having 10 rooms and a central corridor. The entrance to the right of the standing Stelae is called *Yeshekla Keste demena* (rainbow like arched door bricks) (Girma, 1997). A descent of 22 steps leads to a royal tomb called the ‘Tomb of the Brick Arches’. Many relics were found in this tomb like ivory plaques decorated with wine leaves (*Ibid*).

**Figure 4 Partial view of King Remhay cemetery**



Source: Field Survey of 2011

**The Tombs of Bazen:** This is found at the foot hills of *Mai Qoho* and is identified as the cemetery of Aksumite kings in use for a long period of time before and after Christ (*Ibid*). King Bazen reportedly reigned from about 8 BC to 9 AD (በላይ ግደይ፣ 1995:48). This tomb differs from all other tombs in Aksum for its artistry. It differs from all other tombs because it made of curved rocks rather than cutting rocks.

**King Ezana Recreational Center (Ezana Park):** Ezana was an illustrious Aksumite king who reigned during the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD (*Ibid*). He had conducted series of military campaign in all directions which were consistently victorious (*Ibid*). King Ezana is known from the trilingual inscription engraved in Greek, Saba'an, and Ge'ez. Ezana called the 'King of Kings'. In his days, he was the strongest and wisest of the Aksumite king (*Ibid*). The picture posted below is situated in Ezana Park and contains many treasures like inscriptions, unfinished stelae, etc.

**Figure 5 King Ezana Recreational Parks.**



Source: Field Survey (2011)

**The Tomb of Kaleb:** king Kaleb is one of the celebrated Christian kings of Aksum who reigned from about 500 to 534 AD. Before his death, he prepared his own tomb and retired to a monastic life at the monastery of Abune Pentelewon north east of Aksum (Girma, 1997). The tomb is found some 2kms north east of the main stela field. It is amongst the latest Aksumite royal tombs. All are composed of the same granite stone constructed without mortar (NAR, 1995:66-67).

**The Tomb of Gebre Meskel:** Gebre Meskel is the son of Kaleb. He succeeded his father, and reigned from 534-554 AD. His tomb that contains five rooms is 19 steps down from west to east, lying besides Kaleb's tomb. One stone is engraved with a cross and this tomb was excavated by German expedition in 1906 (*ibid*).

**Ta'akha Maryam:** In the past century, many buried palaces, churches and royal tombs have been uncovered, but much remains to be found. One of them was Ta'akha Maryam. This palace is found in a surface area of some 275X390 meters. In 1936, Fascist Italian invaders destroyed the palace as they constructed the main road directly through it (*ibid*).

**Zege Dur (Dengur):** this was the second settlement of ancient Aksum after Béite Giorgis, and located west of the present town. Two archaeological studies suggest Dengur as historical and ancient part of the town. There are a collection of ruined rooms and palaces. The palace has 52 rooms. The joint archaeological expedition of the Germans, the Italians, the French and the British where uncovered Dengur in 1906. That archaeological expedition recovered additional heritages like pottery, gold, aluminum, nickel and other objects such as coins, which were later taken to the National Museum in Addis Ababa. Dengur palace has many historical sites in its vicinity, including Abba Selama's cave, 'Queen of sheba's palace', 'the Grave of Menilik Meziber' and 'the Tomb of Ethiopis' (*Ibid*).

**Figure 6 Queen Sheba Palace**



Source: field survey of 2011

**St. Marry Tsion Church (old):** This church is the holiest church in Ethiopian Christianity. It was first built in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, shortly after the advent of Christianity in Ethiopia. The

older church building rebuilt in 1635 after it was destroyed by Muslim armies. It has the status of monastery and women are not allowed to enter into the compound. In 1964, emperor Hailelassie I constructed a second church open to both sexes. (Paolo Chiari, 2009:119). At the east end of this compound is the small-square plan domed Ark Chapel, also known as the Treasury of the chapel of the Tablets of Moses, *Enda Sellata Muse*. Both the building and the area around it are off-limits and carefully watched by guardians. Its task is to house and protect the Ark of the Covenant. Generally, whether it contains the famous Ark is an issue that puzzled historians and passionate researchers, enshrouding the church in an internationally mystery (*Ibid*). Figure 7 shows the newly constructed churches of Maryam Tsion. The building in the right side is believed by (local legends) as the sanctuary of the Ark of the Covenant.

**Figure 7 St. Marry Tsion Church**



Source: Field Survey (2011)

**The Coronation of David (Menagesha):** Aksum was the place of coronation. For over five millennia, Kings had to be crowned there in order to be officially recognized (David Phillipson, 2003). There was a fixed place called Menagesha (coronation place) used for coronatio ceremony. When one sovereign ruler dies and another succeeds him, his ceremonial process was

held in Menagesha. Particularly, according to oral tradition since the coronation of Menilik I, the process was modified and became more attractive than before.

According to the book, known as the '*Kibre Negest*', during the reign of Menilik I, Ethiopia was divided into twelve administrative regions ruled by twelve kings. Issues of government and litigation were being held at the Menagesha. The wise men of the city judged cases at Menagesha. For this purpose, Menagesha is divided into four sections. This was also the place where the king was ordained, anointed with holy oil, and finally seated upon the throne of David (Munro-Hay, 1991).

### **Murada kal (the Revelation of God's word)**

St. Yared was amongst the celebrated and creative chanters (composers) of church music in Ethiopia. He was born, grownup and educated in Aksum. He invented the church music notes and composed the five basic books known as (*Tsewatiwe Zema or Deggwa*) which is still in use for services within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (Girma, 1997). On his return from Mai Kirah, about 4 kilometers from Aksum, a spirit was reportedly revealed to St. Yared. He then wrote several chanting books which are still used in church services today.

Infact, one of Yared's books is used in the daily church services. The themes of the book concern the acts of angels, Saints, martyrs, the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ and feasts and fasting. St. Yared wrote the focus upon the entire books at Daero Ela<sup>16</sup> also called *Murade Kal* (the place of Revelation of God's Word from Heaven). *Murada kal* is a place situated at the heart of the town of Aksum (*Ibid*).

### **Debre Konatsil Abba Likanos**

The hill east of king Kaleb's tomb is called Debre Konatsil Abba Likanos. Debre Konatsil means 'fox hill' was founded by Abba Likanos, one of the Nine Saints, who came to Ethiopia at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. When the Nine Saints arrived, king Alamida was the king of Aksum. The Nine Saints first settled at Bete Ketin west of Daero Ela. Later, all the Nine Saints spread east ward and established their own independent monasteries.

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<sup>16</sup> In the ancient time, legends show that Daero Ela was used to conduct meetings

**Debre Pentelewon Monastery:** It is located 2.5 km east of Aksum and identified by a top pointed hill. Debre Pentelewon means torture place used for prayers. The monastery was built by one of the Nine Saints, called Abune Pentelewon, who came from the Byzantine Empire.

**The Archaeological Museum:** The museum is adjacent to the Stelae Park. It was established around 1980 to preserve and display the antiquities found mostly by the archaeological missions that have worked in the area since the 1970s. Until recently, the collection was housed in the church compound. From there, it was moved to the present location in 2007, following tenure dispute with the religious authorities and because of the need for a larger and more suitable display (chiari, 2009:83). Given Aksum's importance as the center of archaeological excavations, this museum has very few heritages and it is not well organized and displayed. For detailed information on archaeological excavations and findings of Aksumite kingdom, see annex 2.

#### **4.4 Religious Festivals and Carnivals Celebrated in Aksum**

In addition to the numerous cultural, historical and archaeological heritages of Aksum; there are many religious festivals that can draw the attention of tourists across Ethiopia and throughout the world. The following are some of the religious ceremonies in Aksum that have national and international significance to tourism.

**Hidar Tsion:** It is warmly celebrated every November 31. During this celebration many religious tourists/pilgrims attend the celebration from all corners of the country and the world. According to Belay Giday, Hidar Tsion has very significant meaning in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church; it is in that day Menelik I reportedly brought the Ark of the Covenant (*Tabote Tsion*) from Israel to Ethiopia (Aksum). November 31 was also historically significant in that Abba Selama, the first Bishop of Aksum had preached the Gospel in Aksum. This celebration is so magnificent and attended by tens of thousands of pilgrims from all over Ethiopia. This celebration by itself has its own value for optimization of tourism in Aksum.

**Ethiopian Epiphany:** this is also one of the festivals colorfully celebrated in Aksum next to Hidar Tsion. Ethiopian epiphany is celebrated every January 20/21. Legends also tell that, in the

distant past during this day the replica of the Ark of the Covenant is used to be taken to the place of Baptism at Mai Shum. This was the only day, during which the congregation had the chance to see the Ark of the Covenant. Irrespective of the authenticity of the story, in these days, apparently many tourists travel to observe the celebration when the replica of the Ark of the Covenant is being displayed.

**Palm Sunday:** Palm Sunday is celebrated one week before Ethiopian Easter and warmly celebrated in Aksum than any other places of the country.

**Ashenda:** is one of the festivals celebrated in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and mostly celebrated by women every August<sup>30</sup><sup>17</sup>. There are also other cultural and religious festivals warmly celebrated in Aksum such as New Year, Meskel (the finding of the true cross), the wedding ceremony and its musical instruments etc.

#### **4.5 Community Participation in CBE**

In chapter two of this work, it was stated that community participation is an essential component of CBE. Against this backdrop, this section analyzes and discusses the extent of the community participation in Aksum. The writer has reviewed the issue of local participation and its application to tourism and/or CBE development with particular emphasis to the study area. As cited above participation can be divided into two: individual and group participation. Accordingly the writer has employed separate questionnaires to determine the level of community participation individually or collectively.

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<sup>17</sup> Note that Ashenda is celebrated in August 22 in the whole of Tigray. But in Aksum it is celebrated 8days later in August 30.

**Table 7 The status of community participation in CBE and/or tourism**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid percent</b>	<b>Cumulative percent</b>
yes	14	40	40	40
No	21	60	60	100
Total	35	100	100	

Source: Field survey (2011)

From the above table 7, it is found out that 60% of total respondents are not currently participating in CBE development and even in tourism at all. The remaining 40% of respondents said that they are participating more individually than collectively. However, ecotourism projects normally encompass group participation. Table 8 reveals the status of community participation as a collective group.

**Table 8 Community participation as a group in tourism and/or CBE**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid percent</b>	<b>Cumulative percent</b>
yes	4	10	10	10
No	31	90	90	100
Total	35	100	100	

Source: Field Survey (2011)

From the above table 8, 10% of the total respondents stressed that they participated as collective group under an umbrella association called, Aksum Tour Guides Association<sup>18</sup>. They added that, by establishing such an association they actively participated in tourism and community driven

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<sup>18</sup> Tour Guide Association is an association established by local guides and their tasks are providing local guide services to tourists.

initiatives. The remaining 90% of respondents claim they never participated as a collective group. From the data, the writer observes that there is a significant gap over the extent of community participation in Aksum. This calls for concerted efforts of stakeholders to address the situation.

The attendant question is to establish the reasons for the lower degree of community participation in CBE and/or tourism. Attempts were made to assess explanations based on respondents' feedback. In this respect, the respondents and key informants listed down different reasons such as, communities' inadequate awareness about CBE, lack of funding and financial institutions that provide loans, absence of CBE initiatives, communities' skepticism to participate as a group, absence of coherent policy and clear development strategies, and problems related to empowerment, etc.

Based on the above reasons, two key informants- K3<sup>19</sup> and K4<sup>20</sup>- stressed community lack of awareness on the benefits of CBE. They added that even those who consider themselves familiar with the concepts of CBE linked it with nature-based tourism. Meanwhile, respondents claim that CBE cannot be properly applied in Aksum in the absence of enough natural resources. At least 34% of total respondents attribute their failure to the absence of funding and financial institutions encouraging CBE. Neither grants nor loans appear to be easily accessible for such a group. One of the key informants, K1<sup>21</sup> shared this idea and stressed that local communities are facing dire financial shortages. Apparently, financial institutions are afraid of extending loans for communities because no one can take responsibilities to return such loans on behalf of a collective group.

On the other hand, 12% of the respondents said that they are skeptical on CBE participation as group and they prefer to participate individually. They believe that participating as herds can instigate disagreements and conflicts which in turn lead to business failure. In conformity with this idea, another respondent (R13<sup>22</sup>) justified the case by a local proverb 'ገብረት ፈረቆ'

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<sup>19</sup> K3 is a code given to Ato G/tsadikan Yohannis as cited above in table 5.1

<sup>20</sup> Already cited above

<sup>21</sup> K1 is a code given to key informant 1 for Shewit Assefa according to the interview

<sup>22</sup> R13 is code given to respondent 13

**እግዚአብሔር ዘይምርቅ**,’ which literally means “even God doesn’t bless a shared property.” He used this metaphor to explain that individually owned enterprise stands better chance of success than collective enterprises. Accordingly, one can only engage in group owned projects as a last resort if he fails to perform individually. Regarding the underlying reason for this, one key informant K2<sup>23</sup>, noticed that Aksum’s community lacks team-work sprit and cooperation. Particularly, those who are already involved in tourism sector do not like to work with those who are not. I have had a personal experience as an instructor in Aksum Business and Service College I had been giving training to the members of tour Association. In the course, I observed lack of transparency and mutual rivalries among members of the tour guide association. This is inimical the team work, characteristics of CBE.

On the other hand, 10% of the respondents believe that there are no community-based initiatives in Aksum that can integrate the community as a group. For them, it is very difficult to launch such initiatives, mainly due to lack of awareness on the tourism and CBE. Moreover, lack of capital would hinder to realize such initiatives. A key informant, K2 does not support this claim. Accordingly, the World Bank proposed two projects souvenir and handicrafts and traditional customs and styles, which can boost community participation and benefits.

Probably, a more formidable challenge to CBE application is the absence of coherent policy and clear development strategy. This was a basic problem not only in Aksum but also at the regional and federal levels. Let alone policies tailored to CBE which is the new term for the world, Ethiopia endorsed its national tourism policy just in 2009. This suggests Ethiopia was running tourism development without tourism policy and directions. Thus, the absence of CBE policy guidelines and strategy led to absence of institutional structures that can guide community participation.

Participation should ideally lead to empowerment of those affected by the decisions they are participating in (Garrod, 2001:10). However, the terms ‘participation’ and ‘empowerment’ tend to be blurred from the points of individual interpretation. Coming to community empowerment in the study area, about 34% of the respondents complained that they are not empowered

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<sup>23</sup> Already cited above

economically, psychologically, socially and politically to participate as a collective group. They claim that since the communities are the owner of natural and cultural attractions, the government should empower them to control their local resources. If the government fails to do so, local communities may not cooperate in conservation efforts and the term benefit sharing and sustainability becomes questionable.

Garnering community participation in CBE is not an easy task partly because tourism is heavily reliant on the market and public resources such as national parks and cultural heritages. The experiences of CBE in developing countries show that a top-down planning and development approach with limited community participation cannot benefit local communities. But to rectify such defects the government should empower the community to participate in planning, decision making and managing eco-sites and natural resources including protected areas, cultural and historical heritages. Community participation can be realized by introducing bottom-up planning and development approaches that establish mandatory community involvement. In this regard, the following diagram proposes different stages that communities of Aksum can participate in planning and managing ecotourism projects (adapted from Garrod et al., 2001:15).

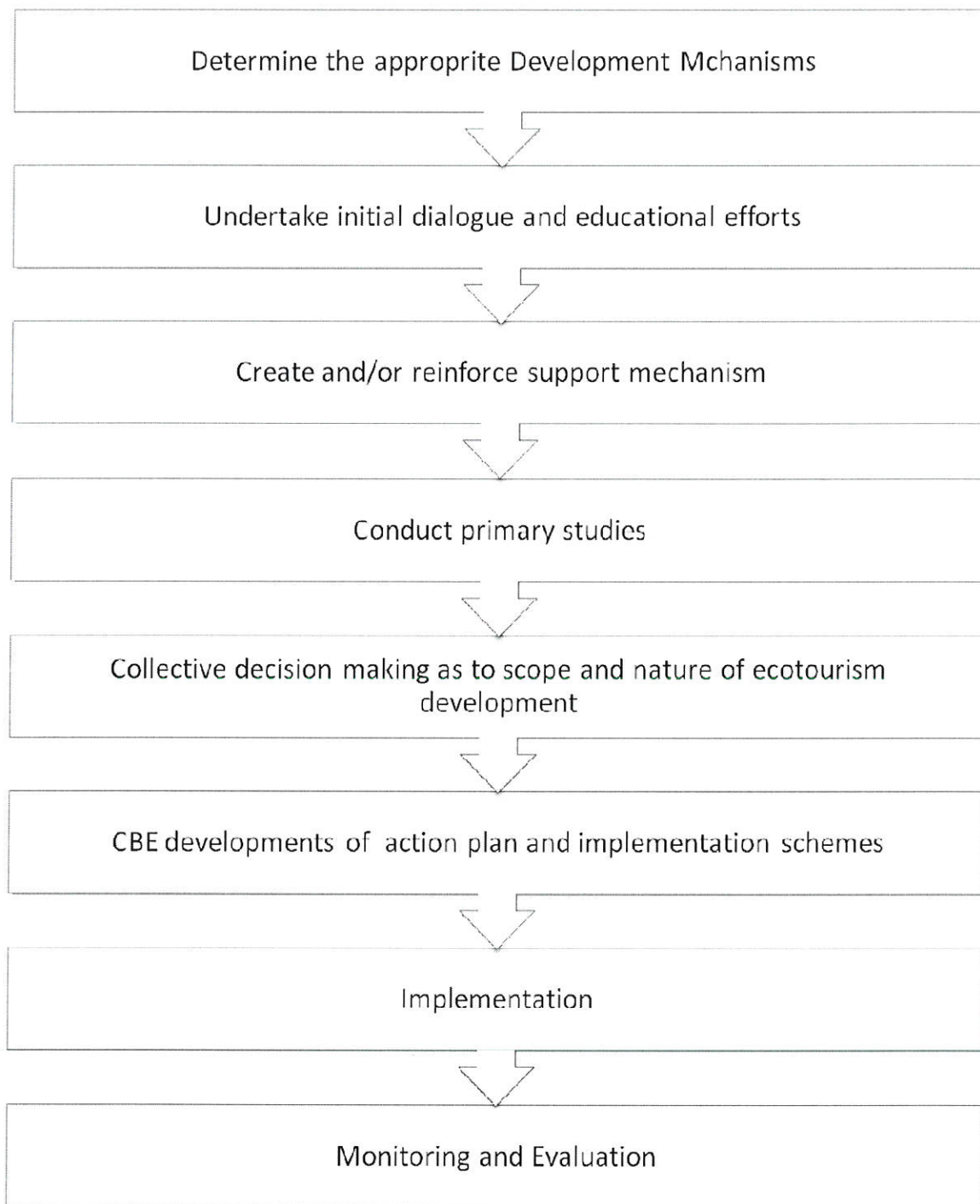


Diagram 1 Stages of local community participation in planning and managing Ecotourism projects; a revised model (Garrod *et al.*, 2001).



## 4.6 Models of CBE Development

As cited above, problems related to community awareness, community empowerment, lack of clear policies and strategies, absence of institutional structures and project loans constrained CBE. If such problems were addressed, the community can participate in the following options of CBE development.

1. Locally owned private tourism businesses such as tour operations, hotels, lodges, guest house souvenir shops, and restaurants etc. employing local people. Although a useful form of employment that can accommodate several people, it is still very important to watch out the private sectors against its temptations for poor wages.
2. Local individuals should produce and sell handicraft products to visitors directly or through tourism businesses. This has often proved to be a good way of spreading benefits within a community.
3. Private tourism businesses (internally or externally owned) being granted a concession to operate by the community, in return for a fee and a share of revenue could attain higher community involvement.
4. Individuals, with links to the broader community, running their own small tourism businesses. Success can vary and lack of skill and tourism knowledge has often proved a major weakness in Aksum.
5. Communally owned and run enterprises: Sometimes these enterprises suffer from lack of proper organization and incentives, but this can be overcome with time (Denman, 2001:11). This faces many challenges such as lack of team-work, limited or no support from financial institutions, disagreement among group members but such challenges can be solved through time and experience.

All the above forms of ecotourism initiatives that involve communities tend to exist within the current tourism activity in Ethiopia. It can roughly be manifested under three major categories/models.

- Community based ecotourism
- Community-private based ecotourism
- Private based ecotourism (Kebede, 2007:5)

#### **4.6.1 Model One: Community based ecotourism**

In this model, communities actively participated as a collective group of people and this type of model is known as '*participatory model.*' The whole community is involved in the project in providing accommodations, car renting, guiding and providing meals and other activities where the communities can take part actively (*Ibid*). NGOs, like World Bank, GTZ and higher institutions, can support the community financially and technically. The higher educational institutions can play crucial roles in capacity building spheres for the service providers. The income from the ecotourism initiatives directly goes to the individuals that provide the services. Yet, the village communities' may indirectly benefit from a community fund to support accommodation services. The income is used for community development e.g. building of school rooms, hospitals, cultural center etc.

#### **4.6.2 Model 2: Private Community-based Ecotourism**

It is jointly owned by the community or some of its members and business partners running ecotourism. The private sectors show interest to provide accommodation for the visitors, while at the same time conserving the environment. The services that the community members provide include guiding, horse renting and renting their house to tourists. NGOs and local tourism office play supportive roles in facilitating and capacity building (*Ibid*).

#### **5.6.3 Model 3: Private-based Ecotourism**

A private business exclusively owns and runs ecotourism. For the communities living in the operating area, income opportunities arise through direct employment or other income benefits like leasing of land, selling of food and souvenirs to the business or directly to tourists. Some private owned ecotourism businesses support local communities directly through community funds or donations to support sustainable development in the area. This model is not an exact

CBE form as per definition but rather a form of ecotourism, supporting community development to some extent, with little or no community participation and right of co-determination (*Ibid*).

While the three models of developing CBE and participating the community are valid, the writer believes that model one or participatory model better fits the study area-Aksum. This is mainly because it entitles the community to a full control and sustainable use of their own resources. From the outset, participation in this study means active involvement of the community as a group rather than as individuals in CBE projects.

In line with this, 95% of the respondents' ideally preferred to have direct control and involvement in ecotourism development beyond mere participation. They believe in direct participation in order to generate more income and improve their livelihood. This includes direct involvement in planning, decision making, and management of the project. The respondents also suggest that government should consolidate legal rights to land tenure because of the threats of land grabbing tendencies on the part of the private sector. Land conservation and other uses would enable local communities to influence private sector activities while still earning more income from tourism. This is also the other reason why the writer endorsed '*participatory model*' as the ideal model of tourism development for Aksum.

#### **4.7 CBE and Sustainable Development in Aksum**

Though the term 'sustainable development' was coined recently, it became the new driving force of global development (Bramwell and Lane, 1993 cited in Dowling and D.A. Fennell, 2003:3-4). Sustainable development meets present needs without compromising the needs of future generation (Jordan, 1995:166): *Ibid*). It contains two key concepts- 'needs' and 'limitations' which particularly lead to essential human needs and environmental limitations to accommodate present and future needs.<sup>24</sup>

In the review of literature of this study, sustainable development also has three dimensions such as economic, environmental and socio-cultural. In fact, CBE goes beyond current philosophy of "the overlaps between nature tourism and sustainable tourism" to encompass the social dimensions of productive organization and environmental conservation. It does more than

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<sup>24</sup> [www.iisd.org/sd/](http://www.iisd.org/sd/)

creating a series of activities to attract visitors, offering them an opportunity to interact with nature, history and culture in such a way as to make it possible to preserve or enhance the special qualities of the site and its flora and fauna. CBE is the segment of tourism undergoing the fastest growth in the world. It is a growing phenomenon in particular to the developing world (Wood, 2002: 41). It has been estimated to account for 10% - 15% of all international travel expenditure. Its figures seem to be increasing very rapidly (Abdel Meguid, 2005). Unless this growth receives careful and professional guidance, dire consequences could likely occur.

**Table 9 Ecotourism and sustainable development.**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid percent</b>	<b>Cumulative percent</b>
Ecological sustainability as the key outcome of sustainable development	7	20.0	20.0	20.0
Socio-cultural sustainability as the key outcome of sustainable development	8.75	25.0	25.0	45
Economic sustainability as the key outcome of sustainable development	8.75	25.0	25.0	70
Balancing ecological, socio-cultural and economic sustainability	11	30.0	30.0	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	

Source: Field Survey (2011)

The current study has attempted to assess the status of the various pillars of sustainable tourism development results. The question was which pillars of sustainability can bring about the best sustainable development result? Data was generated from the questionnaire through sample percentage frequency. Table 9 reveals CBE and sustainable development results in reference to the respondents.

According to the above table 9, 20% of the respondents felt ecological sustainability as the key outcome of sustainable development. They added that this type of development would be essential to ecological and physical process, biological diversity and ecosystems that are found in

Aksum. One key informant, K9<sup>25</sup>, also stressed that conservation is one of the methods of ecological sustainability that considers the needs of present and future generations. One of the respondents -R10<sup>26</sup>- also said that conservation should come first in tourism sustainability; because unless the resources are conserved, there would not be income and employment from tourism at all.

Another 25% of the respondents assume socio-cultural sustainability as the most important outcomes of sustainable tourism development. They rationalized that these types of development can increase communities control over their own lives, and conserve their social values and identity. It can also help local communities to adapt or retain their local culture. One of the respondents, R35<sup>27</sup> also supports the idea and stressed that tourism in Aksum is considerably depending on socio-cultural sustainability.

There are still others respondents who accord top priority to economic sustainability rather than socio-cultural or ecological priority in the development of ecotourism in Aksum. About 25% of total respondents felt that economic sustainability results as the most important ones which can foster efficient resources management and accommodate the needs of present and future generation's development results. They added that economic sustainability indicates that local communities are engaging in economic benefits such as in employment, operating private businesses, and foreign exchange earnings while protecting of these resources.

The remaining 30% of total respondents felt that balancing of ecological, economic and socio-cultural sustainability's are the most important sustainable development results in Aksum. K1, K2, and K3 also share this idea and they believe that equity of the three types of sustainability listed above can be the most important sustainable development results in Aksum.

#### **4.7.1 CBE and Livelihood option**

One of the most helpfulness of CBE and the ways the community benefit from CBE is that it may serve the local community around the ecotourism sites as an option of livelihood. In this

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<sup>25</sup> K9 is a code give for key informant Ato Sisay Belay, souvenir shop owner in Aksum

<sup>26</sup> R10 is a code given for respondent number ten

<sup>27</sup> R35 is a code given for respondent number35

regard, CBE can bring diverse socio-economic and environmental benefits to the community of Aksum in terms of generating foreign exchange, creating local employment, stimulating local economies, fostering peace, increased environmental awareness and education. It can also improve the quality of life of Aksum's community. Besides, CBE can contribute to poverty reduction and improve the well being of the local community. Most of the time, CBE projects are developed in small-scale and is environmentally sustainable. But appropriate management structures, as well as adequate planning, design, and building guidelines for tourism facilities are required to ensure sustainable CBE. Further, carrying capacity needs to be assessed relative to the management objectives of each area, and appropriate management and physical structures must be designed to keep the number of visitors and the visitation mode within the specific setting (Leksakundilok, 2004).

Economically, the vast majority of respondents and key informants agree that ecotourism project in Aksum can serve as a crucial livelihood option. The respondents added that, despite its smallness and seasonal character, ecotourism can deliver economic benefits on multiple levels. K10<sup>28</sup> said that CBE can generate foreign exchange earnings, increased employment opportunities, infrastructure developments and helps to diversify the local economy. One key informant, K9 also noticed that more tourists will come and hence more income could be gained by visiting historical, archaeological and cultural sites. For instance, currently tourism is contributing to improve the lives of Aksum's community by generating foreign exchange earnings and creating employment opportunities.

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<sup>28</sup> K10 is a code given to Ato Muluberhan tourism expert in tourism cluster of Aksum.

**Table 10 International and domestic tourists flow and its receipts in Aksum in the past five years (2005-2010).**

No	Year	International tourists	Receipts	Domestic tourists	Receipts	Total tourists	Total receipts
1	2005	9088	393,273.00	10801	26170.00	19,889	419,413.00
2	2006	9850	418,000.00	12200	31000,00	22,050	449,000.00
3	2007	10040	405,830.00	14564	35477.00	24,604	441,330.00
4	2008	12,360	495,627.00	16026	32661.00	28,386	528,285.00
5	2009	14,889	569,961.00	17171	51.690.00	32,060	619,651.00
6	2010	18,032	666,732.00	22356	70,392.00	38,388	737,124.00

Source: Agency of Culture and Tourism Tigray, Aksum cluster

From the above table 10, the writer observes that tourism and the newly emerging CBE will contribute towards enhancing community livelihood. Recently, domestic and international tourists who visited Aksum in 2006 grew by 9.8% from the previous year. This led to growth rate in receipts of 6.6% in the same year. In 2010, tourists who visited Aksum increased by 19.7% from the year of 2009. This led to the growth in receipts by 15.9%. These figures for different years indicate how tourism is contributing towards improving the standards of living of Aksum community. In addition to direct and indirect impacts, the sector also has its own share in reducing poverty.

There still is another story to be told with regard to tourism development in Aksum. The above receipts (table 10) suggest, tourism has a long way to go to exploit its maximum potentials in Aksum. Tourism can enhance its local economic benefits if the newly proposed projects such as community driven initiatives by World Bank are carefully implemented. Such schemes can help to raise the incomes of local community and reduce unemployment.

Table 10 shows tourist flows and its receipts over the past five years (2005-2010) have grown significantly. Yet while in the issue of benefit tend to pose controversy. For instance, the total

receipts in 2010 were 737,124.00 birr; but from this receipts how much amount of this money were distributed to the local community remains unknown. In addition to this, the writer could not find the exact figure which does not mean that these total receipts have completely gone to the community.

Taking employment opportunity as a case, tourism in Aksum is employing significant number of young people. According to the interview conducted with K2, activities listed in table 11 indicates community directly benefiting from tourism through employment in selected tourism businesses and community owned associations.

**Table 11 Numbers of people directly employed in selected areas of tourism business**

<b>NO</b>	<b>types of business</b>	<b>Number of business</b>	<b>Number of employees</b>
1	Handicrafts	250	1457
2	Hotel	33	444
3	Restaurants	13	80
4	Cafeteria	25	131
5	Tour guides	One tour guide association	52
6	Tour operation	5	15
	<b>Total</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>2179</b>

Source: Informant: Tewodros Abraham (Coordinator Tourism Cluster of Aksum)

From the above table 11, the writer observes that tourism in Aksum is benefiting individuals by generating employment. Furthermore, it shows employees who are directly involved in tourism and its indirect positive impacts may be more than the given figure. Though tourism employed considerable people, there is no guarantee against poor wages.

The writer also observes ecotourism resources available in Aksum can employ much more than the currently employed ones. Almost all respondents claim that compared to tourism resources available in Aksum numbers of local communities currently employed in tourism and related businesses are insignificant. The respondents listed several reasons for the poor utilization of tourism resources. Some of the problems are poor promotion, lack of inter and intra sectoral

linkage, lack of institutional structures that integrate local community and short length of stay of tourists. They added that host tourist relationships are not mutual upto the expected level, because of tourists length of stay is too short. According to one key informant, K10 tourist average length of stay is not more than one night because of very limited number of tourist facilities and services. This also has its own drawbacks on host-tourist relationships. R12 further claim those average tourists spending are limited because tourists tend to visit Aksum during their last day when they already devoured their money in other Ethiopian tourist sites.

#### **4.7.2 Socio-cultural impacts of Ecotourism**

Ecotourism in Aksum may have corresponding socio-cultural impacts important to understand the market (Herbig and Hara, 1997: 231-236). It is important for the revival of ancient festivals, and restoration of cultural heritages and authenticity. The great majority of respondents (93%) approached claimed that cultural benefits could be derived from ecotourism in Aksum. For them, desirable changes of introducing modern values in political, social and development issues etc and discarding unwanted or harmful values would be important for local people's wellbeing.

#### **4.7.3 Environmental impacts of Ecotourism**

Ecotourism's primary appeal as a conservation and development tool is that it can, in theory, provide local economic benefits while also maintaining ecological integrity through low-impact, non-consumptive use of local resources (Stem et al, 2003: 387). It is often claimed that ecotourism activities are environmentally magnificent (Wall cited Leksakundilok, 2004:132), that has implications for sustainable tourism, especially related to the conservation and ecotourism. Stressing the impacts of ecotourism to guard biodiversity and ecosystem functions in developing countries, Gossling notes: "the positive development of ecotourism depends on successful strategies of to limit tourist numbers, inform and educate both locals and visitors, and to manage and control the area efficiently although the requirements of ecotourism is extremely difficult" (Gossling, 1999 cited in Leksakundilok, 2004:132)

There are diverse opportunities in which local communities could benefit from ecotourism in Aksum. It can offer new opportunities in protecting their natural resources. According to the field survey conducted in Aksum, the vast majority of the respondents stated that ecotourism can have significant contribution for environmental protection and

maintenance and conservation of both natural and socio-cultural resources. They added that one of the main efforts of ecotourism is that it encourages individual efforts and attract foreign exchange while protecting the environment. This includes encouraging small-scale infrastructure construction.

According to the interview conducted in Aksum, the key informant- K3- stressed that ecotourism can generate vital revenue to support the management of Aksum's natural areas and conservations of its main tourist attractions. He added that ecotourism can provide a strong incentive for the establishment of protected areas and raise awareness among local people on the value of their natural environment and wildlife. This in turn encourages adoption of /adherence to sustainable resource use practices.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Conclusions

The whole idea of Alternative Tourism as development orientation, ecotourism as development model and community tourism as strategic approaches are all about sustainability. Aksum has sites with historical, archaeological, cultural and natural features that can effectively be utilized as resources for the development of ecotourism. In a poor and environmentally degraded region like Tigray, such tourist resources can stimulate economic development. In addition, following the basic principles of ecotourism, the development of the tourist sector could become an avenue of securing the viability of history, culture, traditional knowledge and skills.

Ecotourism can harmonize both the interests of host community (to satisfy their own needs) while maintaining the ecological sustainability of the ecosystem. Historical and cultural heritages are also increasingly becoming crucial tourist products. Having diverse tourism products, Aksum has promising grounds for the development of ecotourism that can serve as livelihood options and contribute to poverty reduction through conservation, employment creation, revenue generation, and the funding of development projects. Ecotourism could also act as a development vehicle to enhance the local communities' capacity through training, education and awareness that will improve the human resource base.

Generally, sustainable tourism, and its subset ecotourism, has been cited by an increasing number of leading world experts as a sustainable enterprise industry that can meet various goals serving as livelihood option, poverty alleviation and natural conservation, while at the same time contributing directly to income generation of the rural poor (Wood; 2005:5). Therefore, it is believed that ecotourism projects in the study area may have a paramount significance to tackle the prevailing challenges of environmental degradation which is, at least partly, caused by the poverty situation. CBE could play a pivotal role in environmental education for local people as well as visitors. The local people may benefit directly or indirectly through employment opportunities and community development projects, such as education, health care, infrastructure etc funded by the revenue generated. Besides, they will play a role in promoting local cultural and traditional values in the short run, and hopefully human rights and democratic development

in a long run. As community-based ecotourism development can create employment opportunities, generates revenue for environmental conservation and development projects, this will contribute for poverty reduction. And poverty reduction will in turn contribute to environmental conservation. To sumup, CBE could result in sustainable development for Aksum.

To develop CBE in Aksum there are different models. The appropriate model to go seems to be a form of CBE securing the local people direct control and community participation in the management and development of projects. Although CBE might not be perfect, it will help to secure employment opportunities, and revenues that could be used for conservation and development projects. The main advantage of CBE is that it will promote a sense of ownership and active participation among the local communities. But concerted efforts should be done in to raise knowledgeable communities before implementing an ecotourism project in the district.

The necessary historical, cultural, and archaeological and natural resources available in Aksum can attract potential and actual tourists. The attitude of the local communities are positive towards CBE development could be positive as long as local communities actively participated in tourism related activities. It is possible to conclude that CBE can be a tool for sustainable development in Aksum and can contribute for the well being of the local community in a much better way than currently.

## **5.2 Recommendation**

As it was observed from the study population still there is a very low attention to disseminate the necessary information and give training to the local communities. It has never been considered as a big contributing factor to the overall economic development. Therefore, CBE could make a major difference in Aksum by enhancing the role of the government, local communities and technical upgrading than it appears.

### **5.2.1 Role of the Government in Developing CBE**

- The government should consider ecotourism as one of the critical factors for economic development and be committed to enhance the economic developments of Aksum.

- Assuring integration of the national, regional, local and public-private efforts towards ecotourism development.
- Set proper empowerment mechanisms and incentives for the local communities.
- Assuring local community participation in planning, decision making process, and in ecotourism projects from the very beginning.
- Set proper incentives for local and international investors who would like to invest on CBE and fully guide and support their activities with simple or no bureaucracies.
- Encourage NGOs and other funding institutions to provide loans on interest free or low interest rate on CBE projects.
- Making the communities aware and understand the benefits of ecotourism to maximize its outcomes in a civilized manner.
- Allocation of necessary support for the local community to develop their resources and benefit from the sector.
- Formulating policies and strategies that guide ecotourism and formulating of clear institutional structure that provides clear information where, when and at what level local communities can participate in developing ecotourism projects and identifying the roles to be played by the local community.

**5.2.2. Awareness creation:** - One of the major activities to make ecotourism as a force of change is by promoting community livelihood through intensive tourism awareness creation programs at grass root level. The communities should be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of CBE in particular. This includes the importance of preservation and conservation of heritages, participation of the community as collective groups to develop and run tourism, appraising the psychological relations of host-tourist, providing proper service and hosting tourists properly etc. The government should make available financial institutions that provide loans and financial support to community derived initiatives particularly in tourism.

**5.2.3. Infrastructure and Services:-** Expansions of infrastructure and services that can accommodate tourists and increase their length of stay. Now adays, there are significant improvements of roads and infrastructure in Aksum but the service rendering sectors such as hotels and telecommunication are still lagging behind and needs high attention of both government and private sectors.

#### **5.2.4. Training and Creating skills to the local communities**

Local communities are not aware of the philosophies of ecotourism itself. This denies them significant incomes due to their awareness. Thus, they have to be trained on how to develop and run CBE projects and how to produce attractive and portable gift materials. Organizing some entertainment programs for tourist consumptions and promoting the potential market may also be useful.

Lastly due attention should be given for those communities who would like to involve in community driven initiative such as weavers, smith and others. Those community groups have skill and knowledge to produce handicrafts and other tourist products but there is some negative perceptions that isolates them and not used their skills.

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10) If your answer for question no 9 is yes in what way? Specify:

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11) If your answer for question No 9 is also yes are these benefits fairly distributed in the village?

Yes  No

12) Does tourism contributing to positive community development?

Yes  no

13) If your answer for question No 12 yes explain in what way

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13) Is CBE and/or tourism can contribute to the sustainable development of Aksum

Yes  No

14) If your answer for question 'No 13 is yes' specify in what way tourism is contributing to the conservation of the local cultures?

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15) Is tourism contributing to the conservation of the natural resources of Aksum?

Yes  No

16) Does any member of your household involve in tourism related activities?

Yes  No

17) If your answer to question No.15 is yes, can you compare income generated from tourism and other types of jobs?

Yes  No

18) Are you familiar with the meaning of community based ecotourism?

Yes  No

19) Are there community based tourism organizations in your village?

Yes  No

20) If your answer to question No. 19 is yes, who is taking the initiatives for their establishment?

Local community

Government

Nongovernmental organizations

Private business

If others specify \_\_\_\_\_

22) If there are community based ecotourism organizations in your village, has your life been changed since the establishment of the organization?

Yes  No

22) Do the community you live participate in any tourism activities?

Yes  No

23) If yes, in what way?

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24. If your answer for question No 22 is no list the main problems

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

24) Does community based ecotourism serve as livelihood option for you?

Yes  No

25) Can you compare the benefit between community-based ecotourism with that of other types of tourism to the local community?

Yes

No

26. Can Community Based ecotourism contributes to sustainable development?

Yes

No

28. Which pillars of sustainability can provide the most important results?

Economic sustainability

Socio-cultural sustainability

Ecological sustainability

With regard to question no 20 put your justification

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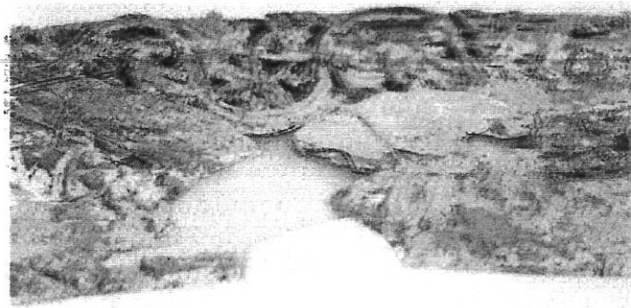
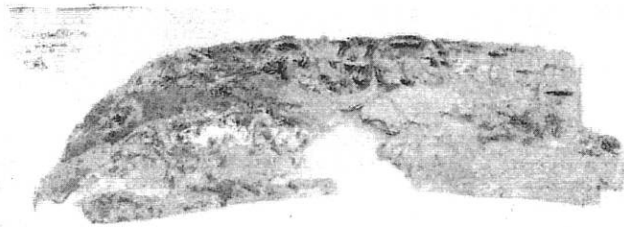
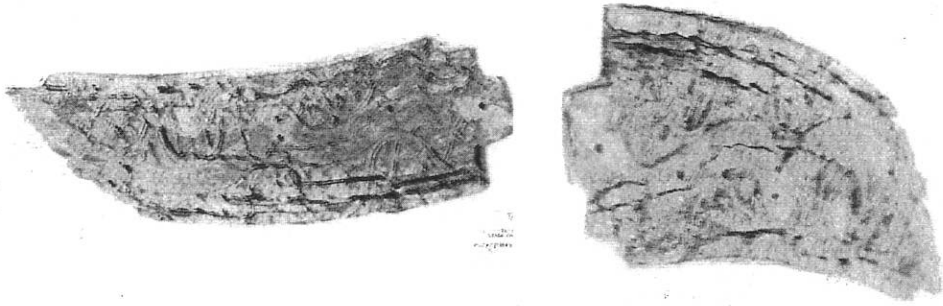
### Section three Interview Guide

1. Why tourism is not integrated to the local livelihood of Aksum community?
2. Are communities participated in tourism related activities?
3. What development model fits to increase the level of community participation?
4. Is there any proposed CBE project in Aksum?
5. Aksum is registered in UNESCO. What advantage can be gain from this international fame?
6. What mechanisms should be taken place to encourage community participation in tourism.

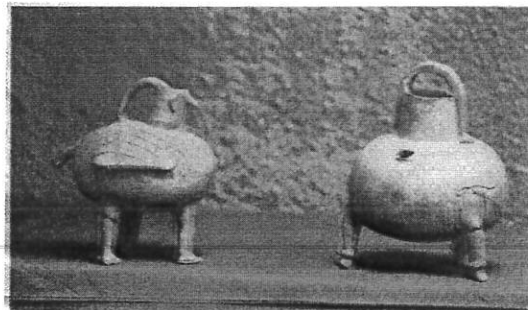
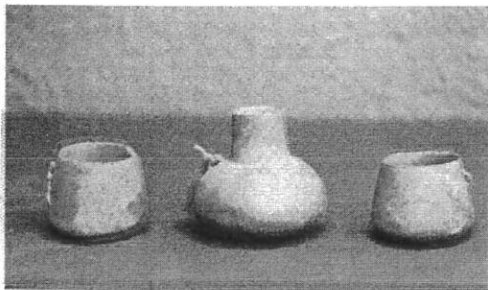
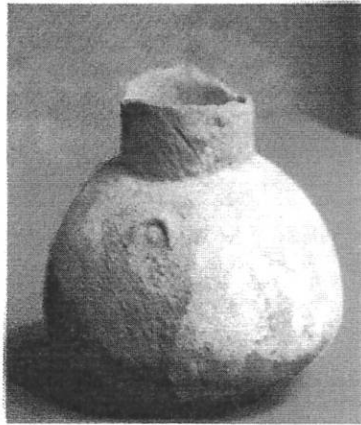
**Annex 2**

**Aksum archaeological resources**

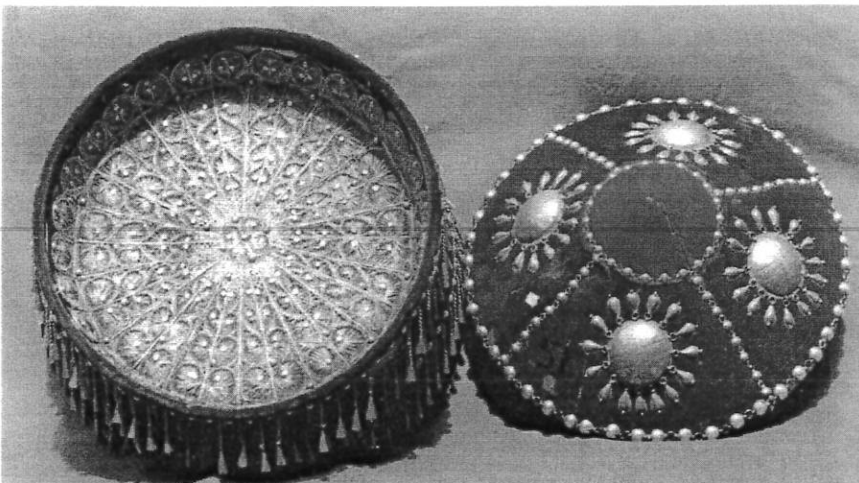
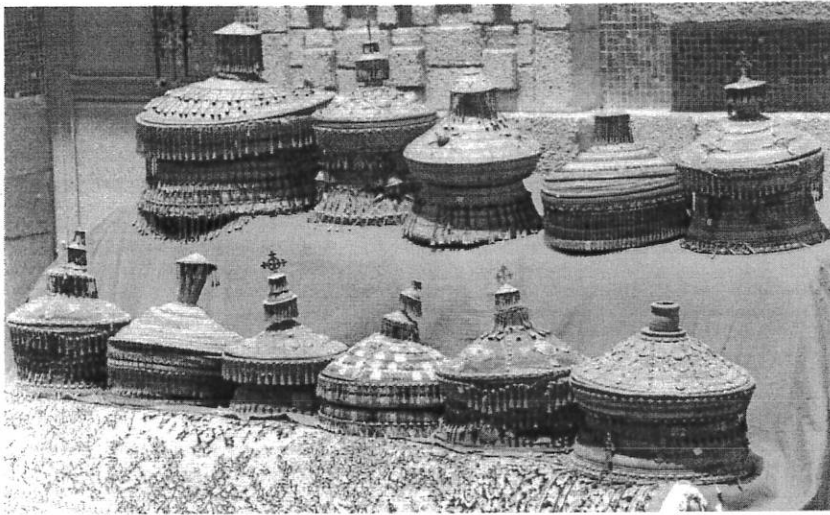
Some of Ivory crafts found in Aksum archaeological museum



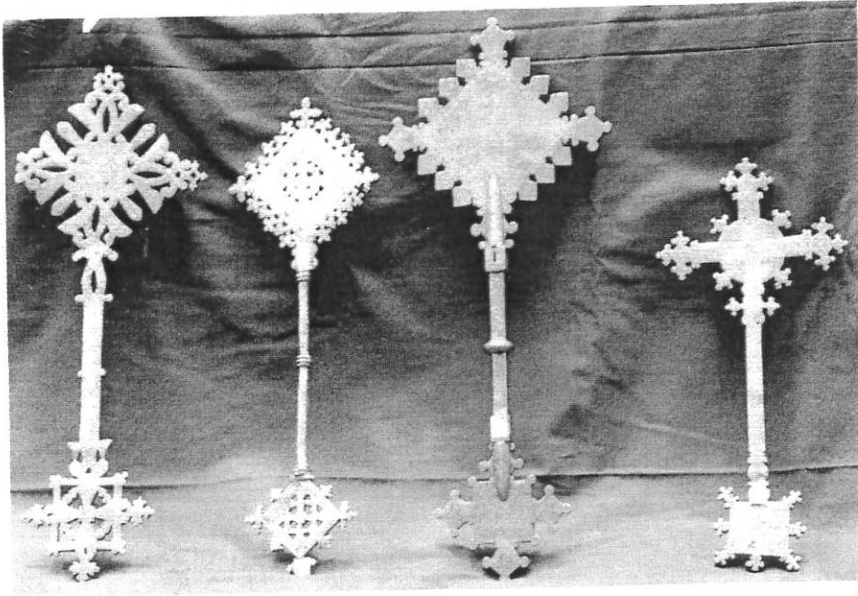
pottery products



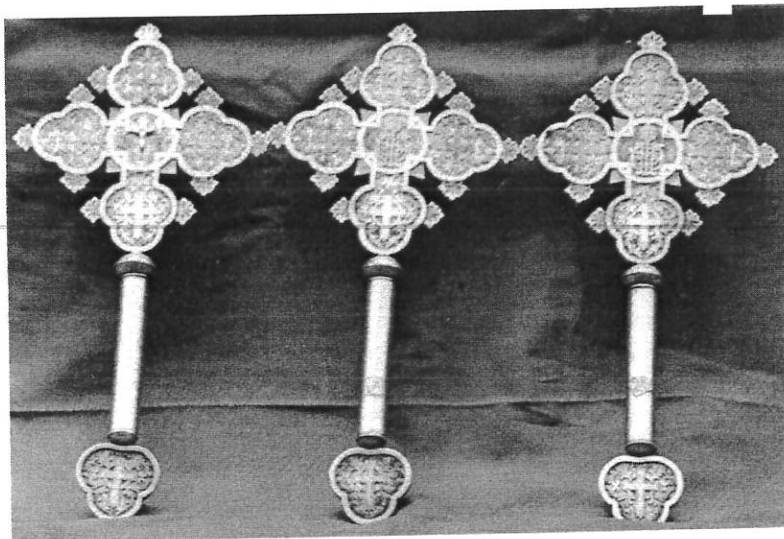
Some of ancient Basketry



Hand Crosses

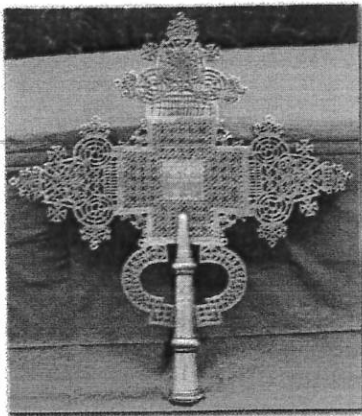
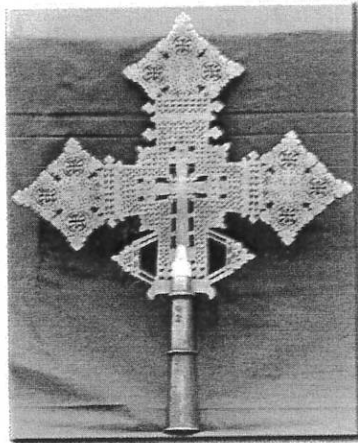
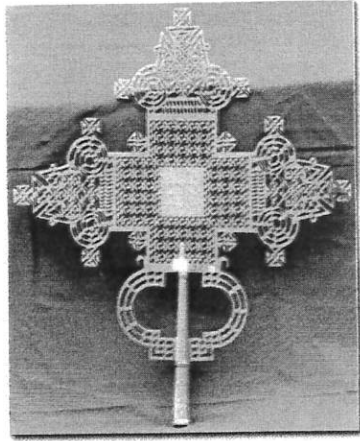


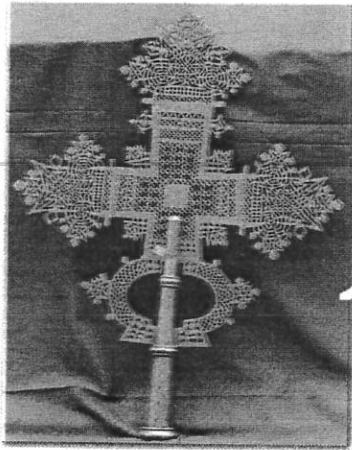
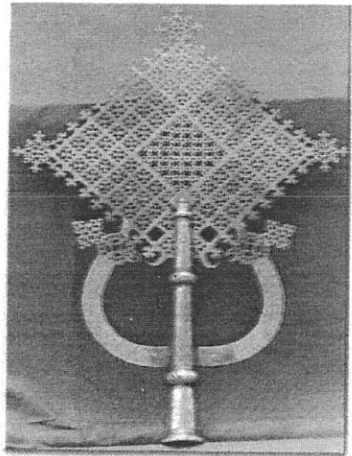
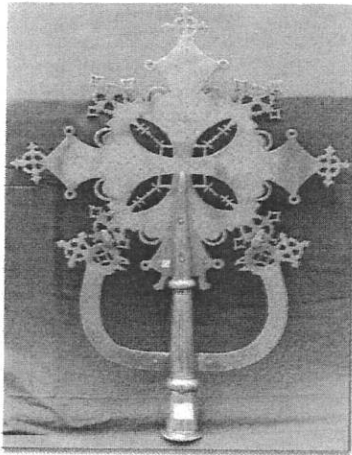
Gold and gold plated hand crosses donated by Emperor YohannisIV (r.1872-1889)

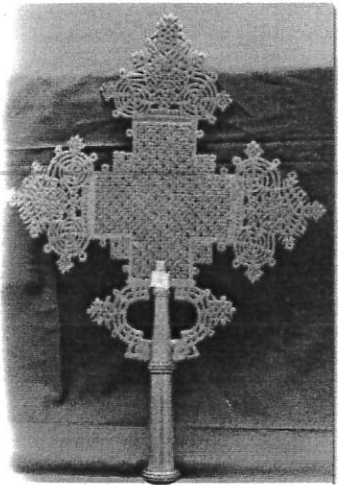
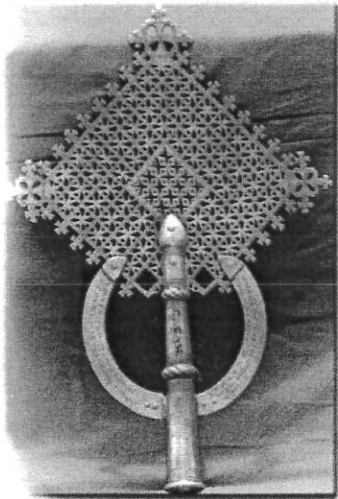
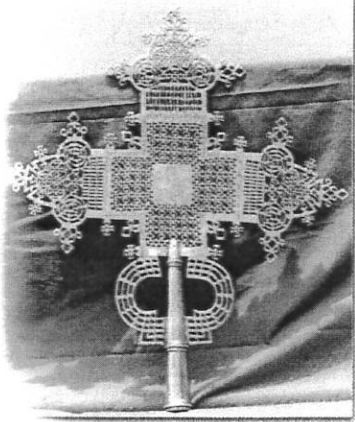


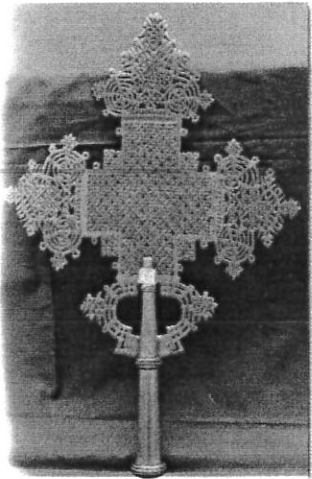
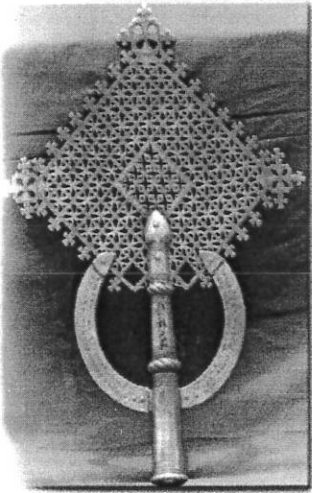
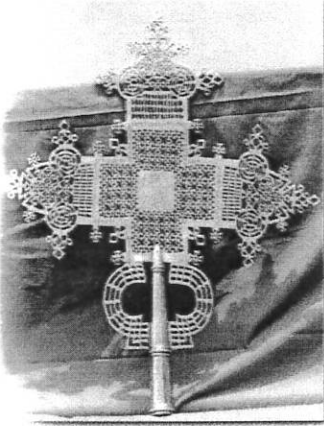
Aluminium hand crosses donated by Emperor Haileselassie I to the church (r.1930-1974)

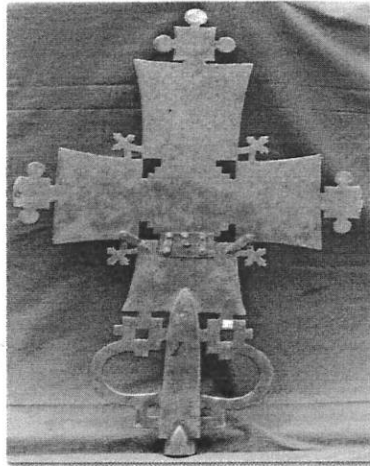
some of gold and gold plated crosses



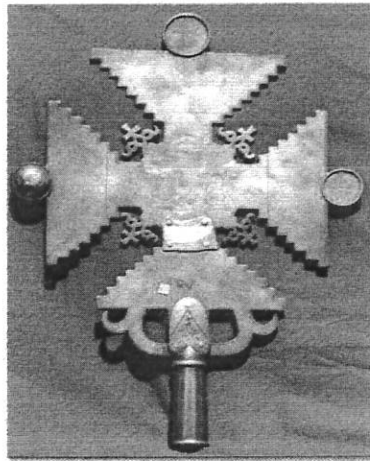




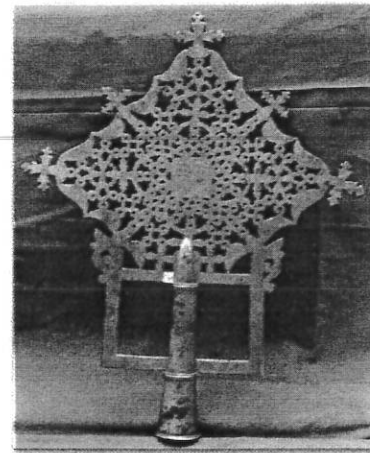




Hand cross donated by King Yisak (1399-1414)



Hand cross donated by King Zera Yacob (r.1426-1460)



Gold and gold plated cross

### Annex 3

#### **WHC Nomination Documentation**

File name: 15.pdf UNESCO Region AFRICA

SITE NAME ("TITLE") Aksum

DATE OF INSCRIPTION ("SUBJECT") 5/9/1980

STATE PARTY ("AUTHOR") ETHIOPIA

CRITERIA ("KEY WORDS") C (i)(iv)

DECISION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE:

The Committee made no statement

BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

The Kingdom of Aksum held political power at the heart of ancient Ethiopia until the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The massive ruins of the kingdom's capital are dominated by obelisks and enormous stelae.

1.b. State, province or region: Northern Ethiopia. Administrative region of Tigray

1.d Exact location: Lat. 14°09' N ; Long. 34°42' E

Aksum, Ethiopia  
(translated from French)

## Convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage

### World Heritage List

#### Nomination Form

Under the terms of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by the General Conference of Unesco in 1972, the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, called "the World Heritage Committee" shall establish, under the title of "World Heritage List", a list of properties forming part of the cultural and natural heritage which it considers as having outstanding universal value in terms of such criteria it shall have established.

The purpose of this form is to enable States Parties to submit to the World Heritage Committee nominations of properties situated in their territory and suitable for inclusion in the World Heritage List.

Notes to assist in completing each page of the form are provided opposite the page to be completed. Please type entries in the spaces available. Additional information may be provided on pages attached to the form.

It should be noted that the World Heritage Committee will retain all supporting documentation (maps, plans, photographic material, etc.) submitted with the nomination form.

The form completed in English or French should be sent in three copies to:

The Secretariat  
World Heritage Committee  
Division of Cultural Heritage  
Unesco  
7, place de Fontenoy  
75700 Paris

1. Specific location

a) *Country*

ETHIOPIA

b) *State, Province or Region*

Northern Ethiopia  
Administrative region of Tigray

c) *Name of property*

Aksum  
Historical archaeological site.

d) *Exact location on map and indication of geographical co-ordinates*

See map  
14° 09' N  
34° 42' E

2. Juridical data

a) *Owner*

Ethiopian Government

b) *Legal status*

Ethiopian Government

c) *Responsible administration*

Ministry of Culture  
Centre for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage.  
Addis Ababa.

### 3. Identification

#### a) *Description and inventory*

Aksum is mentioned in a first or second century text, the "Circumnavigation of the Eritrean Sea". The city of Aksum and the kingdom of the same name enjoyed great fame during the 3rd century, according to a contemporary Greek text, attributed to Mani, which describes the kingdom as "the third in the world". Indeed, in the city itself, large monuments and a considerable quantity of material relics preserve the memory of a great historical age. There are giant stelae, one of which was more than 33 metres high and is the largest obelisk ever quarried, transported, carved and erected. There are also an enormous stone table, thrones carved out of stone blocks, numerous fragments of columns, royal tombs, etc. which join with legend and tradition in evoking for the visitor a glorious past.

The western part of the town contains the sub-foundations of three large buildings known as Enda-Semon, Enda-Mikael and Taakha-Maryam. These are the ruins of ancient castles dating from the 1st millennium A.D., the largest of which was 120 metres long and 85 metres wide. Other ruined castles exist to the west, outside the limits of the town itself, and also beneath the present-day Maryam-Tsion basilica and in the Necropolis of Caleb to the north.

The site contains a great quantity of historic relics, whether in the form of ruined buildings, sculptures, pottery, coins or inscriptions. What is already known of the archeology of the ancient city of Aksum is tiny in comparison with what still lies beneath the surface.

#### b) *Maps and/or plans*

See map

3. Identification (cont'd)

c) *Photographic and/or cinematographic documentation* See photographic documentation

d) *History*

cf. 3 a)

e) *Bibliography*

Abundant

In particular, the work of the Deutsche German Expedition published in Berlin in 1913 under the direction of Enno Axum.

Conti Rossini. Storia d'Etiopia, Milano, 1928.

Moneret de Villard. Axum.

Fr. Anfray. Aspects de l'Archéologie éthiopienne.

Journal of African History,  
University of London, 1968

L'Archéologie d'Axum en 1972.

Paideuma. Frankfurt, 1973.

4. State of preservation/  
conservation

a) *Diagnosis*

Problems of stabilisation, nationalization of the excavations and rectification of earlier restoration work.

b) *Agent responsible for preservation/conservation*

Ministry of Culture  
Centre for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage,  
Addis Ababa P.O.B. 5580  
and Project: Ethiopia 74014

c) *History of preservation/conservation*

Ethiopian Government, 1970 and  
Project: Ethiopia 74014

d) *Means for preservation/conservation*

National Law of 1958 on the Administration of Antiquities.  
Draft Law on the Identification, Preservation, Inventory  
and Inspection of Sites and Monuments belonging to the  
Cultural Heritage.

Financed by the Ethiopian Government (with occasional  
foreign aid).

e) *Management plans*

See Administrative Chart of the Centre.  
See Draft Law.

5. Justification for  
inclusion in the World  
Heritage List

a) *Cultural property*

The site of Aksum enjoys great renown. This is due to the fact that the name of the city and of the kingdom of which it was the capital are part of world history.

The ruins of the city are highly distinctive and cover a very wide area. The giant stelae, which may be approximately dated to the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D., and which include the largest monolith ever carved by human hands, give a remarkable appearance to this archeological site.

The study and the preservation of these ancient relics (stelae, buildings, sculptures, tombs, pottery of different kinds, coins and inscriptions), is indispensable to our understanding of Ethiopian antiquity.

The site does not merely contain relics from the 1st millennium A.D. Mention should also be made of an 18th century basilica which, besides being of historical interest, is a unique example of Ethiopian architecture.

These monuments are consequently of exceptional universal value from the historical, artistic and scientific points of view.

5. Justification for inclusion in the World Heritage List (cont'd)

b). *Natural property*



Signed (on behalf of State Party) \_\_\_\_\_

Full name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_