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**CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF RELIGIOUS  
TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN *GISHEN DEBRE  
KERBE MARIAM*, NORTH CENTRAL ETHIOPIA**

By

**ERMIAS KIFLE**

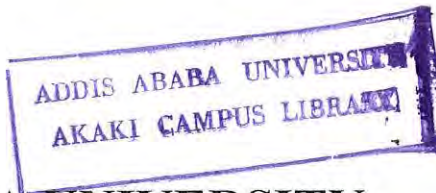
Advisor: Dr. Mulugeta Feseha

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**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**  
**COLLEGE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

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# **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my beloved mother Mulu Demissie who raised me discharging the responsibility of both a mother and a father. She is very good mother, who strived for the learning of her children working as daily laborer. I never forget her encouragement and patience during the learning of her children.

## **Challenges and Prospects of Religious Tourism Development in Gishen Debre Kerbe Mariam, North Central Ethiopia**

Ermias Kifle Gedecho

### **ABSTRACT**

*The main purpose of this research is to assess the challenges and prospects of religious tourism development in Gishen Debre Kerbe Mariam. Data were collected through self-administered questionnaire, direct/participant observation, semi structured interview, informal discussion and managing secondary data. Categorical, explanatory and descriptive methods of qualitative data analysis techniques were employed for data interpretation. Eleven resources were identified as potential attraction for religious tourism development in Gishen. Except museum which was under construction, resources such as landscape and scenery, religious festival, church buildings, history of Gishen Mariam, holy water, cave of king Lalibela, and Natural cave were being utilized and rated as attractive resources for majority of respondents. Poor performance of marketing, poor infrastructural development especially road, illegal settlement, Environmental pollutions and begging, and unsuitable institutional structure were identified as challenges to religious tourism development in Gishen Mariam. Despite these challenges, an increase trend of domestic religious tourist arrival by 11.8% for the last four years was registered in Gishen Mariam. This has contributed to an increase in contribution of job creation and government revenue. This in turn has resulted in positive attitude of local residents. Moreover, its geographic location in the northern historical route is an opportunity for boosting religious tourism. Gishen Debre Kerbe Mariam has huge religious tourism potential and prospects despite challenges. Illegal settlers need to leave away from Gishen in order to make Gishen a monastery. Furthermore, road construction and tourist facility developments need to be implemented in cooperation with volunteers and church.*

***Key Words: Development, Gishen, Religious, Tourism.***



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## ACRONYMS

ATA	African Travel Association
AWCT	Ambasel Woreda Culture and Tourism
AWSA	Ambasel Woreda Security and Administration
AWTP	Ambasel Woreda Traffic Police
CSA	Central Statistical Agency
DSNP	Direct Safety Net Program
EC	Ethiopian Calendar
EHRCA	Ethiopian Heritage Research and Conservation Authority
EOTC	Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church
ERCS	Ethiopian Red Cross Society
GAA	German Agro Action
GDP	Growth Domestic Production
HoA-REC	Horn of Africa Regional Environmental Center
MoCT	Ministry of Culture and Tourism
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
ORDA	Organization for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara
SWCT	South Wollo Culture and Tourism
SWD	South Wollo Diocese
SWHD	South Wollo Health Department
SWIUD	South Wollo Industry and Urban Development
SWTP	South Wollo Traffic Police
UNESCO	United Nation Education, Science and Culture Organization
UNWTO	United Nation World Tourism Organization
WHO	World Health Organization

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background Information

Religious tourism is as old as the religion itself and consequently it is the oldest form of tourism in the world (Karar, 2010, p. 99; Rinschede, 1992, p. 53). Smith (1992) and Shackley (2005) noted that most religions require, whatever the aim is, to visit holy places. A good example is the Zoroastrians (Sarahani and Musa, 2012), which motivated pilgrimages in ancient times, which is still going on un-interrupted today. Each year around 300-330 million tourists visit world's key religious sites (UNWTO, 2011a). In addition UNWTO (2011a) has reported that 60% of the world population practices a religion and these believers form demographic base of religious tourism. Many countries include religion in their census. It is estimated that there are approximately six hundred million national and international religious and spiritual voyages in the world, of which 40% take place in Europe and around half of which in Asia and the rest is in other continents of the world (UNWTO, 2011a).

The three major religions in the world; Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism, with a 33%, 21% and 14% worldwide followers respectively have received highest proportion of religious tourist in their headquarters (Rojo, 2007). For instance, Israel which is important for all Christians, Muslim and Judaism received more than 2 million foreign visitors that make religious tourism backbone for Israel's economy (Sizer, 1999, p. 85). Makah origin and center for Islamic religion received more than 2 million of pilgrims from different countries of the world which makes religious tourism to be the second GDP contributor of Saudi economy next to oil (Ahmed, 1992). Rome origin and center for Catholic Christianity has received more than 10 million religious and cultural tourists from everywhere especially from Europe and America. Gua and Velankani, and India have annually attracted one million and 500,000 pilgrims respectively; and 100,000 in both Sri Lanka and Philippines (Stirrat 1988 cited in Rinschede, 1992).

Though noted for its tourism potential and unknown statistics for religious tourism, Africa's underdeveloped tourism sector is attracting 5.2% (49.4 million) of the total tourist arrived in 2011 in the world (UNWTO, 2011b). According to Ighobor and Haidara (2012), in Africa

around 7.7 million people are employed in the tourism sector. They also noted that tourism is contributing an average of 9% GDP to East African countries' economy. However, infrastructural problem and lack of innovations are challenging the tourism sector in Africa (Ibid). In the missionary countries of Africa Catholic pilgrimage sites have developed and partially built upon the traditional beliefs (Rinschede, 1992).

Ethiopia has huge tourism potential: natural, cultural and other tourism resources (Mulugeta Feseha, 2011). Tourist arrival is increasing from time to time despite its poor performance compared to other countries with less tourism potential. For instance, according to the MoCT report, Ethiopia received 584,490 international tourists in the year 2011/12 which has 20% increase over the number of tourists in 2010 which was 468,305 (MoCT, 2012). Tourism is the third export earner next to coffee and oil seeds, claiming an average of 23.34% of the total export earnings from 1995 to 2007 (Ayalew Sisay, 2009). Nevertheless, the tourism industry has faced different challenges as Yabibal Mulualem (2010) listed; poor infrastructural development, security issues, low promotion, lack of trained man power in the field of tourism and low tourist facilities development were some of factors for the tourism development in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia is known to be home of the two major religions: Christianity and Islamic. Muslim religious tourism practice however is not developed due to different reasons and that should be developed. Christians' religious tourism or travel to religious sites is encouraging which constitutes the biggest share of domestic tourism in the country. Travel for annual Saints festival and for passing fasting seasons while praying in monasteries are the most common practices of EOTC religious followers. However, famous religious sites in Ethiopia have been mostly visited and well promoted for their historical and archaeological value than for their religious importance; for instance, Axum and Lalibela<sup>1</sup>. Only religious festivals such as *Mesqel*<sup>2</sup> and *Timket*<sup>3</sup> are being promoted for their religious tourism importance. Religious tourism sites are the main attractions for domestic tourists.

---

<sup>1</sup> Axum and Lalibela are world heritage sites

<sup>2</sup> Mesqel is one of the famous religious festival celebrated by EOTC followers on September 27 each year to commemorate the finding of the True Cross (Bantalem Tadesse, 2010)

<sup>3</sup> Timket is Annual religious festival celebrated by Christians especially by EOTC followers

According to WHO (2010) report, out of the 10 top popular pilgrimage sites in Ethiopia, Gishen Mariam was the first ranked ancient pilgrimage site with 350,000-500,000 domestic pilgrims each year (Ayalew Sisay, 2009; Bantalem Tadesse, 2010; WHO, 2010).

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Most of the religious tourism sites in Ethiopia belong to Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church (EOTC). Hence, Churches and monasteries have been seasonally visited mainly by EOTC followers. They are ancient and source for studying Ethiopian civilization, history and literature. EOTC holds many historical and religious treasures that are internationally significant. However, few are recognized and visited by both international and domestic tourists. Whereas many of them that could be listed under UNESCO world heritage are not well recognized and still not visited. One of these is Gishen Debre Kerbe Mariam Church, ancient historic, full of tourism potential site and one of the top pilgrimage sites in Ethiopia. Gishen comprises both spiritual and secular attractions in it; presence of Jesus Christ's Cross, red Scarlet robe (Mathew 27:28), Holy water that came from river Jordan, holy icons that were originally painted by the Apostle John and Luke, the covenant given to pilgrims and *Kura'ate Re'esu* (Dagnachew Kassahun, 2006), Saint George Cave and church are some of the spiritual attractions while landscape beauty of Gishen, history of Mount Gishen (Bantalem Tadesse, 2010), inhabitant's culture are some of the secular attractions. All resources or attraction could attract both pilgrims and tourist. Gishen receives 350,000-500,000 domestic pilgrims and/or religious tourists each year (WHO, 2010).

Though Gishen has huge tourism potential that could make it one of the top religious tourism sites in the world and benefit many stakeholders, tourism in Gishen is not well developed due to different challenges and problems. Some of these includes; poor infrastructural development, absence or poor promotion, absence of tourist facilities, less attention given to the study site, seasonality etc. As a result, visitation is mostly done by domestic on annual festival from September 25 until October 5. Economic dependency, overcrowdings, shortage of clean and portable water, price increase, and outbreak of water related disease such as, cholera have been observed by the researcher for the last eight years as permanent participant on annual festivals. In addition to this some religious rules and sanctions have been broken and illegal activities as well as drug trafficking has been taken place due to inability of managing negative impact as result of overcrowding (SWD, 2007).

Religious tourism is foreign exchange earner. Through spurring investments in new infrastructure; bringing competition between local firms and firms in other tourist countries; stimulating other economic industries through direct, indirect and induced effects; it generates employment and increases income, causes positive exploitation of economies of scale in national firms (Cohen, 1984; Karar, 2010; Pratt, 2011; Vuconic, 1998).

However, Government and NGOs are focusing on enabling local community sustaining their life through agriculture (safety-net programs) and they didn't see tourism's potential in fostering local economy as Rotherham (2007) has stated where religious tourism as being one important engine for improving local economy. From religious heritage conservation point of view, religious tourism development in such heritage rich area could also sustain the church heritage conservation. Hence religious tourism should be taken as an alternative to improve the local community's economy and to conserve heritages of the area.

Different researchers and authors have conducted and wrote articles and papers regarding EOTC's contribution to tourism development, civilization, conservation and arts of Ethiopia (Alemayehu Wassie, 2008; Getachew Deme, 2012; Hingabu Hordofa, 2011; and Mezmur Tsegaye, 2011). In addition research related to challenges and opportunities of eco-tourism has been conducted by some few researchers (Gebeyaw Ambelu, 2011; Kauffmann, 2008; Yabibal Muluaem, 2010). Neither of the two groups of researchers could address the problem of religious tourism in general and Gishen Mariam in particular. Moreover, Research was carried out by South Wollo Diocese (2007) and Said Ali (2010), but neither of them focuses on religious tourism development. They rather focused on socioeconomic status and conflict resolution areas. Therefore, it can be said that there is a research gap in identifying religious tourism potential, challenges and prospects of Gishen Debre Kerbe Mariam, which needs to be filled with empirical evidences.

This study assumes that reducing challenges while utilizing prospects are important for religious tourism development in Gishen Debre Kerbe Mariam. Based on this assumption, the study has therefore attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What are the tourism potentials and factors supporting the religious tourism development in Gishen Debre Kerbe Mariam?

2. What are the main challenges for the development and continuity of religious tourism in Gishen Debre Kerbe Mariam?
3. What are the positive signs for future and better development of tourism in general and religious tourism in particular develops in the study site?

### **1.3. Objectives**

#### **1.3.1. General Objective**

The aim of this study is to find out the challenges and prospects of religious tourism development in Gishen Debre Kerbe Mariam.

#### **1.3.2. Specific Objectives**

- ❖ To identify religious tourism potential of Gishen Debre Kerbe Mariam
- ❖ To investigate challenges for the development of religious tourism in Gishen Debre Kerbe Mariam.
- ❖ To look for prospects of religious tourism development in Gishen Debre Kerbe Mariam

### **1.4. Significance of the Study**

This research will contribute to the understanding of religious/pilgrimage tourism characteristics in Gishen Mariam, a main pilgrimage site in the context of Ethiopia. Thus it will serve as a reference for researchers and others. For policy and decision makers, this research will become an input in developing religious tourism in Ethiopia in general and in the study area in particular. Many churches and monasteries in rural areas of Ethiopia are remaining poor, as a result they have been begging from followers and donors. In solving churches financial problem this research will provide option as religious tourism is and can solve the problem for so long. Moreover, this research could also be used by NGOs that work on poverty reduction programs as an input for their strategy. Besides, other stakeholders who want to engage themselves in the business of religious tourism could also benefit from this research.

### **1.5. Scope and Limitation of the Study**

The study has geographically covered an area from Dessie town to Gishen Mariam. In terms of theme it was limited only to assess the potential, challenges, and prospects of religious tourism in

Gishen Mariam. Some of the key informants such as South Wollo Diocese (SWD) managing director, member of committee organized by the diocese were not voluntary to be interviewed. Moreover, all local informants were not also voluntary for focus group discussion and interview. As a result the researcher was unable to conduct focus group discussion. Issues that were thought to be assessed from focus group discussion were discovered through key informant interview, informal discussion and participant observations.

## **1.6. Structure of the Research**

The thesis is organized in the following way: Chapter one: Introduction of the topic, statement of the problem, research question, aim and objectives, significance of the study and limitation and delimitation; Chapter two: Literature review; Chapter three: the research methodology: research design, data collection instruments, sampling designs and data analysis; Chapter four: shows analysis of main findings encountered using tables and figures with a commentary on the data found and their discussion in detail and Chapter five: covers conclusion and recommendation.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. Basic Definitions and Concepts

##### 2.1.1. Religious Tourism

Religious tourism is a type of tourism whose participants are motivated either in part or exclusively for religious reasons (Rinschede, 1992). Religious tourism is not one type of tourism like secular tourism rather includes two types: tourism performed through a religious duty like traveling to Mecca which is a duty for any Muslim; and tourism where knowledge is recorded and quoted for wider dissemination (Al-Amin, 2002). The aim of religious tourism despite obtaining Blessing of God is to introduce to tourists a country which the tourists find unfamiliar and which is impossible to know about without the existence of religious tourism in the first place (Ibid). Visitors would also be unable to know more about the people of a country if religious tourism does not exist there (Ibid).

Nolan and Nolan (1992) have categorized the main religious attractions into three:

- a. Pilgrimage shrines defined as places that serve as the goal of religiously motivated journeys from beyond the immediate locality;*
- b. religious tourist attractions in the form of Structures or sites of religiously significance with historic and/or artistic importance; and*
- c. Festivals with religious associations* ( Nolan and Nolan, 1992, p. 69).

**Tourists:** the term tourist is derived from Latin word called *tornus* or *lathe* which means individual who travel and stay elsewhere outside his home village and visits a destination perhaps due to various reasons other than for sacred motivation (Smith, 1992; UNWTO, 1970; Vuconic, 1998). Religious tourist lies between the two extremes; pilgrims and tourist (Smith, 1992).

In religious tourism person traveling alone represents the minority of travelers (Rinschede, 1992, p. 59). As Morinis cited in Rinschede (1992) noted, only 11% of the 1537 pilgrims went alone to West Bengal, India while 65%, 12% and 12% went with family member, with friends and with organized group. In Christian religions, pilgrimage groups are organized by the parishes, diocese, youth groups, school, or senior clubs. Of the total participants the number of women was higher

than men in the Christian religion than in the Muslim and in Hinduism religion the opposite has happened (Rinschede, 1992). In terms of age composition of pilgrims as the study in three areas shows number of pilgrims between the age of 25 and 60 were higher than below the age of 25 and above 60 in Lourdes and West Bengal, India but in Germany Catholic Church the number of pilgrims below 25 were higher than the number of pilgrim above the age of 25 (Rinschede, 1992).

Means of transportation as Rinschede (1992) has cited and discussed the former and still means of transportation in religious tourism is on foot. Later on as train, ship (boat) and airplane were introduced the means of transportation has also changed (ibid). Now days, pilgrims from West Africa travel to Makah on foot and as they reach at Red sea they cross by ship. Trucks in developing countries are also used as means of transportation. Many of the domestic travel are made by buses and trains. In some pilgrimage sites of Ethiopia pilgrimage transport is through combination of both foot and vehicles.

### **2.1.2. Pilgrimage**

It is defined as: "A journey resulting from religious causes, externally to a holy site and internally for spiritual purposes and internal understanding" (Barber, 1993, p. 1). Stoddard (1997) has considered the following three definitions:

*Definition #1: A journey to a sacred place as an act of religious devotion (Sykes 1982, 776).*

*Definition #2: Pilgrimage involves three factors: a holy place; attraction of individuals or crowds to this place; a specific aim, i.e., to obtain some spiritual or material benefit (Brandon, 1970: 501).*

*Definition #3: The term pilgrimage is used in at least three senses.*

*(1) There is first the "interior pilgrimage," the "journey of the soul" in a lifetime of growth from spiritual infancy to maturity. (2) There is, second, the literal pilgrimage to some sacred place as a paradigm of the intent of religion itself. This literal journey may be called "extroverted mysticism" (Turner, 1973). (3) Finally, every trek to one's local sanctuary is a pilgrimage in miniature insofar as it acts out on a small scale some transition or growth and experience of the sacred and new community which pilgrimage in general affords (Crim 1981, 569) (Stoddard, 1997, pp. 42-43).*

Different religion pilgrimage may have different meaning and value. For instance, in Orthodox tradition (or proskynese) pilgrimage refers to the act of bowing down before an icon, or relics, and kissing or touching the sacred objects rather than to the transformative act of the journey and process of reaching (Dora 2012). Anyone regardless of his religious affiliation can participate in the Korean religious pilgrimage (Bell, 2008).

**Pilgrims:** Pilgrim is derived from Latin word *peregrinus* which is one who strives to obtain the salvation of his/her or their soul through a physical journey in which *caritas*, love for God; and not *cupiditas*, love for material things, drive them (Smith, 1992, p.1).

According to Dora (2012), orthodox pilgrims are different from other visitors whose religion is non orthodox in terms of dressing and ways of performing religious practice in the monasteries. Dora (2012) classified visitors in orthodox context into two: the first groups of visitors are called proskynese, those who lighten candles, kiss icons and write down names for commemoration, and the others are secular who are just looking around and take pictures. For the orthodox pilgrim in Greece it doesn't really matter if the shrine is reached either on foot or by car. Pilgrimage is not a mere inspiration matter rather a possibility to experience a glimpse of paradise at the shrine in a strong, ontological sense through the sacra which is through icons relics liturgies and seek for spiritual counseling (Ibid).

### **2.1.3. Motivation of Religious Tourist**

There are many and multidimensional motivations to sacred sites (Dora, 2012). Many of the religious tourist and or pilgrims are visiting religious sites for praying, to fulfill a vow, to express penitence, to meet an obligation such as hajj, and to gain merit and salvation (Poria, Butler and Airey; 2004). "While some seeking life changing experience and while others for a while away from wet afternoon. Some wish to worship and others to marvel or just to explore" (Shackley, 2001 cited in Dora, 2012). Knowing motivation of religious tourist helps to successful marketing of religious tourism destination. Their motivation mostly determines through asking the visitors themselves and perhaps little through observation from what they are doing.

## **2.2. Importance of Religious Tourism**

Religious tourism is foreign exchange earner. Through spurring investments in new infrastructure; bringing competition between local firms and firms in other tourist countries; stimulating other economic industries through direct, indirect and induced effects; it generates employment and increases income, causes positive exploitation of economies of scale in national firms (Cohen, 1984; Karar, 2010; Pratt, 2011; Vuconic, 1998).

As discussed by Vijayanad (2012) religious/pilgrimage tourism has the following positive impacts: earning maximum foreign exchange, strengthen national unity and promote brotherhood, guards cultural heritage and it is very helpful for regional development, employment generation, and can enroot again cultural values. For instance, pilgrimage tourism in India contributes 44.5% of total export item of tourism in 2009 (Vijayanad, 2012). Many people in North East Asia work in pilgrimage tourism related business; for example in China 1 out of 10 people, 8.9% of the total employment in India, and in the same region total of 9 million people which is 6.1% works in pilgrimage tourism either directly or indirectly (Karar, 2010; Vijayanad, 2012). Churches are contributing for formation of social capital for example in Western Cape province of South Africa Christian Church has been doing lots in formation of social capital (Swart, 2006). Many modern social evils which are caused by materialism can be cured with the help of religious tourism.

According to Cordora's UNWTO international conference 2007 report on "religious, tourism and dialogues on cultures", religious tourism was reported as having the following importance: being cornerstone of pluralism, peace and reducing division (UNWTO, 2007a). It is thus very important form of tourism to have for countries that have more than one religion such as, Ethiopia. From this point of view, religious tourism offer people from different religions and cultures to come to know each other, bring people together, provide mutual understanding and peace between people of whole world, etc. (Karar, 2010). Cohen (1984) noted that interaction of religious tourist with local community gives change in terms of way of life, value system, labor division, family relationship, attitudes, behavioral pattern, ceremony and creative expression.

### **2.3. Challenges of Religious Tourism**

There are different challenges and problems that hinder religious tourism development: issues of safety and security; financial related problems; negative attitude of the local people and tourist to tourism; low level of infrastructural and facility development; lack or shortage of trained man power; poor performance of marketing campaign; and discouraging policy and rules. These challenges can be classified from where they originally come: internal from product producer or destinations themselves and outside the host or producers which is from the guests and the stakeholders. These are discussed in detail as follows.

#### **2.3.1. Safety and Security Issues**

Safety and security issues are prime factors for tourists to make a holiday in particular destinations. Anything that disturbs the safety and security of man always attracts media and has gained full coverage at both local and international level, this therefore immediately create both negative and positive images on the destinations. Whenever there is safety and security, regardless of other factors, tourism development looks better than in destination with less safety and security. Political instability, terrorism, war, and road quality are some of the other factors that affect safety and security issues of destination. Below is a detail look at each of the factors.

Road safety and security is one of the concerns of visitors while they are traveling (Wilkis, Watson and Faulks, 1999). Until lately, safety and security issues had never been concern of pilgrims, it is now being changed to gaining of concern by religious tourist. For instance in Israel and Palestine places where there was no peace, visitors are not allowed for visiting (Suleiman and Mohammed, 2010). This is for the sake of safety and politics. Safety or perceived safety is one factor that determines choices of tourist to a particular destination. Tourist would go for a holiday to a destination when they perceive that destination is safe rather than worrying for safety once they are on holiday. The survey in UK in 1994 supports this idea in which more than 43% who traveled to New York had concern on safety of destination (Allen, 1999). For instance, in destination with high rate of crime due to different offences such as murdering, serious assault, and rape can gain lot of media attention and can affect the tourist choices.

Political instability and civil war are other factors that impede tourism development. For example, Suleiman and Mohammed (2010) noted that conflict between Israeli and Palestinian has affected the tourism in Palestine especially in east Jerusalem. In addition, war was the factor that affected tourism in Croatia in the early 1990's (Curie, Skare and Loncare, 2004). It was the major factor for US \$5B decline of tourism contribution to economy of Croatia within war period of 1991-1995 (Curie, *et al.*, 2004). War was also responsible for the decline of both tourist flow and the revenue gain from tourism during civil war in Ethiopia (Ayalew Sisay, 2009).

Terrorism is also another challenge that has been affecting the tourism industry in the world in general. Due to terrorist attack in New York in 2001 at trade center and in Bali in 2002, the tourism industry was reduced by 0.6% worldwide (UNWTO, 2002). More recently, terrorist attack at Afar region on foreign tourist was feared to affect the tourism in Ethiopia (Associated Press, January 18, 2012).

### **2.3.2. Absence or Poor Infrastructural Development**

Infrastructural development is pre-requisite for tourism business growth and development in any destination. According to UNWTO (2011b) report, countries with developed infrastructure receive more tourist than countries with poor infrastructural development. For instance, According to Ighobor and Haidara (2012), infrastructural problem was one of the greatest challenges for tourism development in East Africa. Some of the infrastructural problems include: absence of telecommunication and electricity services, absence or poor quality road, health centers, lack of sanitary water etc. Dora (2012) reported that infrastructural development was an opportunity and responsible for growth of religious tourism arrival at Mount Athos and monastery of Meteora in Greece. He has also reported that "asphalted road and electric hauling system has lifted up, Athos to make it accessible for everyone" (*ibid*). Vuconic (1998) recommended that infrastructure development is very important for meeting all need of religious tourist.

### **2.3.3. Low Level of Investment**

For developing tourism in an area private and public investment is important and indispensable despite infrastructural development. For instant there are so many private and public investments in Israel and Mecca, as a result the tourism has boosted and is contributing to the countries' GDP

in general (ETV, 19/08/2012: 9:00 PM local time). In areas with low or poor private and public investment there would always be low tourism development. For this reason, public interest, private sector's involvement, attention of the government policy and interests of individuals to invest on the religious tourism business are needed.

#### **2.3.4. Poor Tourism Marketing Performance**

Tourism marketing means satisfying the need and wants of customer through exchange. Tourism marketing mix is defined as providing quality tourism product at fair price at the right place in a way that satisfies the needs of tourist (Chavan, 2010). This means product need to be developed based on the interest of the tourist in other words product develops on tourist need. The price needs to be also fair and be at right place in which many tourists can get access to it. It should be also promoted using appropriate medium to the target market of the product.

The tourism product by its nature is service which has features of intangibility, inseparability, variability, perishability (<http://elearning.stut.edu.tw/tounsm/mht.htm> accessed on 23/03/2013). Reducing the quality of tourism products costs the destination in loss of customer. Planning and implementing to have religious tourism business without product development is challenge because nothing can be done without products. Tourism products are provided by different stakeholders such as local people, tour operators and travel agents, hoteliers etc. (Chavan, 2010). Religious tourism products include: attractions, accommodations, transport and etc...

With regard to price, however price could be determined based on the quality of the product. Sometimes, it should be at least fair from customer perspectives. Indeed price are set based on different factors (Chavan, 2010). But failure to make fair price cause challenge for development of tourism business in particular destinations. For instance, this problem was noticed in Ethiopia as challenge or determinant factor for low number of tourist arrival comparing with neighboring country such as Kenya (Yabibal Mulalem, 2010).

Poor methods and lack of innovative techniques in promotion of tourism business in developing countries of Africa hinder tourism sector's contribution to economy of each country (Ighobor and Haidara, 2012). In developed countries such as Spain, Portugal and Italy they have more lists of pilgrimages and religious festivals in their promotional literature than any other countries did (Nolan and Nolan, 1992). As a result pilgrims/tourist number to these countries religious sites

flows more than any other European countries. Promotion is another very important component of tourism businesses: it includes introducing tourism product produced, religious sites and announcing and informing rules and regulations of the destination. Promotion is used as a tool for religious tourist management; in order to increase number of arrivals in destination. There are different methods and tools of promotion that could be employed in different places and destinations by different people. Some of them include: advertisement, sale promotion, personal selling and public relations etc. Tools used includes: Television, Internet, Radio, Broacher, Billboards, Magazine, Newspaper, T-shirt and Sign posts etc. destination that uses combination of different promotional means based on its marketing target is more successful than destination that uses one promotional methods. In this regard, Ethiopia's tourism destinations except few are not promoted through international media.

### **2.3.5. Seasonality**

Religious tourism is bounded to certain seasonality though some have potential to be visited every day. According to Rinschede (1992), three factors are responsible for seasonality characteristics of the religious tourism: One, religious ceremonies and commemorations day; two, climatic conditions/locations of the pilgrimage sites; and three, work calendar. Cuccia and Rizzo (2011) found that seasonality was one of the features in cultural tourism practice in Sicily and it was the cause for overcrowding and unsustainable tourism practice in the study area. They had recommended that de-seasonality through policy intervention is needed in destination that are affected by seasonality (ibid). Therefore, it can be minimized through different mechanisms such as tax reduction on the off seasons, high promotion campaign, provide regulation that limits the number of visitors in particular destination, etc.

### **2.3.6. Negative Attitude towards Religious Tourism Development**

Positive attitude towards tourism brings opportunities for tourism growth and development in particular destination. Positive attitude is not only expected from local residents but also from other stakeholders of tourism sectors such as government, non-government organizations, host or owner. In some areas negative attitude of the local residents brings hindrance in tourism development. Andereck *et al.* (2005) discussed that local residence could have positive attitude towards tourism if they obtain benefit from tourism otherwise they perceived negatively as a

result they are no more supporter of tourism development in destination. Andereck *et al.* (2005), conclude that in order to develop positive perception on local community, provision of positive benefit to the local residents leaving around the destination need to be benefited (ibid). In addition to this, residents whose religious and cultural heritage is positively portrayed by the tourism destination would be more likely to support tourism development than would those whose religious and cultural heritage is ignored.

### **2.3.7. Low Level Local Community Participation or Involvement**

Community participation in tourism destination where there is community residing around seems must for the success of tourism business or sustainability (Camamba, 2003). There are different stages and levels to involve local community. Since they are primary stakeholders of the destination, they need to be involved in planning, implementation, management, conservation, preservation and other levels (Camamba, 2003). Unless the community participates and involves success and continuity of tourism development will no longer exist. Many authors have suggested the importance of involving local community in tourism industry. Their involvement can be assured by providing fair and equitable benefit otherwise failing to achieve involving local community is the consequence. In other words, lacking involvement of local community will bring challenge to development of tourism.

Public participation in tourism has different advantages such as; conservation, sustainable development, pride, effectiveness on the planning and the implementation of tourism developments and projects (Sanchez, 2009; Stem *et al.*, 2003). Therefore, local resident participation in tourism development is important for sustainable development of religious tourism. As Brohman (1996) noted below tourism development needs to make meaningful participation.

*Unless specific measures are taken to encourage meaningful participation in community decision making by members of the popular sectors, including traditionally disadvantaged groups, increased local participation may simply transfer control over development from one elite group to another (Brohman, 1996, p.60).*

### **2.3.8. Negative Impacts of Religious Tourism**

In as much as it has its positive impacts, religious tourism has also negative impact on economy, social and environmental aspects of the host country. Religious tourism is very prone to negative social impacts such as violation of rules (Rinschede, 1992). Vuconic (1998) explains how discovery of a holy shrine in 1981 resulted in a sudden growth of private accommodation and in land price inflation. Since, many religious sites receive many tourist/pilgrims on some occasions like festivals, negative impact during this time is huge as compared to other times. Some of the negative impacts include: leakage, degradation, violation of rules and regulations, conflict between community and tourist/pilgrims etc (Camamba, 2003).

Brohman (1996) mentioned the negative impacts of tourism faced in developing countries as;

*Some of the short coming third world faces include: wider fluctuating earning due to factors such as global recessions and the seasonality of tourism in some places; environmental destruction, often involving the irretrievable loss of nonrenewable resources and foundation assets; and rising alienation among the local population because of problems such as increasing crime, overcrowding and overloaded infrastructures, pollution and other environmental impacts (p. 58).*

### **2.4. Conceptual Framework**

Religious tourism might have both challenges and prospects. Challenges could be born, developed and can cause hindrance from both inside sector or the host destination and external bodies such as stakeholders and visitors. Internal challenges include: low or lack of religious tourism business knowledge and skill of employee and employer, financial problem, poor marketing campaign, setting unpractical rules and regulations, negative impact and activities of host etc. While external challenges include: insecurity and instability, lack of government attention etc. For better religious tourism development different means of solving and minimizing challenges has to be created.

Prospects of religious tourism are positive aspects that encourage participation of different stakeholders in the business of religious tourism and that could ensure better religious tourism development in the future. These could be social, political, environmental, and economical

opportunities created due to different reasons. If they are carefully taken into account and utilized, they will boost religious tourism development better.

Thus, the researcher believes for better religious tourism development and continuity reducing challenges while utilizing prospects is worthy. Therefore, this research will identify both challenges and prospects of religious tourism so as to recommend what to do for better development of religious tourism in Gishen Debre Kerbe Mariam.

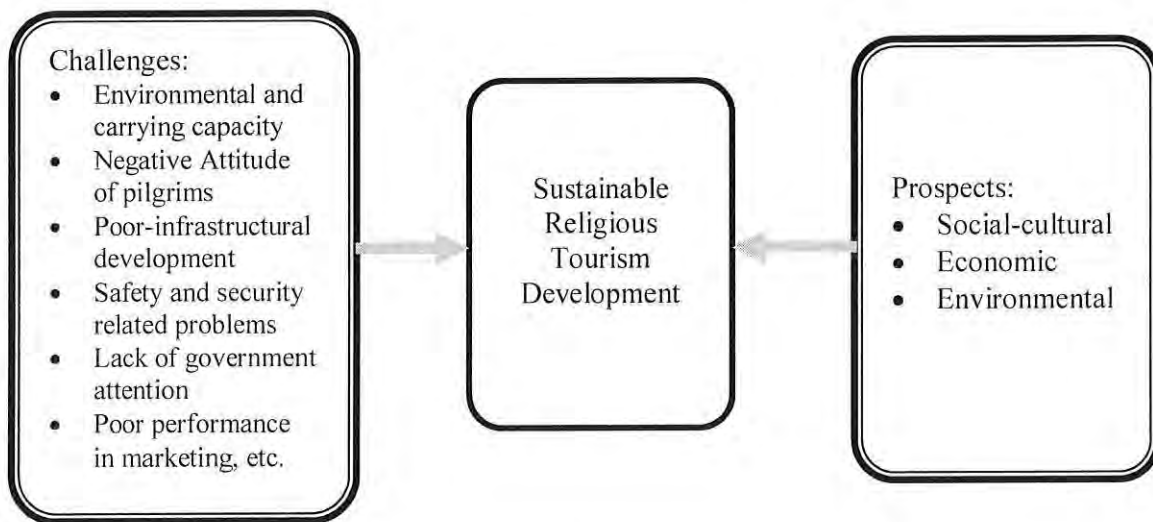


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Source: His Author)

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Site Description

Gishen Debre Kerbe Mariam is located 482 km north of Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, in Amhara regional state, South Wollo zonal administration, Ambasel Woreda<sup>4</sup> (figure 2). It is located in a cross shaped mountain with an altitude of more than 3000 meters above sea level. It has an area of 26 hectare, of which 90% of the land is suitable for building whereas the rest 10% requires study. Since the cross shaped mountain is surrounded by hills, expanding its ownership down the mountain is unthinkable hence the only option remains utilizing the available land appropriately.

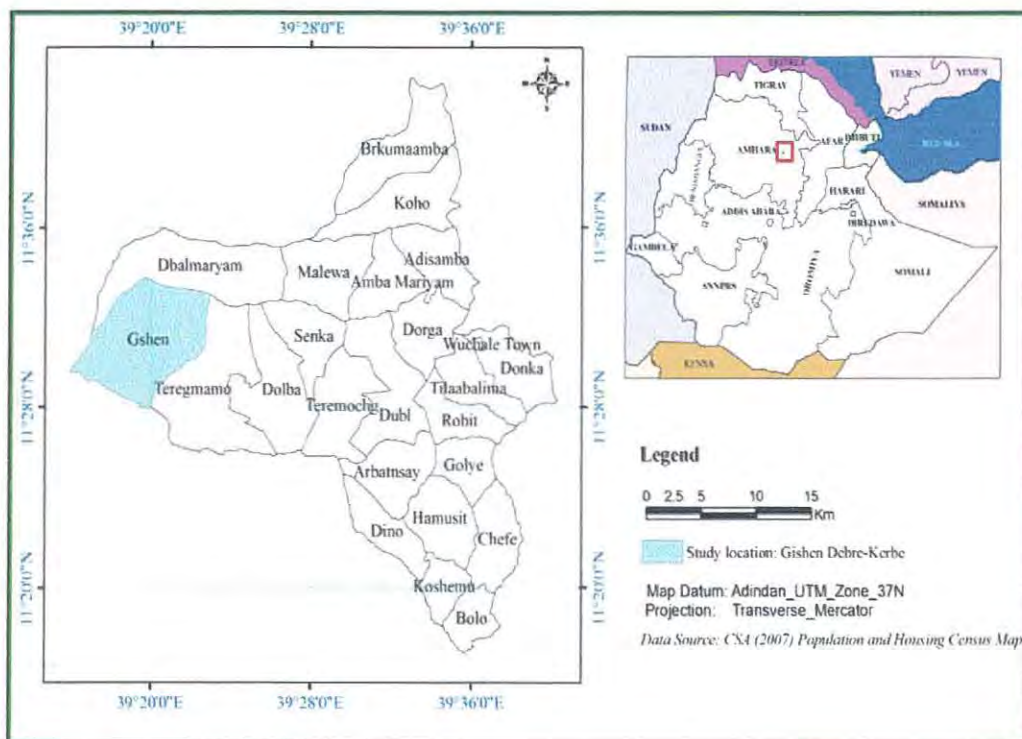


Figure 2: geographic location of Gishen in Ethiopia (right) and the specific location of Gishen in Ambasel Woreda in Amhara regional state (left)

<sup>4</sup> It is equivalent to district (county)

Gishen Debre Kerbe Mariam has *dega* (2300-3200 msl) agro-ecological zone climatic condition with average temperature of 10-15<sup>0</sup>c. Air condition on September and October is very cold and a bit warmer on January (personal experience). Most of its land is covered by white soil and some with black soil. There are some plants species planted in all churches and surrounding churches some of them includes; *Eucalyptus*, *Cupruss*, *Podocarpus*.

### **3.2. Research Design**

Though study on finding out challenges and prospects in most cases uses qualitative research methods, this research used both quantitative and qualitative research designs. This enabled the researcher to provide evidence on how some of the challenges hinder religious tourism development with statistical figures. Moreover, the quantitative research design has enabled the researcher to provide more additional information on visitors profile and their view. Hence; the quantitative research design used was survey research design, while qualitative design was field research design. Survey research design was used because it is appropriate design and method for collecting data through self-administered questionnaire with high number of respondents (large Sample). Field Research design was used for assessing and understanding socio-environmental impact of religious tourism as well as to identify and see some challenges and prospects for development of religious tourism in and around the study area.

### **3.3. Data Collection Instruments**

In order to obtain both primary and secondary data the researcher used different data collection instruments. These instruments includes: visitor questionnaire survey, key informant interview, observation (direct and participant observation), informal discussion and secondary data reviewing (books, reports, brochures, etc.). These instruments are discussed as follows.

**Self-Administered Questionnaire Survey:** this was made with pilgrims/tourists and gave information about the pilgrim motivation, length of stay, whether they come to Gishen Mariam other than the peak season and the reasons if they don't come, their level of expectation and actual experience, the problem they encountered while they are in the study area, their recommendation for betterment of study area etc. The questionnaire was prepared in English and Amharic. It was pre-tested and amended before the actual questionnaire survey was made.

Only few of questionnaires were filled in English while many of the questionnaires prepared and filled were in Amharic.

**Key Informant Interview:** was made with church leaders and servants, local people and government authority representatives. The interview that was employed with church informants was helpful for understanding and obtaining information regarding the rules and regulation of the church, attitude towards tourism, whether there was an activity in encouraging potential visitors during off season etc. On the other hand, the interview with government authority representatives has helped to understand government attention and activities in making the destination one of the top international tourism destinations, and to obtain information regarding supply factors that are important for having both international and domestic pilgrims. The semi structured interview with local residents gave information about the potential of Gishen for tourism, level of involvement of local people etc.

**Observation (passive and active):** was made in order to enumerate and take inventory of religious tourism resources and products, and to see impact of religious tourism in and around the study area. Researcher's last eight years continuous participant observation on annual festival on *Meskerem 21* (October 1) was used as an input to this research. In addition to this, some tour operators and travel agents website who sell Ethiopia's tourism product was visited in order to see their contribution for development and promotion of the study area.



**Picture 1: Participant Observation (Photos by Deacon Eyasu and Yosef)**

**Secondary Data:** was used and managed in order to see and analyze arrival trends in different years and months. Secondary data sources such as Audio and Video Media: preaching,

documentary films and spiritual songs; both secular and spiritual books; magazines and newsletters; report and research papers; leaflets and other important resources were used.

### 3.4. Sampling Design

Participants in visitor questionnaire survey were selected using availability sampling technique. Since tourists are not residents rather are temporally staying in particular destination, it is impossible to know exactly how many tourists would attend the festival next year. But it is possible to predict how many tourists are going to attend the festival next year based on previous years tourists flow trend. According to Bantalem Tadesse (2010) and WHO (2010) the maximum length of stay in the destination was one to nine days and visitors number was estimated to be 350,000-500,000 per year. Considering visitors' length of stay and number of arrival trend, the researcher took 200 samples, however the exact sample size was 384 based on O'Leary (2004) sample size determination technique. Around thirty questionnaires were given to pilgrims in their resting places such as tents and rented houses. Around fifty questionnaires were filled in Saint Gabriel the Archangel Church and the remaining questionnaires were filled in Saint Michael the Archangel and *Igziabher-Ab* (God the Father) churches. The way the questionnaires were distributed was based on accessibility and willingness of pilgrims to fill the questionnaire.

Key informants were chosen purposely by the researcher, as a result they were chosen based on their knowledge and responsibility of the individuals in relation to the study area. Key informants that were semi structurally interviewed were from: *Gishen Gote*<sup>5</sup> police, Ambasel Woreda Culture and Tourism Office (AWCT), South Wollo Culture and Tourism Department (SWCT), South Wollo Traffic Police Department (AWTP), Ambasel Woreda Traffic Police Office (AWTP), and Church Sebeka Gubae<sup>6</sup>, *Betekihnet*<sup>7</sup> and SWD.

Out of the total 44 tour operators that had website, 30 websites were purposely chosen, visited and checked whether they market Gishen Mariam under their websites.

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<sup>5</sup> *Gote* means a sub kebele. It is the lowest government structure which commonly used in Amhara regional state.

<sup>6</sup> *Sebeka Gubae* is the smallest unit of church administration which is accountable either to the Woreda *betekihnet* or to the diocese. For example Gishen Sebeka Gubae is accountable to SWD.

<sup>7</sup> *Betekihnet* is church administration structure which is found below diocese

### **3.5. Data Analysis**

All data gathered through visitor questionnaire survey were coded, entered and analyzed in Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20. Frequency distribution, central tendencies and dispersion were computed in order to show respondent characteristics and their opinion to different questions. Cross tabulation was also computed in order to show the relationship between two different variables. Qualitative data was analyzed through categorical and explanatory analysis technique. Data obtained through observation was described in text with the support of pictures. Data obtained through interview with different key informants was analyzed through explanatory and category methods. Some of the results were then presented in forms of tables, graphs, charts and pictorial devices.

Likert scale was used to analyze tourist opinion about tourism resources by giving zero to “no idea about the resource”, 1 to “not attractive”, 2 to “less attractive” and 3 to “attractive”. Based on average number each resource categorized into three groups: attractive, less attractive and not attractive. Between one and one point five as “not attractive”, between one point five and two point five as “less attractive” and more than two point five as “attractive”.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1. Respondent Characteristics

In order to gather data from religious tourists and/or pilgrims, 200 samples were taken non-randomly. But only 177 filled questionnaires were taken into analysis. Out of the 177 respondents, 63% of them were male and 37% were female. In terms of age composition, majority of respondents were between the age of 18 and 30 (50.6%), followed by age groups between 30 and 45 age (37.6%), above 45 (9.6%) and below 18 (2.2%). Except two respondents who did not mention their religious affiliation, all respondents were EOTC religion followers. In terms of their origin, 68 % were from Addis Ababa whereas 32% were from 30 different towns of Ethiopia. Hence it can be said that 100% respondents were from Ethiopia. International visitors were not seen during the study on either of the two top festivals (October and January). This indicates that there are more things to be done in order to attract international visitors.

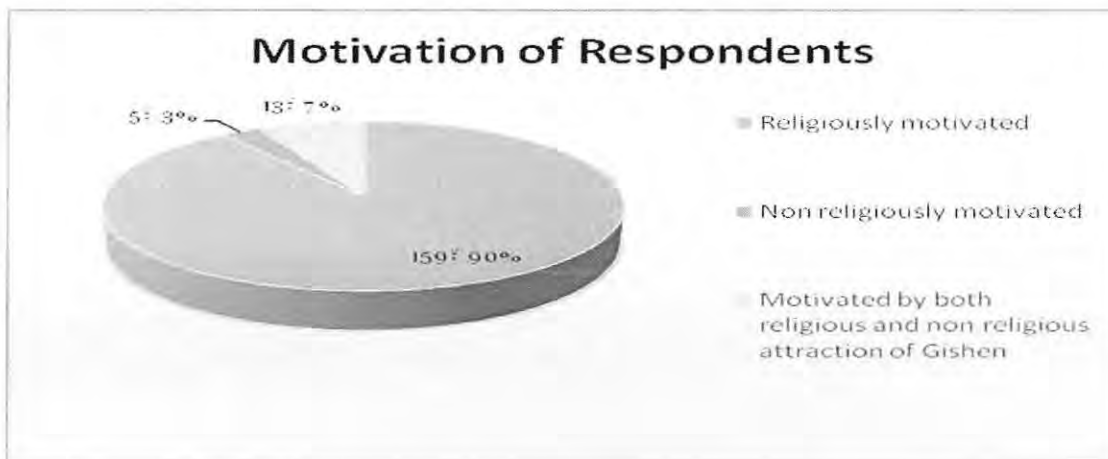


Figure 3: Motivation of respondents

Figure 3 shown above reveals that respondents have different reasons to visit Gishen Mariam: 90% of respondent were religiously motivated. Religious motivations include; for Cleansing own sin (37.4%), for praying (36.6%), for attending annual festival (7.3%), felt religiously obliged to

visit (4.2%), for *tsebel* (the holy water) (3.8%). Non religious motivations include; feel as own heritage (1.9%), research and education (1.1%) and for being blessed (.4%). visiting (6.1%).

Table 1: Length of Stay

For how long are you going to stay here?	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1-2 days	2	1.1	1.1
3-4 days	21	11.9	13.0
5-6 days	73	41.2	54.2
7 days	51	28.8	83.1
9 days	26	14.7	97.7
You don't know for how long you stay	4	2.3	100.0
Total	177	100.0	

Respondent were asked to know their length of stay. As the result showed in table 1, the maximum length of stay was nine days whereas the minimum length of stay was one overnight. Average length of stay of respondents was 6 days. Mode and median is 5.5 days. However, this doesn't represent pilgrims or religious tourists who went on January or other time of the year.

Table 2: Accommodation used

Accommodation used	Frequency	Percent
Tent	20	11.3
Renting house/room	95	53.7
Surrounding the church	44	24.9
Own/family/friend house	17	9.5
In-side the temple	1	.6
Total	177	100.0

Four accommodation types were used by respondents, table 2 shown above highlighted that majority of the respondent used rented houses (53.7%) followed by respondents sheltered inside the church (24.3%), tent (11.3%), their own/family/ friend's house (9.6%). There was problem of getting hotels and guest houses. This shows that there is a need to construct guest houses, lodges and other facilities that could provide accommodation services.

Table 3: Means of transport

Cross-tabulation		Means of transportation (count (percent))					Total
		Private car	Bus	Foot	Animal	Partly on foot	
Reason for coming on foot partially or the whole	Shortage of money for transportation	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (1.1%)	0 (0%)	3 (1.7%)	5 (2.8%)
	For being blessed	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (2.3%)	0 (0%)	13 (7.3%)	17 (9.6%)
	Fearing the road coming by motor vehicle	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (1.2%)	0 (0%)	2 (1.2%)
	Other ...	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (2.3%)	4 (2.3%)
	Not concerned	13 (7.3%)	132 (75%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (2.3%)	149 (77.3%)
<b>Total</b>		13 (7.3%)	132 (75%)	6 (3.4%)	2 (1.2%)	24 (13.6%)	177 (100%)

As shown in table 3 above, respondents answered to the questions what means of transport they used; the result showed majority of respondents used bus as means of transportation (75 percent). The other means of transports besides bus were partly on foot (13.6%), private car (7.3%) and on foot and animal (horses or mules) (4.6%). Those who went on foot partly or as the whole were due to the following reasons. Out of the 16% of respondents who went Gishen on their foot, 9.5% of them were just for being blessed and be part of the covenant written in the *metshafe tefut* (book of history) stated as *“for whom, who come on foot to Gishen having money for transportation shall be rewarded more than the one who come by vehicle or animal”*. Shortage of money for transportation for 3% of respondents and other reasons such as accomplishing vow for 2.3% of respondents were reasons in using their foot as means of transportation.

Table 4: With whom respondent come

With whom do you come?	Frequency	Percent
Alone	19	10.7
With family	31	17.5
With friends	33	18.6
With organized group	94	53.1
Total	177	100.0

Table 4 shown above depicts respondent behavior in terms of their organization, 53.1% were in groups, 18.6% with friends, 17.5% with family and those who visit Gishen Mariam alone were 10.7% of the respondents. The result found agreed with the finding of Rinschede (1992) stated “the least group are those who come alone”. Organized group trip is organized by parish churches, Sunday schools and spiritual associations.

Table 5: Frequency of visit

<b>Frequency of visit</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1-5 times	74	41.8
5-10 times	31	17.5
10-15 times	11	6.2
Above 15 times	8	4.5
Once	53	29.9
Total	177	100.0

Table 5 shown above highlights that 42 per cent of respondents visited Gishen Mariam 1- 5 times. It is followed by those who visited Gishen Mariam for the first time (30%), 5-10 times (17.5%), 10-15 times (6%) and above 15 times (4.5%). In general 70% of the respondents were at least for their second time and at most for their 20<sup>th</sup> time. This implies that many of the respondents at least know about the study area more than one time and have knowledge about Gishen Mariam. Therefore, the questions that were prepared were filled with knowledge.

## 4.2. Religious Tourism Potential of Gishen

About eleven potential tourism resources were first identified by the research, which are important for religious tourism development in Gishen Mariam. Once this has been done table was prepared in order to see which resources were more attractive to the religious tourists who have been in the site during the study time. Along with their detail description and opinions of the 177 respondents on the attraction level of each resource is presented in the following sub topics. Out of these eleven resources some of them were being utilized by domestics but not by international tourists. By their nature most of the resources are not affected by seasonality, they can be visited at any time in a year. This creates an opportunity for continuous religious tourism development in Gishen Mariam. In general Gishen has potential in attracting any tourist who is interested in nature, history, or religion.

Table 6: Opinion of Religious tourists about different religious tourism resources

Religious tourism resources	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Landscape and Scenery	2.79	0.76	1
Religious Festival	2.78	0.76	2
Church Buildings	2.73	0.84	3
Secular and Religious History	2.69	0.89	4
Holy water (Tsebel)	2.40	1.18	5
Movable Tangible Heritages	2.19	1.30	6
Small Man-Made Cave	1.97	1.32	7
Natural Cave of St Gabriel	1.97	1.42	7
Culture of inhabitants	1.91	1.27	8
Monasticism	1.75	1.37	9
Museum	1.21	1.44	10

Table 6 shown above, highlights the opinion of religious tourists to the eleven selected tourism resources. Resources such as landscape and scenery, religious festivals, church buildings and history have more than 2.5 average score whereas except museum which has less than 1.5 average score, other six resources ranked 5-9 have average score between 2.5 and 1.5. Therefore, resources ranked from first to fourth are attractive, the next six resources ranked from 5-9 are less attractive and the 10<sup>th</sup> ranked resource is not attractive.

#### 4.2.1. Landscape and Scenery

Almost all *Ambasel* district is endowed with spectacular mountainous chains. Landscape of Gishen Mariam is unique and very beautiful that could attract both nature based and culture based tourists. To the researcher's knowledge, Gishen is the only cross shaped mountain plateau which has an altitude of more than 3000 meters in the world. The entrance to the plateau is only one, there is no another way to go up. Before its invasion and damage by *Gragn* Ahmed <sup>8</sup>in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the main entrance of Gishen Mariam was through the current position of church of Archangel Saint Urael. Today's main entrance is through the head of the cross which is built by Empress Menen <sup>9</sup>(Interview, 01-2013). The cross shaped mountainous landscape signifies the presence of the True Cross. If one looks at the mountain from air it seems manmade cross (picture 2). It also looks like Jesus crucified and bowed his head after he gave up his ghost as the Holy Bible tell, "...When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, it is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." (John 19:30).

Besides Gishen's landscape, the landscape formation and different types of land use from *kutaber* through Gishen are spectacular and eye-catching for tourists. Moreover surrounding landscape formation is incredible especially looking from the top of the mountain. Mountains of *Meqdela*, *Delanta* and *Tenta* are another landscape features that give Gishen Mariam more importance for trekkers besides religious tourists.

Though only provided during festival season on *Meskerem* (September); mountain trekking, horse riding, scenic viewing and photo-graphing have been practiced by pilgrims. Possible additional products include; research and education, bird watching, etc. For trekkers on their way to Gishen from *kutaber* they face two challenging mountains called *Wollo-Ber* and *Qogat* mountains.

This resource was very appealing to most of the respondents. Result obtained through questionnaire survey verified this saying. Compared to the other resources this resource

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<sup>8</sup> Ahmed Gragn was one of the Muslim Sultans in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. He was burning and demolishing churches and monasteries in his way expanding Muslim religion in Ethiopia.

<sup>9</sup> Empress Menen was born in *Ambasel Woreda*. The place where she got baptized is near to Gishen Mariam.

was rated as attractive by 99.4% respondents. Therefore, it can be concluded that this resource is very potential resource to attract many more tourists each year.



**Picture 2: The only gate and the cross shaped plateau of Gishen (Source: W/ro Amaretech Ademe via email, 26/4/2013)**

#### **4.2.2. Religious Festival**

According to Nolan and Nolan (1992), religious festivals are component of religious tourism attractions. In this regard, Gishen has a lot to provide to the religious tourists. There are five churches; each comprising at most three arks commemorated each month with their annual celebrations. The most important, unique and colorful festivals celebrated in Gishen are *Meskerem 21*, *Tir 21* (January 29) and *Megabit 10* (*Mesqel*: one of the sub religious festivals of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church).

The Festival celebrated each year on *Meskerem 21* (October 1) is for two reasons; one, it is the date whereby Emperor Zera'a Ya'iqob <sup>10</sup> finished building the church and celebrated entrance of the True Cross to Gishen, and two, it is monthly commemoration date of Saint Mary.

The second most popular festival at Gishen Mariam is *Astere'o Mariam*, celebrated on *Tir 21* (January 29) commemorating the death of Saint Mary. Wedding ceremony on January 29 is common to take place. Therefore, those who wanted to see how the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church Wedding ceremony looks like could go and attend the ceremony.

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<sup>10</sup> He was king of Ethiopia since 1434-1468 (Tadesse Tamirat, 1972)

The third less common is *Mesqel* festival is celebrated on September 26 and 27 each year to commemorate the finding of the True Cross. It is also celebrated on Megabit 10 to commemorate the discovery of the True Cross by St Helena.

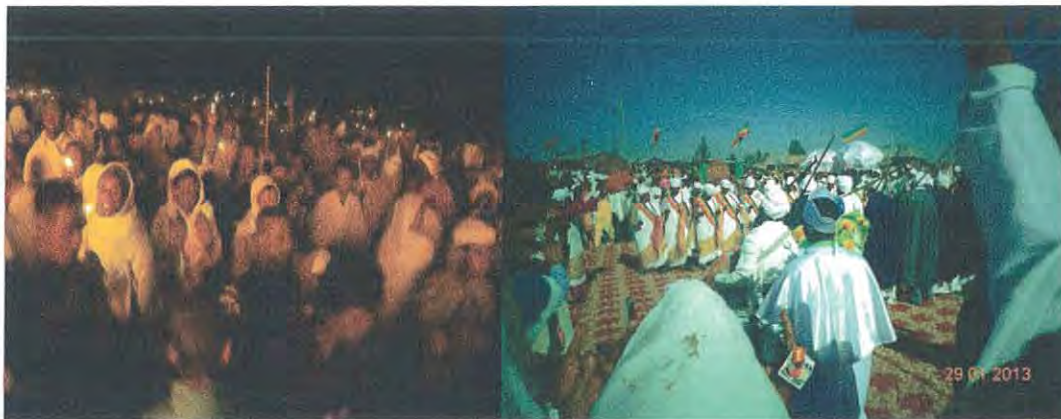
Moreover, an explanation by the Sebeka Gubae for when, how and why church service is offered in Gishen Mariam, is replied as follows,

*Every day there is Sebhate Fikur prayer, the first week of every month there is community prayer, on every Sunday and monthly Saints' memorial-day especially every months of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> days (in Ethiopian Calendar) there is mass service (Interview, 01-2013).*

Thus, religious tourist can get church services at any time of the year they go. Presence of such festival could encourage visitors make travel to Gishen at any time of the year.

Religious festivals in EOTC in general and Gishen Mariam in particular are celebrated according to the Holy Bible (1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 15:16)

Finding on the opinion of respondents about the potential of this resource to attract tourists revealed that 92 per cent of respondents said religious festival as attractive. Only 1 per cent of the respondents said this resource is less attractive. There was no respondent who rated the resource “not attractive”. Therefore, it can be said that this resource is very attractive to religious tourists from respondents' perspective.



**Picture 3: Religious festival celebration at Gishen Mariam**

### 4.2.3. Church Buildings

There are five churches situated in different parts of the flat area at the top of the cross Shape Mountain: *Gishen Mariam* (dedicated to Saint Mary), *Igziabher-Ab* (dedicated to God the Father), Archangels Saint Michael, Saint Gabriel and Saint Urael churches. Each of the churches was built in different times. They have different designs and size. They are described as follows.

#### 4.2.3.1. *Igziabher-Ab* church

*Igziabher-Ab* (God the father) church was first built in 517 E.C. by a church father called Abba *Fekade-Kiristos* or Felix (who came from Greece). The first church design was similar to grassy hut in rural Amhara region. Before Emperor Zera'a Ya'iqob rebuilt the church of *Igziabher-Ab* and decorated with expensive minerals such as gold and diamond (enqu), the church was renewed by different kings such as Yikuno-Amlak<sup>11</sup>. Since then according to *Mergeta*<sup>12</sup> *Yemane-Birhan*, the church was renewed by Emperor *Sertse-Dingle*,<sup>13</sup> Emperor *Adiam-Seged Eyasu*<sup>14</sup>, Emperor *Tekle-Giorgis*, Ras Ali and Emperor Minilik II in different periods (interview, 01-2013).

According to Ethiopian Heritage Research and Conservation Authority (EHRCA), current design of *Igziabher-Ab* church (picture 4, the left one) was brought from Jerusalem by Emperor *Minilik* II and built accordingly by King Michael of Wollo (the right picture of picture 4). As showed in picture 4 below, the church has cross shape design which is classified under one of the four types of EOTC church buildings design called *Igre Mesqel* (foot of cross). The True Cross and other sacred materials that had brought with it are deposited in this church. Inside the holy of holies, there are different icons that narrates the story of the True Cross (interview and discussion). Only men are allowed to enter and get church service inside this church.

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<sup>11</sup> He was the first king who restored Solomonic Dynasty in 1270 (Tadesse Tamirat, 1972)

<sup>12</sup> Name given to person who graduate the church education in Qine bet (house of Poetry)

<sup>13</sup> Reigned from 1563-1597. His former name was Atnaf Seged I

<sup>14</sup> Reigned 19 July 1682-13 October 1706 (Iyasu I)



**Picture 4: Design and church of Igziabher-Ab (photos by AWCT and the author)**

#### **4.2.3.2. Saint Mary Church**

Saint Mariam Church is round shape decorated with different colors. It was first built by Emperor Yikuno-Amlak in 1275 in order to make Gishen accessible for both men and women to enter and participate in any service of the church. This church was used to be for women. Many religious tourists used this church for their shelter and prayer during



the heavy crowd. The church was renewed in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries by *Emahoy* <sup>15</sup>Eleni who was sister of Emperor Zera'a Ya'iqob and Empress Menen respectively. Like *Igziabher-Ab* Church this church is also decorated with different paintings.

**Picture 5: Saint Mary Church (photo by the author)**

#### **4.2.3.3. Archangel Saint Michael Church**

Archangel Saint Michael Church was built in 1953 by the Arch bishop of Gondar Diocese *Abune Michael*. This church was situated on west side of the cross shaped mountain of Gishen Mariam, in other words, the church was situated on the foot of the cross (imagine that cross lay on ground). Though one prominent informant of the church agreed with the presence of the church but he was not happy with its position on the cross shape mountain (interview, 01-2013). He prefers if the church was situated at the right

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<sup>15</sup> Title given to nuns

side of the cross where church of the Archangel Saint Gabriel is now situated, because EOTC taught say, “Saint Michael stands on the right side of Saint Mary whereas Saint Gabriel on the left side of Saint Mary”. Indeed, if it was situated in this way the church situation would teach more people about the church’s taught in practice. Informant from the *Sebeka Gubae* of Gishen Mariam told, “There are two arks called *Lideta* (birth of Saint Mary) and *Abune Tekle-Haymanot* commemorated on 1<sup>st</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> days of each month of the year respectively” (interview, 01-2013). The unique feature of this church



building besides paintings is that the color of the outside wall of the church showed miraculous color change: bright yellow and dark yellow (observation, 09-2012). Church of Saint George and visitors’ way are seen from this church. In tourism terms it is called as view point.

**Picture 6: Archangel Saint Michael Church (photo by the author)**

#### **4.2.3.4. Archangel Saint Gabriel church**

Archangel Saint Gabriel church was built in 1995 by volunteer husband and wife called



Ato Yimesgen G/Egziabhier and W/ro Aberash Nigussie. This church has round shape, situated on the right hand of the cross shaped mountain (see picture 7). It was built to commemorate the Archangel Gabriel on every 19<sup>th</sup> day of the month.

**Picture 7: Church of Archangel Saint Gabriel (photo by the author)**

#### **4.2.3.5. Archangel Saint Urael Church**

The new and the fifth church called Archangel Saint Urael church was built and started giving service for pilgrims in this Ethiopian academic year 2005, is situated near to the

main gate of the cross shaped Mountain. Structure of this church is similar to that of Saint Mary church. The church was built in the name of Archangel Urael for its contribution as it is one of the seven Archangels who led Abbot *Fekade-Kiristos* (Felix) and Emperor Zera'a Ya'iqob while finding Gishen Mariam; it is the one who blessed and glorified Gishen with the blood of Jesus Christ, and gave to Saint Marry (key informant interview, 01-2013). The Archangel is commemorated on 22<sup>nd</sup> day of each month of the year.



**Picture 8: Archangel Saint Urael church (photo by Ayalew)**

From the opinion of the respondents the result showed in table 7 demonstrates that, 90.4% and 1.1% of respondents rated the five church architectural designs and everything they possessed as attractive and less attractive respectively. In general from respondents' perspective the five churches are attractive. Moreover, as Nolan and Nolan (1992) described in their study shrine and temples are some of the attractions that appeals religious tourists.

**Table 7: Opinion of visitors on church buildings**

<i>Church buildings</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Less attractive	2	1.1
Attractive	160	90.4
Not applicable	15	8.5
Total	177	100.0

#### 4.2.4. Secular and Religious history of the site

##### 4.2.4.1. Before Coming of the True Cross

The history in this period covers from creation of our world until coming of the True Cross in the 15<sup>th</sup> C. According to Zemedkun Bekele (1992 EC) and Mergeta Yemane-Birhan (interview, 01-2013), Gishen was protected by Saint Angles until 522 AD. But later on in 525 Gishen became place where people started to live following its establishment as a monastery by a monk called *Fekade-Kiristos* or Felix with King Kaleb<sup>16</sup> by the order of God the Lord revealed in his vision. While he was establishing Gishen as a monastery he built church of *Igziabher-Ab* with Ark of Saint Mary and *Igziabher-Ab* which were brought from Yemen. Gishen remained as men monastery until the reign of Yikuno-Amlak who built Saint Mary Church in order to access Gishen for women and men.

The mountain has had different names before it was called Gishen. Until the coming of king Lalibela to Gishen, the mountain was called as *Debre Negodguad*, this name was given because roaring was heard on the top of the mountain (interview, 02-2013). Following the coming and trying to build temple of God the Father by excavating cave on the mountain by king Lalibela, the name was changed to *Debre Igziabher* (Zemedkun, 2007). After a few years, the name has been changed for the third time to *Debre Negest* meaning mountain of royal families, during the reign of Emperor Yekuno-Amlak. This name *Debre Negest* was given because nearly 590 royal families were attending school on the top of mountain (interview, 01-2013). However, the reason given for “why *Debre Negest* was given to Gishen” by Tadesse Tamirat (1972) stated in his book of church and the state seems contradicted:

*Before coming of the true cross Gishen Mariam was serving as royal prison due to its unique geographical isolation during medieval time. Even following the death of Emperor Yikuno-Amlak Gishen was used for imprisoning distant relatives of the deceased king in order to prevent them from their active role in struggle for*

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<sup>16</sup> The last major Axumite King of Ethiopia ruled from 514-543 AD (<http://www.dacb.org/stories/ethiopia/kaleb2.html>)

*succession. During this time Gishen was called as Debre Negest (mountain of royal family) (Tadesse Tamirat, 1972).*

But from logical reasoning both reasons could be true. Because, the former lacks the information why royal families exclusively attend school at Gishen while the latter, also lacks whether the successors become a king with or without education. Hence, it is possible to predict that Gishen was used to be school for royal families because royal families were imprisoned due to its geographical isolation for keeping peace in that time. And a successor of deceased king was selected from imprisoned royal families to become a king and lead the country with the knowledge he acquired at Gishen Mariam. Therefore, from these premises it can be concluded that the name *Debre Negest* was given for both reasons.

The current name of mount Gishen is *Debre Kerbe* meaning place of Cross, given following the coming and burring of True Cross inside the Holy of Holies of Church *Igziabher-Ab*.

In general mount Gishen is the living heritage for both Zagwe<sup>17</sup> and Solomonic<sup>18</sup> Dynasties of Ethiopia. Because King Lalibela who belong to Zagwe Dynasty built a church and Emperors who reigned starting from Yikuno-Amlak had put their legacy to their successors are from the restored Solomonic dynasty. According to Tadesse Tamirat (1972), Mount Gishen was used as royal prison for about 176 years (1270-1446). It is the place whereby Ethiopian peace during the medieval period was maintained as being a political center. This history could make Gishen Mariam a living laboratory for studying Ethiopian History.

#### **4.2.4.2. Coming of True Cross**

According to book of *Tefut* and EOTC taught, Emperor Dawit II was the king who brought the True Cross from Egypt. In order to get the True Cross from the then Alexandria, Emperor Dawit II was beseeched to free Pop Michael the Alexandria from

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<sup>17</sup> Zagwe Dynasty was established in 10<sup>th</sup> century by Agew people in Adefa, it stays in power for about three centuries (<http://www.royalark.net/Ethiopia/zagwe.htm> )

<sup>18</sup> Solomonic Dynasty was established since Minilik I it then continued till emperor Haile-Sillassie I

Egyptian Muslim leader by Christians. He then with the support of Ethiopian monks and abbots had stopped Blue Nile River from its flowing down to Egypt. His intention was first just to free the pop but later changed to get the True Cross from Alexandria. However, Egyptian Christians and the ruler of the time initially sent gold and other expensive minerals as lobbying to Emperor Dawit II they were forced to send him the True Cross with other sacred materials once they realized that Emperor Dawit is not to let Blue Nile River unless he gets the True Cross. Emperor Dawit while coming back home receiving the True Cross dream that after letting the Blue Nile River to flow down Egypt the True Cross needs to be kept on Cross like Mountain or place, written in Ge'ez as “ይነብር መስቀልየ ቡዲበ መስቀል (*Yinebir Mesqelye Bedibe Mesqel*)”. Unfortunately he died on his way back home in Sudan (book of *Tefut*).

After nearly twenty years since the death of Emperor Dawit II, his youngest son Emperor Zera'a Ya'iqob took power and brought the True Cross and other sacred materials. The sacred materials brought from Egypt and Jerusalem are; Icons of Saint Mary and *Kura'ate Re'esu*, Ark of Saint Michael and the True Cross brought by Emperor Dawit II until Sudan; and *sprung*, crown of thorns and Scarlet Robe (Mathew 27:28) brought by Emperor Zera'a Ya'iqob to Ethiopia.

Emperor Zera'a Ya'iqob was ordered by the Lord to put and keep the True Cross on a place or a mountain of Cross, saying “አንብር መስቀልየ ቡዲበ መስቀል (*Anbir Mesqelye Bedibe Mesqel*)”. As soon as he arrived in Ethiopia he started finding the place that was suitable for putting and keeping the True Cross. After his third trial led by Saint Urael the Archangel, he found Gishen as a suitable place. He then built a church and deposited all sacred materials including the True Cross in church of *Igziabher-Ab*. The True Cross and sacred materials were put as follows: first they were put in a box of gold; second the box of gold was put in a silver box; third, the silver box was put in an iron box; fourth, the iron box was put in another iron box; and finally the iron box was put in a bronze box and this was stamped by the king of kings and was put in a bed made from ivory.

Since that time, the True Cross and other sacred materials had never been accessed to public even to the top church leaders. According to an informant from the church, the True Cross and the other sacred materials weren't and wouldn't appear to public

(interview, 01-2013). The reason he mentioned is because it is the order of God not to access His Cross to the world. In addition, the informant said that the power of the Cross is very high that can destroy our world (*Meqseft*), if one tries to see it. It was decided, that strong spiritual restrictions were to pass by the contemporary bishops called Abba Michael and Abba Gabriel and also Abba *Yohannes Episcopos*, so that no king could take it ( the cross) from Gishen to other Place (Book of *Tefut*).

With regard to the actual size of the True Cross there is no agreement between historians and among church scholars. *Mergeta Yemane-Berhan* and *Memre*<sup>19</sup> *Simea-Tsediq* claimed that the main body part of True Cross is buried in *Igziabher-Ab* church (interview, 01-2013). Their argument is based on the statement written in the book of history (*Tefut*) as “*ambir meskeliye be dibe mesqel* (put the Cross on the cross shaped mountain or place)”. They said that this statement tells us that the True Cross is whole. In addition to this they said that the story written by many authors saying “the True Cross is divided into four parts which then distributed to four countries such as Rome, Greek, Paris and Egypt (now in Ethiopia)” doesn’t mean that main body part is divided. The three churches took not the main body part of the True Cross, for instance Rome took the upper part of the cross.

However, many Ethiopians even historians believe that the True Cross is *Gemad* (parcel) (Tadesse Tamirat, 1972). Even Synod of EOTC has yet not recognized that the True Cross is whole (interview, 03-2013). The Archbishop of SWD is still saying that *Gemade Meskelu* (parcel of the True Cross) (Atsede Wudneh, 2013, May).

Table 8: Opinion of religious tourists on history of Gishen Mariam

History of the site	Frequency	Percent
Less Attractive	3	1.7
Attractive	157	88.7
Have no idea	17	9.6
Total	177	100.0

<sup>19</sup> Its direct meaning is teacher but traditionally this prefix is given to priest who teach church traditional education

From religious tourist opinion as shown in table 8 above, 90.4% of religious tourist rated history of Gishen Mariam as attractive and less attractive with average score rate of 2.69. Qualitatively history of Gishen Debre Kerbe Mariam is attractive. This is the main motivating factors for many religious tourists.

Gishen Debre Kerbe Mariam is very important place for individuals who are motivated by either spiritual or secular history.

#### 4.2.5. Holy Water (Tsebel)

Holy water shown in picture 9 below was brought from river Jordan through a number of



camels in 15<sup>th</sup> century. Since then, this holy water has been casting evils from people, healing from their fleshy disease. Each year many pilgrims fetched and take holy water return home. Holy water is considered as souvenir whereby many pilgrims are expected to bring back to their home (observation).

**Picture 9: Holy water (photo by the author)**

Nevertheless, it has been only accessible three times per year for religious tourists. It has been provided in unorganized ways with absence of rooms and appointed priests who provide the service. In order to make this resource one of religious tourism product, it should be at least accessible at any time of the year and the service should be offered in organized ways by appointed priests.

**Table 9: Opinion of religious tourist over holy water**

<i>How do you rate Holy water</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Less attractive	4	2.0
Attractive	139	79.0
Have no idea	34	19.0
Total	177	100.0

This resource has a potential to attract people who wanted spiritual treatment of their disease. Table 9 shown above revealed that vast majority of religious tourist said holy water is attractive (79%). In tourism word Gishen has potential for health tourism.

#### 4.2.6. Monasticism

Monasticism was first started in Egypt then it expanded throughout the world. In Ethiopia it was started by the Nine Saints in the fifth century (Tadesse Tamirat, 1972). Even though it has different meaning and culture in different countries and religions, monasticism in Ethiopia is a life whereby individuals live for the sake of spiritual reward by ignoring secular temporary life either alone or in group in wilderness areas and monasteries. As written in *Fetha Negest* (justice of king) “monastic life is wisdom of Christian law and monks are earthly angels or heavenly people, followers of Jesus Christ as much as it is humanly possible...” (Chapter 10:1). Their daily job is serving God and praying. They eat one meal per day. The food they eat is called *Nifro and Dabe*. They fast every day except Saturday and Sunday including holy days.

Those individuals who became monks are classified into two: celibates and non celibate (married/widow and single). Those who are celibates and educated in church tradition can become archbishops while the latter couldn't. In general monasticism is a way of life for the sake of blessing and saving soul, and it is very unique way of life whereby EOTC religious followers give prestige.

During the time this study was conducted, 500 monks and nuns were reported as they were living in the church. However, their life was not like in other monasteries of Ethiopia whereby they live committing spiritual activities alone. Because, Gishen is parish church not monastery; both married people and monks who dedicated their life to Jesus Christ live. According to the study conducted in 2008, fifty monks were forcefully evicted from the church by the administration of the church in the year 2000 E.C. The saddest news was that many of the monks had no house, no means of income, no land (interview, 01-2013). Out of the 152 direct safety-net program (DSNP) beneficiaries in Gishen kebele, many of them were monks (interview, 01-2013).

TABLE 101. OPINION OF RELIGIOUS TOURISTS ON MONASTICISM

How do you rate monasticism?	Frequency	Percent
Not attractive	11	6.2
Less attractive	17	9.6
Attractive	88	49.7
Have no idea	61	34.5
Total	177	100

Though there was no well-organized monastic life in the church, religious tourists rated life of monks as it is attractive (50%), less attractive (10%) and not attractive (6%). Those who exactly know that there was no monastic life in Gishen were 34 per-cent of the respondents. It can be suggested that those who rated monasticism as attractive perhaps didn't know about the absence of monastic life in Gishen; because if they had known, they wouldn't have rated the monastic life in the church as attractive. Besides, they shouldn't have known that Gishen Mariam is a parish church not a monastery whereby only monks and nuns live.

Whatever happens today, there is a prospect that Gishen Mariam will become monastery in the near future and thus people will go for getting monastic experience or service. Monastic life is the reason for many people traveling to religious sites in Greece for example (Dora, 2012). It also could enable Gishen Mariam be visited at any time of the year.

#### 4.2.7. Natural Cave of Saint Gabriel the Archangel

According to church taught, Natural cave of the Archangel Saint Gabriel is discovered by a monk called *Giorgis Zemenber* in 682 AD during the reign of *Bahire-Ekla*. This Natural cave with its religious resources is situated west down side of Mount Gishen Mariam. To reach to this natural cave from mount Gishen Mariam and get back, it takes four and half hours on average. There are two churches situated some meters apart: the first church that can be seen from Gishen is Saint George Church and the second church is found within the cave called *Bisrate Gabriel Church*. Inside the cave there are four holy waters prominent for EOTC religion followers. These holy waters (*Tsebel*) are named by

Saint *Arsema*, Saint George, Archangel Saint Gabriel and John the Baptist. During the study on January, 2013, *Tsebel* of John the Baptist was dried hence not accessible. *Mergeta Yemane-Birhan* in his book stated “all the four *Tsebel* have healing power” in providing evidence to this statement he stated,

- 1) *Women who entered to the cave to fetch water being in period were chased out by a big serpent that came from inside the cave. As a result of this, women of the village usually entered to the cave once after they have got cleaned from the period.*
- 2) *At least twelve evils were casted from a girl who came from Merhabetie by tsebel of John the Baptist.*
- 3) *Tsebel of Saint George has supported villagers in their success and has freed some of the drug users/abuser.*
- 4) *as the tsebel of Saint Arsema in different regions of the country have been doing miracles the tsebel of Arsema found in the cave healed a woman from HIV AIDS (Yemane-Birhan, n.d).*

These days, people are eager to be healed from their disease by any means. In this regard, these four holy waters could be preferred by these individuals. Therefore, from tourism point of view these *Tsebels* (holy waters) could provide an opportunity for traditional health tourists as there is travel to *Tsadqane Mariam*<sup>20</sup>.



**Picture 10: Saint George church, buried human skeleton and church of Archangel Saint Gabriel (from left to right)**

Besides the four holy waters, the natural cave comprises full skeletons of monks who died in different time long time ago. Though it was not accessible during the study there is a plan to make it accessible for visitors (interview, 01-2013). This natural cave has a potential to be one of the geo-tourism sites in Ethiopia, if accessible for visitors. But there

<sup>20</sup> *Tsadqane Mariam* is popular monastery whereby many people travel for praying and holy water

is hindrance to development of geo-tourism in the area: the abstinence from entering the cave by passing the *Tsebels* (holy waters). As *Mergeta Yemane-Birhan* stated in his book, nobody is allowed to pass *Tsebels* (holy water) unless God permitted him” (*Yemane-Birhan, n.d*). The strength of the church servants is that they preserved the natural cave very well using written regulation posted on visible sides (observation, 01-2013). Everybody was part of the implementation of the regulation. However, scientific investigation on the cave is needed.

Table 11: Opinions of religious tourists on natural cave

Natural cave and Church of Saint Gabriel	Frequency	Percent
Less attractive	1	1.0
Attractive	115	65.0
Not answered	60	34.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>100.0</b>

From the pilgrims point of view it is attractive and has been visited by religious tourist each year on *Meskerem* (September and October) and *Tir* (January). The survey analysis on table 11 above showed that natural cave of Saint Gabriel the Archangel was rated as attractive by the majority of religious tourists (65%).

In general, it can be said that natural cave of Archangel Saint Gabriel is attractive and could be one potential resource that should be well developed in the future.

#### 4.2.8. Movable Tangible Heritages

Heritages can be tangible and intangible which have different benefits. They can be also movable and immovable. In this regard EOTC is rich enough. These heritages are found specifically in Gishen Mariam in partially well preserved manner through church tradition. Under this topic the researcher focuses on the movable tangible cultural heritages because other heritages are already discussed in the above topics.

There are about 157 movable tangible heritages which are registered by AWCT Office. These relics have been collected since one thousand and five hundred years of age from emperors and empresses, church fathers, royals and famous persons through gift. *Metshafe Tefut* (book of *Tefut*) is one of the famous books never found elsewhere in

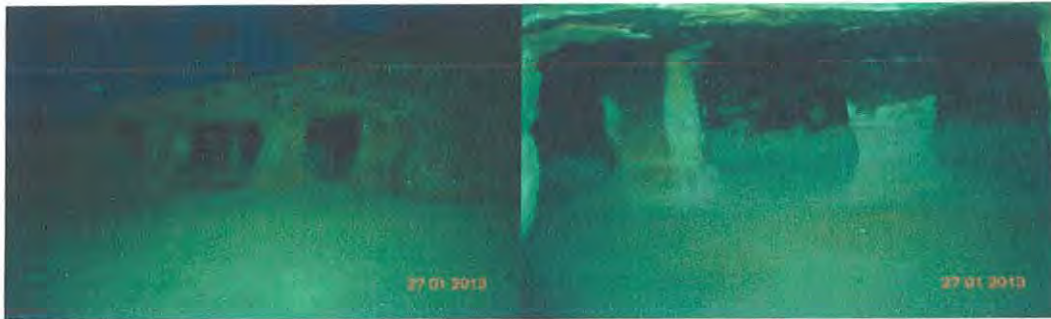
Ethiopia except in Gishen Mariam. Many Thrones, Chronicles, Skirts, hand crosses made from silver and gold, gold made cups, and a drum made from silver, different types of icons, dishes made from minerals and other gifts of famous persons, kings, royal families, church fathers etc. were some of the movable heritages kept in store. According to AWCT office, some of heritages were already damaged due to lack of heritage preservation knowledge and skill (interview, 01-2013). So far these heritages are not accessed to public or visitors. These resources have scientific, economic, social and educational values in addition to religious and historical importance (Throsby, 2000; Heritage Lottery Fund, 2011). Thus if they are displayed and accessed to visitors they are expected to draw tourist flow at any time of the year hence solve seasonality problem of Gishen Mariam, and will generate income to the church, and they will be studied by researchers.



**Picture 11: Some of the movable heritages of Gishen Mariam (literatures, skurts, gold plates, painting, gold cup and silver made drum) (photos by AWCT)**

#### **4.2.9. Small Size Semi Rock Hewn**

This semi rock hewn which was carved by king Lalibela before building the 11 churches in the 12<sup>th</sup> century is located on the way to church of the Archangel Saint Michael. It used to be a praying house and shelter for some monks, as a result human skull and bone was common to be found in (picture 12). If well preserved and developed, this resource has a potential to be one of the religious tourism attractions in Gishen Mariam. Based on personal observation people were taking the holy soil /*Emnet*/ each year.



**Picture 12: Semi rock hewn (left: from outside view and right: inside view)**

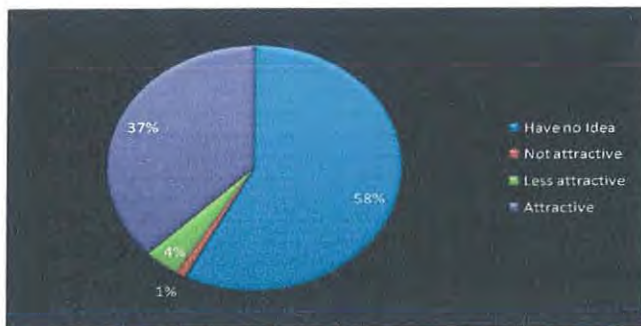
Compared to other resources few pilgrims rated this resource as “attractive” (56.5%), perhaps due to presence of human waste products around the semi rock hewn and no longer usage of the semi rock hewn by monks and the church.

**Table 12: Opinion of religious tourists on semi rock hewn**

How do you rate semi rock hewn	Frequency	Percent
Not attractive	5	2.8
Less attractive	22	12.4
Attractive	100	56.5
None	50	28.2
Total	177	100.0

#### **4.2.10.Museum**

It is strange hearing that there is no museum in such very famous pilgrimage site. Gishen has comprised both secular and religious heritages that could be kept and displayed in museum, unfortunately there hasn't been museum. As the questionnaire survey result showed in figure 4 below, almost all respondent rated as they don't know whether there is museum or not. Out of 177 respondents 100 respondents didn't know whether there is museum or not. Those who rated not attractive, less attractive and attractive were not based on their experience rather based on their interest and by considering the treasury house as museum.



**Figure 4: Opinion of religious tourists on museum**

Museum is being built since its inauguration ceremony was held on January 30, 2013 by the Archbishop of South Wollo Diocese Abune Atnatious (picture 13). The museum is going to be finished after maximum of two years. Though it is very late to build a museum in such holy place having huge heritages, it is very much supported by Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Christians. The museum building is estimated to cost 5 million Ethiopian birr (report, 29/01/2013). When completed it is expected to display the 157 movable heritages of the church (see heritage). The design of the museum is designed in modern way that could protect from natural damages (picture 13). So that visitors will go and get access to the heritages, which have never been open to pilgrims. It is also expected to generate income to the church. This contributes for dispersal of tourists. However, there is a need to create same perception on local residents through orientation about the importance of museum because perception of local residents is different (Some of the local residents said “we don’t think it is good to build a museum and display the heritages to tourists. It makes the heritage vulnerable for theft.” Others said “no we think it is good because the museum is going to be built in a way that doesn’t make heritages vulnerable for theft” (interview, 01-2013)).



**Picture 13: Design of the museum and cornerstone (from left to right)**

#### **4.2.11. Live Culture of inhabitants**

There are different cultural resources that belong to the people of Ambasel (Wollo). Local people speak Amharic language and have *Wollo's* people living tradition. Many of them are farmers who belong to Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. Honey in this place is unique which is produced by local farmers in the mountainous terrain. Local beer such as *Tej* which is prepared from honey is very common which is provided to guests in Gishen. As the participant observation showed *Tej* was very tasty. Traditional music with 'Ambasel' choir that could be provided in hotel and lodges if they are going to be opened is another potential resource. One of the four traditional musical rhythms in Ethiopia, Ambasel is originated from this region. Therefore, the area has also potential for attracting musicians and singers besides international visitors who are primarily motivated by religion.

As the visitor questionnaire survey analysis showed, 50.8% have rated live culture of inhabitants as "attractive", 15.3% rated "less attractive" and 8.5% rated as "not attractive". Cross-tabulation with origin of respondent revealed that most of the respondents who rated live culture of the inhabitants as "attractive" were outside the Wollo zonal administration. Therefore, this resource target markets are outside Wollo zonal administration.

### **4.3. Challenges of Religious Tourism**

#### **4.3.1. Poor Performance in Marketing Religious Tourism**

Marketing is the center for business function concerned with matching organization's skill with market demand (Laws, 2004). This study focuses on the traditional tourism marketing mix components status. The findings show that absence or low level of product development, unfair price, absence/low promotional campaign and inappropriate product distribution were problems/challenges discussed in detail as follows:

##### **4.3.1.1. Absence (low level) Religious Tourism Product Development**

Lack or low level of religious tourism product was one of the challenges for religious tourism development in Gishen Mariam. However, there are immense tourism resources discussed in sub topic 4.2, most of them are not changed into products as a result their

level of utilization has been lower. Nevertheless, some religious tourism products have been seasonally produced like horse renting, church service, food and beverage. What makes worse is that these products lack quality and design.

Hence, in order to have well developed religious tourism, different products must be developed by the church and the local community. Some of the potential products that have to be developed include: confession service, guiding service, mountain trekking, guided visit to the caves, spiritual advice, preaching and education, baptizing or providing church health treatment etc.

#### 4.3.1.2. Un fair Price

Church service in all Ethiopian orthodox churches is provided free of charge. Likewise, the church services such as mass service, community praying, preaching and teaching are provided with free of charge at Gishen Mariam. Most products that were provided not by the church were with charges. For instance; horse renting, house renting, food and beverage, souvenir products were provided by individuals who were from local residents and outside from Gishen with charge. It was able to check and assess the fairness of price of the products through participant observation and visitor questionnaire survey.

Table 13 Respondents' evaluation to price of products

Un fair price	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	22	12.4
Disagree	30	16.9
Partly agree	66	37.3
Agree	24	13.6
Strongly agree	35	19.8
Total	177	100.0

Table 13 reveals that majority of the respondents said that price of the products including food and beverage is very unfair, unfair and partly unfair (71.7%). The remaining respondents (29.3%) said that price of products is very fair and fair. Therefore, it can be said that many of the respondents were facing price increase. As participant observation revealed the price of food was equivalent with that of the star hotels and standard hotels' price in Dessie or in Addis Ababa. For instance *Tibis* (roasted meat) was sold for 45 birr

on average at Gishen. Compared to that of the price of *Tibis* (roasted meat) in Dessie it was equal with some hotels but higher compared with equal quality of *Tibis* (roasted meat). Soft drink in Gishen was 10 birr whereas in Dessie or Addis Ababa it was less than 7 birr. Despite this, horse renting service charge was to some extent fair and enough, though it was only provided on meskerem. Some products were absurdly expensive.

#### 4.3.1.3. Absence or Poor Performance of Promotion

Promotion is very vital component of tourism business development and marketing. Effective promotion can motivate tourist visit to a particular destination even if there is infrastructural problem (Kauffmann, 2008). Promotion becomes effective whenever promotion is done through targeting the potential customers using appropriate Media. In this regard, as it was able to see different stakeholders' contribution in promoting the study site, lack of effective and powerful promotion is one of the main challenges for low level of religious tourism development in Gishen Mariam.

Table 14. Tour Operators' contribution

Items	Frequency	Per cent
Have fixed package tour to Gishen Mariam (annually)	1	3.3
Include Gishen with northern route itinerary	1	3.3
Full coverage on website about Gishen Mariam	0	0
Mentioned Gishen under title of <i>Mesqel</i> to say " <i>Mesqel</i> is celebrated to signify the burring of True Cross in Gishen Mariam	5	16.7

The analysis shown in table 14 above, from visiting websites of tour operators and travel agents revealed that there were only two tour operators that were promoting and included Gishen in the itinerary. One of the two was selling Gishen at any time of the year while other was selling on annual festival on October and January alone. As 30 tour operators have purposely visited to promote other historic and cultural attractions in their page, none of them were promoting Gishen Mariam giving full coverage. 5 (16.7%) tour operators wrote about Gishen under title of *Mesqel* to say "*Mesqel* is celebrated to signify the burying of True Cross in Gishen Mariam".

**Table 15: Activities of the Ambasel Woreda Culture and Tourism Office**

Year	Activities
2009	1000 pamphlet
2010	1000 pamphlet were distributed to pilgrims, documenting through video
2011	1500 pamphlets were distributed
2012	Create awareness about providing good service

**Source: AWCT office annual reports (2009 - 2012)**

The two main activities of the Ambasel Woreda Culture and Tourism Office regarding Gishen were promotion and tourist survey. The way they promote was only using pamphlets and leaflets (table 15). For instance according to an informant from AWCT office, nearly 1000 leaflets that narrate history of Gishen and news about building museum were distributed to the pilgrims and the businessmen on October, 2012 (interview, 01-2013). These pamphlets and leaflets were prepared only in Amharic language; this means, the target market was only domestic. They had three limitations: 1) there was no pamphlet distribution on the other period of the year other than on *Meskerem*, 2) pamphlets were distributed only in Gishen, and 3) they were prepared in Amharic language alone.

However, zonal tourism department has used different promotional campaign but it had limitations. An informant from SWCT said that they have been promoting Gishen in bazaars in Dessie, and they used calendars, billboards and full stands (Picture 14).



**Picture 14: Promotion instruments used by SWCTD (Road side and calendar)**

The church administration does announce the event using television. An informant from the *Sebeka Gubae* answered to the question whether the church promotes the study site or not as:

*...Yes, we annually announce about the religious festival on meskerem using Ethiopian television. However, we paid and needed to promote Gishen in a way that can enhance tourism development in Gishen Mariam but the Ethiopian Television doesn't promote it like we want it to be promoted (Interview, 01-2013)*

The promotion was done after the religious festival was over. They don't do any promotion campaign in order to attract many religious tourists. Therefore, from this it can be said that the church administration lacks commitment in developing and making Gishen Mariam conducive for religious tourists. Perhaps this could be due to their lack of knowledge or understanding about the importance of religious tourism.

From the researcher's personal observation, Gishen was advertised in different regions of Ethiopia by churches found especially in urban areas. They organize trips with fair price and then post in different places where they can attract many pilgrims on *Meskerem* and *Tir* each year. However this was a good endeavor, it has limitations in that it is limited to certain season of the year.

Table 16: Sources of information

Source of information	Frequency	Percent
<b>Friends or Family</b>	69	38.5
<b>Media</b>	10	5.6
<b>Church education</b>	56	31.3
<b>Other</b>	44	24.6
<b>Total</b>	179	100.0

Table 16 shown above reveals different source of information used by respondents about Gishen Mariam. Word of mouth (information from family and friends) is the first ranked source of information for 38.5% respondents, followed by education (31.3%), other (24.6%) and Media (5.6%). From this result it can be said that media were the least source of information which could verify absence of promotion done by different stakeholders.

In general promotion was not done successfully in a way that targets both international and domestic visitors in motivating them to visit Gishen Mariam and make them visit the

site at any time of the year. All the above mentioned stakeholders should have to promote Gishen Mariam to attract both international and domestic tourist using appropriate Media continuously.

### **4.3.2. Poor Infrastructural Development**

Infrastructure is a key determinant factor that promotes arrivals in any tourism destination. Thus improving infrastructure is essential in order to attract tourists to a destination (Phukan, Rahman and Devdutt, 2012). It is about transport, water, electricity, safety services, health services, communications, and other developments in a destination.

This study has identified the following components of infrastructure as hindrance to religious tourism development at Gishen at any time of the year except on *Meskerem* (Sep) and *Tir* (January). These are poor road quality and absence of public transport, water problem, absence of road light and inappropriate lighting at toilets, and communications. Each of them is discussed in detail as follows.

#### **4.3.2.1. Transport Infrastructure**

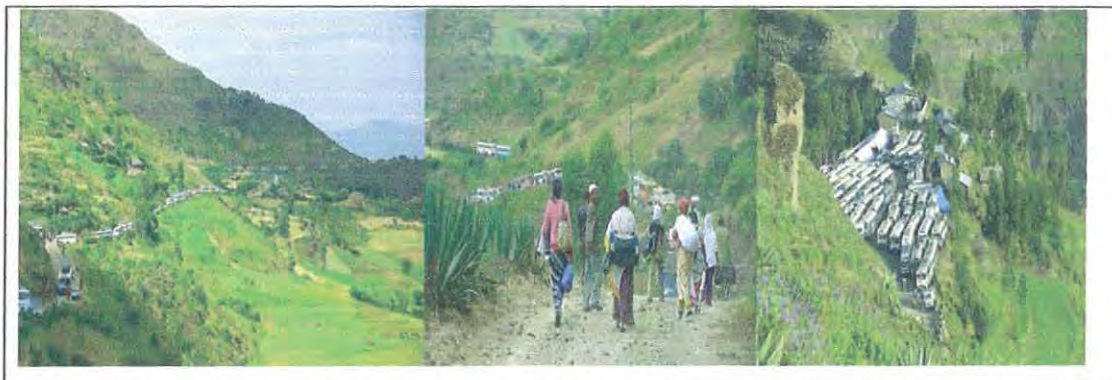
Transport infrastructure is an essential component of successful religious tourism development in that it induces the creation of new attractions and the growth of existing ones (as cited in Khadaroo and Seetanah, 2007). On the other hand it affects arrival and tourism development whenever there is no development on transport infrastructure. Moreover, it is fundamental for development of other infrastructures in particular destination; for example in Ethiopia electricity wires are stretched following roads. What is observed and confirmed through interview and questionnaire is that absence of quality road and public transport affects travel of religious tourists to Gishen Mariam.

Table 17 shown below highlights the relationship between number of respondents who didn't go to Gishen on the other time of the year and their reason for not visiting Gishen. Majority of the respondents that constitute 86.5% didn't visit the site on the other season of the year except on *Meskerem*. Absence of public transport due to poor road quality was reason for 26% of respondents who didn't go or visit Gishen on other periods of the year

except on *Meskerem* (Sep) and *Tir* (January). This means if there was no problem of transport and had good road quality these respondents would have come at any time of the year.

**Table 17: Reasons for not visiting Gishen on other than *Meskerem* or *Tir***

<i>Cross tabulation</i>		<i>Have you visit the site rather than on Meskerem and Tir?</i>		<i>Total</i>
		Yes	No	
<i>Why don't/did n't you visit the site on other times other than on meskerem and tir?</i>	You thought that the promise doesn't work on other seasons of the year	0 (0%)	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.5%)
	You thought that there is transportation problem	0 (0%)	46 (26%)	46 (26%)
	You are so busy on the other periods	0 (0%)	49 (28%)	49 (28%)
	It makes you feel happy only coming on either on meskerem or tir	0 (0%)	32 (18%)	32 (18%)
	You thought that there are safety and security problems on other periods of year	0 (0%)	2 (1%)	2 (1%)
	Other	0 (0%)	23 (13%)	23 (13%)
	No problem	24 (13.5%)	0 (0%)	24 (13.5%)
<b>Total</b>		24 (13.5%)	153 (86.5 %)	177 (100%)



**Picture 15: Motor vehicle on the road, road of Gishen Mariam and the 1<sup>st</sup> bus station in Gishen Mariam (source: [www.gishenpicture...](http://www.gishenpicture...))**

There are no air and railway transport infrastructures in Gishen Mariam. There was no regular public transportation service from either Dessie town or Kutaber to Gishen Mariam due to the poor quality road of Gishen Mariam (picture 15). Transportation

service from Dessie to Gishen Mariam has been provided on September/October and January (religious festival) alone, because the road is operated during these periods of the year.

Table 18 shown below highlights respondents of religious tourists over road quality of Gishen Mariam: 37.3% “strongly disagree” and “disagree”, 30% “partly agreed” and 27.1% “agree” and “strongly agree” with the statement stated as “Road quality of Gishen enables people to travel or make tour to Gishen Mariam at any time of the year”. This implies that road quality and absence of regular transportation service have hindered them making travel to Gishen at any time for most of the respondents. Besides, most religious tourists in their recommendation said that transport infrastructure such as air transport development along with road quality improvement is needed.

Table 18: Religious tourist opinion on road quality

Road quality of Gishen enables visitor come any time	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	34	19.2
Disagree	32	18.1
Average	53	29.9
Agree	13	7.3
Strongly agree	35	19.8
None	10	5.6
Total	177	100.0

#### 4.3.2.2. Electricity

Absence of electricity power was one of the challenges faced to Gishen until it has lately received power from *Tenta*. Gishen now has become 24 hour electricity service beneficiary since September 2012. As a result people living on the mountain are users of electric power. Until electric power was introduced to Gishen, the church electric power was generator operated for not more than 9 hours per day. Based on researcher’s eight year observation it was this year that 24 hour electric service has been provided. Electricity power is lined/ generated from *Tenta* Woreda which is about 40 to 50 kilo

meter. It is now good opportunity for investors who want to invest their money on hotel, restaurant, and guest-house etc. Nevertheless, there have been some problems such as absence of road light, which has been obstacle for movement at night time. Unless people are using torch it is impossible to move from place to place. In addition, mobile charging center were not adequately providing service to religious tourists. Moreover, frequent interruption of light was observed and commented by respondents as a problem. Therefore, as some tourist commented road light at different spot should be fixed and there should be adequate mobile charging service.

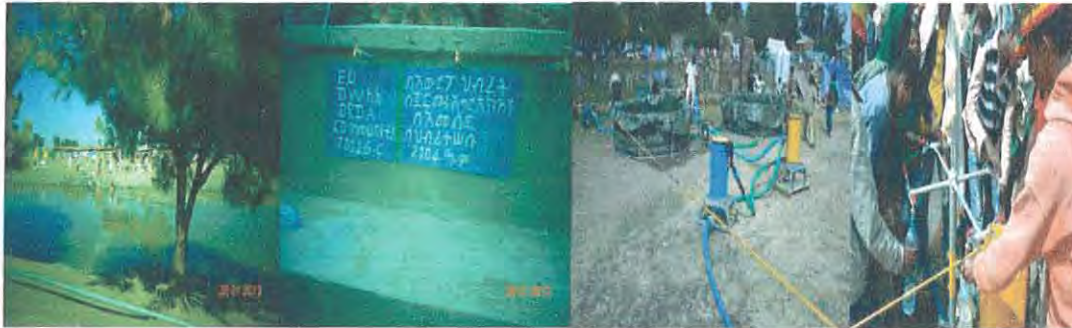
#### **4.3.2.3. Telecommunication**

Communication is vital for development and for any business. One of the modern day's fast and easy ways of communication is telecommunication. So as to communicate through telecommunication, presence of network is a prime factor. In this regard there is an optic fiber network system at Gishen, thus people are now communicating through their mobile. What is more important is due to the presence of good network, the number of applicants resulted from losing their friends, their association and their relatives at the crowd in Gishen have dramatically reduced. In addition to this traffic police were also using mobile for their job. Network busy problem comes whenever there is high number of users under one optic fiber. On the other time for instance on January network was so good. Problem with regard to network failure have occurred on September and October each year due to overcrowding.

#### **4.3.2.4. Water**

Until 2007 people fetched water from *Embacho* (protected spring water) located outside the compound, at the foot of the big Gishen plateau near the main entrance and from *Ye-Mariyam Wuha* (St. Mary water) which is rainwater harvested and spring water overflow collected at a pond. The other two sources of water for local people and religious tourists are; *Tafach Wuha* (sweet water) gravity piped spring water and *Teleyayen* (meaning we are departed) River located 18 km before reaching Gishen Mariam. Two of the four sources are turbid while the two other are clean waters. Those two turbid water sources caused water related disease outbreak in the year 2009 (WHO, 2010). But, later after

following the outbreak of the disease, local people and the church were using pure portable water which was built in collaboration among EU, GAA, ORDA and the Community. However, there is still water shortage especially during the off-seasons; one local person interviewed on January told that there was shortage of water on some months of the year as a result they got access to the water once per week or more than this frequency. More importantly, pilgrims have faced shortage of water on *Meskerem* though *Ye-Mariyam Wuha* is treated by the *Woreda's* health office and WHO.



**Picture 16: Water resources and cleaning activities of NGO (from left to right: ye-Mariam Wuha, Ye-bono Wuha, clarifying and pilgrims fetched clarified water (photos by the author and WHO (2010))**

#### **4.3.2.5. Health center**

These days, people are concerned about their health while getting away for their vacation thus they want to know whether there is health service in the destination where they are going. Therefore, destinations are replying to such potential tourists by providing health service infrastructure. In this regard Gishen Mariam is expected to do more.

Health center was not permanently and adequately serving at Gishen Mariam. Health station, located at the foot of the mountain is providing health service to Gishen kebele residents. However, due to lack of medicines and facilities besides its distance from the plateau, it has not been used by religious tourists and even by Gishen *Gote* residents as well (interview, 10-2012). Temporary health center that stays not more than a week have been established in collaboration between ERCS and SWH department on *Meskerem* each year. Compared to permanent health center it is somehow better in terms of well trained manpower and medicine availability. Except on *Meskerem* church traditional

health treatment through *Tsebel* is not provided on other periods of the year. Therefore, it is essential to improve the existing health centers in terms of human resource, health facilities and medicines.

#### 4.3.3. Absence and Low Level of Investment on Tourist Facilities

Absence and very low investment in tourist facilities development has hindered religious tourism development. Only during the annual festival were people investing their money; in opening temporary restaurants, cafés and inns or local hotels. In addition to poor infrastructural development, absence of tourist facilities was an obstacle for tour operators in order to bring international tourists to Gishen Mariam (informal discussion, 02-2013). The comments from religious tourists themselves support this idea, in their comment they recommended that tourist facilities should be developed. In addition to this, they also recommend for the church to invest money on providing guest houses and other important facilities at any time of the year.

Presence of bed rooms and restaurants are determinant factors for the presence or staying of tourists in specific destination. Even though, the number of hotels and beds in Ethiopia in general has been increasing they still are not satisfying the demand of the industry due to none-uniform distribution of hotels and beds. Most of the hotels and beds are located in big cities such as Addis Ababa. There was no bed in any house in the local hotels in Gishen, what they provide was only space after 10 pm for the overnight alone. Generally, there is lack of lodges, restaurants, super markets, cafes and other facilities in Gishen Mariam (table 19).

Table 19) Tourist facilities status in Gishen Mariam

Tourist facility	Meas.	Status	Remarks
Restaurant	No.	0	
Café	No.	0	
Souvenir shop	No.	Many	Temporary
Guest house	No.	3	For church leaders and government rep. alone
Internet rooms	No.	Absent	Might not be important
Trial	-	Present	Un designed
Toilets	No.	3	1 is temporary

If religious tourism is needed to be flourished and practiced throughout the year tourist facilities should be developed by the church, the local community and the local government. As it has been cited by Vidic (2007), local communities were hosting religious tourists who went to monasteries, which in return have helped to reduce problem of accommodation. Similarly, local people residing down the mountain could also host religious tourists by building guest houses and hotels.

#### **4.3.4. Environmental Pollution and Begging**

Human waste was observed along the edge of each way, this has reduced the aesthetic nature of the environment and was disturbing pilgrims. Trails that had human waste were not chosen to pass/use unless there was no way to pass. Smell was so bad which was really destructing and disturbing pilgrims who want to have pray in front of the church. Places where human wastes were observed include: in front of *Ye-Mariam wuha/Tsebel* outside the fence where pilgrims used as seating for community praying and preaching services during every evening.

According to Said Ali (2003 EC), 95% of the houses found on Gishen plateau had no toilets. As a result those who rented these houses were forced to use the two public toilets constructed by volunteers situated in front of Saint Marry Church and on the way to church Archangel Saint Gabriel. From these two toilets sludge was released directly to river downstream. The smell of these two toilets was bad.

Sound pollution was another problem caused by business tourists. Individual and organized group; CD, DVD and cassette sellers have been used high power audio device as personal selling promotion in front of churches where people are gathered for praying. Individuals selling spiritual songs; preaches; books; and neck and hand crosses were making the sound pollution while moving around. However certain organized groups were selling in selected places supposed to be far from churches, sound pollution seem to be inevitable. Some monks who came from different monasteries of Ethiopia were using speakers in order to teach and preach to pilgrims on *Meskerem* each year. They taught by overlapping on other teachers who were assigned by the church *Sebeka Gubae*. As a result, this was disturbing pilgrims who wanted to either pray or to learn.

Economic negative impacts such as price increase, dependency and commercialization were noticed during the study. Mariamawit Tassew (2012) found presence of trade and commerce in Kulubi as a cause for illegal religious practices of pilgrims and inflation of any goods and service such as transportation (p. 76). The interview made with local community revealed that they were dependent on the temporary job. According to the secretary of the church, Gishen is a place where livelihood of the local people is depending (interview, 01-2013). Building more houses was practiced in order to increase their income from renting which cause a threat to pilgrims as some said “we got lost space for shelter; why do they reduce building house?” Some others demanded “this is holy place, why do people commercialize?” (Interview, 10-2012).

*... and Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves. And said unto them, it is written, my house shall be called the house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves. Mathew 21:12-13*

As Jesus said Gishen seems den of thieves and market place rather than praying place. If religious tourism is wanted to be real means for achieving church aim and boost local economy, religious practice should be outweigh than secular practice. Every activity should be based on plans.

Many religious tourists claimed and complained that begging was the boring practice done by local people as well as by people who come from other towns and villages of Ethiopia. They recommend for avoidance of begging practice from Gishen Mariam. Beggars were from different regions and town of the country: this includes from healthy to blind and crippled men and women.

The religious tourist questionnaire survey result in table 20 below showed that 26 percent of respondents didn't support the development of religious tourism at Gishen Mariam. For out of the total respondents, presence of environmental pollution and begging were reasons for 22 percent of respondents who were not supporting religious tourism development in Gishen Mariam (see table 20). Besides, prominent informants were not also fully supporting religious tourism development especially they said that road

shouldn't be constructed in order to prevent negative impacts and keep the grace of Gishen Mariam.

Table 20: Reasons for not supporting religious tourism development at Gishen Mariam

Cross-tabulation		Do you recommend this holy site to be open for visitors?		Total
		Yes	No	
Why don't you recommend?	There are not enough tourist facilities	0	4 (2.2%)	4 (2.2%)
	Negative impacts on church might get worse for its authentic future	0	39 (22%)	39 (22%)
	It is far from main town	0	1 (0.6%)	1 (0.6%)
	There is huge infrastructural problem	0	1 (0.6%)	1 (0.6%)
	All none	0	1 (0.6%)	1 (0.6%)
		131 (74%)	0	131 (74%)
Total		131(74%)	46 (26%)	177 (100%)

With regard to reducing environmental pollution and related problems, respondents of questionnaire survey recommend the following points to be implemented

- Keep the tradition of the church while protecting from globalization
- Providing garbage bags, transport services
- Reduce begging
- Respecting and protecting rules and regulations of church
- Educating local people about cleaning,

Compared to what Tewodros Yosef (2011) found in Addis Ababa, number of beggars is higher in Gishen which affects tourism. Begging is one of the challenges Ethiopian tourism faced (Yabibal Mulualem, 2010). It is not the only challenge observed in Gishen

but also elsewhere in Ethiopia (Gebeyaw Ambelu, 2010; Kauffmann, 2008; Mariamawit Tassew, 2012)

#### **4.3.5. Settlement**

Settlement has been a challenge for conservation of wildlife and tourism in national parks of Ethiopia (Hillman, 1993). It has been also a cause for conflict of interest among different stakeholders near and around big monasteries such as Monastery of Debre Libanos (Informal discussion, 03-2013). In Gishen it is the main obstacle and cause for conflict of interest among different stakeholders. From the researcher's observation and according to Ambasel Woreda Health Office report Gishen is a kebele whereby 5402 people are living in. Gishen Mariam is one *Gote* (sub kebele) whereby more than 755 individuals are living (telephone interview, 03-2013). Individuals settling in Gishen Mariam without considering monks and nuns can be seen in three categories: priests and deacons, none church servants and people whose residency is either in Addis Ababa or Dessie.

The first group comprises priests and deacons who were married and who have children. They have been serving in the five churches and have owned land in their name down in the *kebele*<sup>21</sup> 023 of Ambasel Woreda. However, they have built houses and live on the church's land. Moreover, they are paid church servants and not freelance like monks. According to Said Ali (2003 EC.), they were living under the 93 (19%) houses which had been occupied during the study.

The second group comprises non church servants who came to Gishen and remained with different reasons. Some of their reasons include: visiting relative, being government employees, having blood relations with persons who had been lived. Their way of life was similar to living in any town of Ethiopia. Some opened local grocery, while others are doing different activities.

The third group comprises people living in Addis Ababa, Dessie and other towns of Ethiopia but illegally built and owned 396 (81%) houses (Said Ali, 2003 EC.). They built

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<sup>21</sup> It is smallest administrative unit of Ethiopia similar to a ward, a neighborhood or a localized and delimited group of people. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/kebele>)

and owned house because they had close relation with church administration and or are native to Gishen Mariam (ibid). If this is going to continue to happen in the future, spaces that are free today would be occupied by illegally constructed houses.

Though the above three groups are important for the church service and heritage conservation as they claimed, but they are illegal settlers. Because the land they possess today in the plateau has never been belonged to them rather to the EOTC. Since its establishment, Gishen has been the church property not of individuals, unlike what residents have claimed (South Wollo Diocese, 2000 EC.). Zonal and Woreda government confirmed that the 26 hectare of land is the freely given land to the church not to individuals (interview). Current Federal Constitution of Ethiopia article 40 (3) gives absolute right to land owners to use the land they possessed exclusively. This land which EOTC has been possessing is under constitutional guarantee not to be snatched by anyone except by government (article 40 (4)). But what is happening in Gishen is the opposite; the residents and users of the land are illegal who should be asked by law, and in reality the land is not under guarantee. One government informant told that “the church has never asked for resettlement, everyone of the church administration member didn’t see the impact, what they just saw and worry is about their current benefit”. Another informant mentioned that “people who are members of the *Sebeka Gubae* were very reluctant to appeal to government in order to safeguard the land of the church”.

As informant interview, questionnaire survey and personal observation revealed, this illegal settlement has been causing two effects; one it reduces areas sacredness and two, it makes the holy places vulnerable to evil deeds. Each of these effects have different effects, for instance if people’s respect to the sacred place of Gishen continue to reduce, there is no doubt that there wouldn’t be religious practice on Gishen; this means no people would travel to Gishen each year any more. In other words, settlement has become the cause for happening or presence of different criminal offences and cause for conflict between monks and ordinary people (South Wollo Diocese, 2000 EC.; interview). As interview with some locals revealed, their presence in the church was illegal. One local who didn’t want to mention his name said “We people living here are decreasing the grace of Gishen by our evil deeds” another individual has also said

*It is not good for us living with our families. We are doing the same as those people who live in town. I did this because I had no other option. If I were to get another means of livelihood it would be me who would first go out from Gishen (interview, 01-2013)*

On the other effect as the study conducted by the diocese justified there would be no guarantee for people living in the church to not become non orthodox because the federal constitution article 27 sub articles 2 and 3 gives to citizens freedom to change, follow, worship and expand their religion or believe. To confirm this, researcher was able to find some families who get changed their religious to protestant. This means that people who are living today at Gishen might perhaps change, follow and worship another religion. Therefore, if religious tourism is needed to be well developed, illegal settlement should be either banned or reduced.

#### **4.3.6. Lack of Trained Manpower in the Field of Religious Tourism**

According to AWCT office, there was only a single man who has training in tourism at the Woreda level (interview, 01-2013). In addition, there were no tour operators and tour guides who were trained in tourism at either zonal or at Woreda level. Moreover, there were no personnel who were specifically committed to religious tourism development and management at regional and federal level. According to researcher observation, it was able to know that there were even very few tourism experts at the zonal level, most of which are from history, management and other related fields.

Though there are universities and colleges that teach tourism as separate discipline, there is still gap in filling specialized human power that is well trained and concerned especially with religious tourism. By its nature religious tourism resource is easily prone to social negative impacts, in adjusting and reducing such impact human resource that is well trained and specialized in religious tourism is needed. In this regard, it is indeed difficult to find a person who is trained in both theological and tourism disciplines. Rather we have persons who are qualified in either of the two disciplines; theology or tourism. Having the knowledge in both disciplines makes religious tourism destination area being easily manageable and thus would have sustainable religious tourism. Some of

the problems that are noticed for example depict presence of such challenge in every place where religious tourism is being developed.

Some church staff of Gishen had less knowledge about religious tourism. The interview made with key informants witnessed the aforementioned statement: very prominent key informant in the church has understood tourism as completely negative industry by saying “I don’t support tourism development in Gishen Mariam because I do believe that tourism will reduce glory of Gishen.” in addition to this he said that road shouldn’t be constructed because it would reduce the glory of Gishen. It is sure that if he had enough knowledge and understanding about religious tourism, he wouldn’t have perceived tourism as it always causes negative things.

The finding agreed with what Kauffmann (2008) found in central rift valley. Particular to getting religious tourism specialist expert the finding is similar with finding at Fruska Gora in that it was a problem (Vidic, 2007). Therefore, having experts, local guides, specialties in religious tourism in general in the country and in specific in Gishen is needed.

#### **4.3.7. Absence and Unfair Local Community Involvement**

Lack of involving and benefiting local residents fairly has brought negative impact on religious tourism development in Gishen Mariam. According to AWSA office, road has been constructing with the involvement of local community of different *kebeles* in the Woreda. On the other hand as the report from Woreda tourism office shows 20 people were participated in establishing new bus station and parking near primary school west side of Gishen Mariam.

Some jobs such as providing security service, receiving guest and church service provision were occupied by local residents however local community haven’t been yet fairly involved and benefited. To say local community is involved, they should have to be involved at different level of tourist attraction: they should act as stakeholders in terms of consultation, manipulation, decision making and implementation (Gorad *et al.*, 2012). Findings show that the church administration does exclusively involve individuals who have blood relation with those who are leaders of the church (interview, 01-2013). In

short, involvement of community was unfair; that was why some individuals have repeatedly complained that the church is not fairly involving everyone who has lived in the church, for instance monks and nuns.

Church is non-governmental institution whereby many individuals who are member of the churches are used and get services such as praying, mass services, baptism, confession, advice and so on fairly and equally. These days' churches are being built by local residents who are follower of EOTC religion. This has resulted in growing feeling of being own property among individual believers. As a result churches are property of EOTC followers, in which everybody have right to demand church service and give opinion for betterment of church service. One informant said "church leaders are corrupted. More than a million birr is gained from pilgrims each year but nothing positive change is seen so far. I think they are using the money for their personal purpose". Most of the monks and nuns had no budget for their daily life (food and drink). Some respondents to questionnaire survey have mentioned racial discrimination as the problem that shouldn't be seen in Gishen Mariam. With regard to gender involvement, it is still the big question left to the church administration. Therefore, it can be concluded that church administration should have to involve every member of the church irrespective of what s/he is? What s/he has? From where is s/he?

#### **4.3.8. Safety and Security Issues**

According to police officer of Gishen *Gote*, different criminal offences have been committed by different groups and individuals each year (interview, 01-2013). Some of the criminal offences that have been committed include: theft, rape, assault and murdering. Theft is the most criminal offence committed on visitors each year. As the result of tourist questionnaire survey showed, 7 (4%) religious tourists were victim of the criminal offence. Out of the seven religious tourists five were victim of theft and two were victim of assault. Only two of them were reported to police and evaluated the service as it was good. One rape case was registered on *Meskerem* 2005 EC. many assaults and bite on thefts were committed on *Meskerem* (interview, 01-2013).

Car accident on the way to Gishen Mariam starting from Dessie town is not surprising to happen. This is because of the inconvenient and low level quality of the road. In this Ethiopian academic year four car accidents have been registered. Two were registered on *Meskerem* while other two accidents on *Tir* (see picture 17). Two out of the four accidents, caused easy damage on human whereas the two caused damages on property.



**Picture 17: Car Accidents registered on tir (photos by the author)**

Unless there is an organized group, going alone by car could cost tourist time, money and life. It was people who were pulling cars that closed the road as shown in the picture 17.c. In addition, it would be difficult for un-experienced drivers and to those who don't know the road before in reaching and getting back safely without accident. Roads or bridge and rivers such as *Teleyayen* and *Qundit* can damage cars easily especially during summer season.

According to the *Woreda* and zonal traffic police, trucks have been allowed in providing public transportation service. Because they provide the transportation service with cheap price/charge and some provide it freely for vow. Though it is good to have such services but they are not recommended due to their negative health impact such as vulnerability to accident, eye problem, air born disease transmission, damage on body part etc (interview, 01-2013).

In order to minimize and prevent traffic problem having and assigning traffic polices at different spot is indispensable. Regarding the number of traffic polices assigned to Gishen, informant from AWSA said that they assigned traffic police from their office and traffic polices from different *Woredas* of South Wollo zone. In general, 26 traffic polices

were assigned on *Meskerem* in this year (2012/2013). They were assigned in different spots starting from kutaber town until foot of Gishen Mountain where traffic problems are expected to happen. Only radio and mobile phone were used for communication. They stayed not for more than six days. To the question whether the number of security persons are enough or not, the informant answered that the number of security person assigned was enough to manage problems related to security and traffic that was why they managed capturing 26 thefts who were organized and stolen many mobiles and bags etc. Since these security persons were assigned temporarily, different security problems could perhaps took place upon their absence. Only two police officers are assigned permanently to manage the security related issues. This might not give confidence to tourist to travel to Gishen Mariam. Hence it is good if security persons are going permanently assigned at Gishen as well on ways to Gishen along with other developments.

According to Woreda agricultural office, 21% of Gishen *kebele* residents are food insecure. Veen (2000) reported that Ambasel Woreda is the frequently affected area by drought. Informal interview made with one of the Woreda agriculture office expert revealed that most of the direct supporters of government safety net program are from the Gishen *Gote* (they are monks and nuns). On the other hand, livelihood of monks and nuns has been depended on begging and getting temporary labor jobs once or twice a year. This might perhaps be a challenge to have religious development in such area. Tourists are not interested to spend their time visiting drought and poverty affected tourist destinations. Before they decided to make travel to particular destination they first check whether residents livelihood is good or not, if not they avoid poor areas for their vacation. Hence as much as possible local residents livelihood should be food secured.

#### **4.3.9. Inconvenient Institutional Structure**

Under this subtopic brief introduction about church establishment administration types is presented followed by the findings. Church administration structure is one of the factors that affect religious tourism development in Gishen Mariam. Being parish church and accountable to the SWD has been affecting religious tourism development.

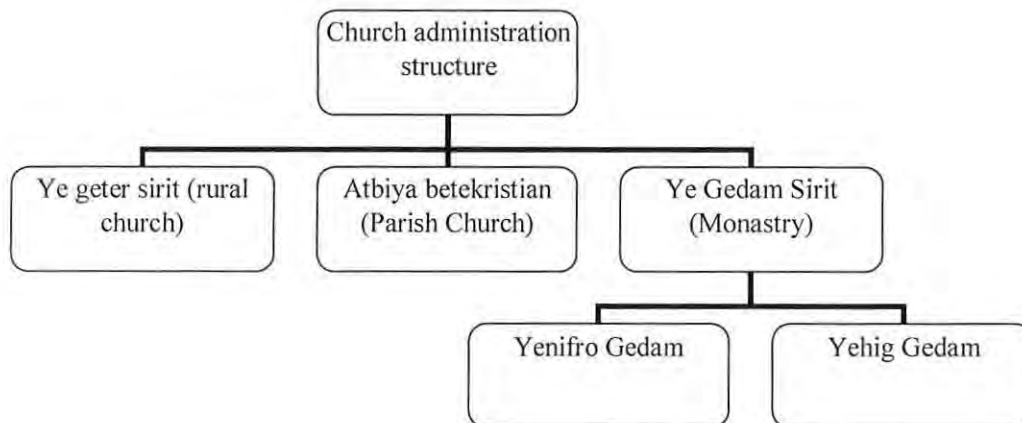


Figure 5 EOTC church types (source: the Author)

According to EOTC taught churches are three types based on their purpose of establishment, administration and place where they are established etc. These three types as showed in the above figure 5 are: *Ye-geter Sirit* (rural church), *Atbiya Betekiristian* (Parish Church) and *Ye-gedam Sirit* (Monastery). As the name *Ye-Geter Sirit* (rural church) implies, these are churches found in rural areas of Ethiopia. Their unique feature includes: one; they are located in rural areas where there is few number of EOTC followers, two; they provide church services one day per week or per month or per year which depends on the availability of church servants and spiritual strength, three; church servants are not paid, four; the church is administered by followers association (they are protected from enemies by people whose residence is near to the church) etc. Most of them had been closed for so long due to lack of church servants and their inaccessibility.

On the other hand parish churches are mostly found in urban areas whereby there is larger population relative to that of *Ye-Geter Serit* (rural church). There is church service on 12<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> of every month, every Saturday and Sunday, saints' day the church name is dedicated and on annual major and minor religious festivals as well as fasting days. The church is administered by group of people (composing chair man of Sunday school, priests and representative of ordinary people) called *Sebeka Gubae*. A local person who is not paid if chosen by pupil can be member of the *Sebeka Gubae*. Church

servants such as priests, deacons, preachers and teachers, singers are monthly paid. Parish churches are accountable to Woreda *Betekihnet*. Cathedrals are under this category.

Monasteries in Ethiopia are two types; *Ye-Nifro* and *Ye-Hig*. They are similar in that mass service is everyday in the afternoon except on Saturday and Sunday whereby mass service is in the morning. They are different in the following aspects. The former one is rich in spiritual life of monks whereas the latter is established by the order of pupil in urban areas. The former are mostly found in rural areas of Ethiopia but the latter found in urban areas. The former are two types men and women monastery. In men monasteries women are not allowed to enter but in women monasteries men can enter. The famous monasteries of Hayq, Ziquala Abo and Debre Damo are under category of *Ye Nifro Gedam*, whereas monasteries such as Hawassa Saint Gabriel and Miskaye Hezunan Medhanialem are *Ye Hig Gedam*.

Gishen Mariam is a parish church that possesses some features of parish church mentioned above. With regard to church administration structure itself different stakeholders have complained that it has problem and it is the main cause for the happening of different evil deeds. Committee appointed by South Wollo Diocese in order to find out solutions to the conflict which is raised between the monks and ordinary people in 2000 EC. noted that there were people who demand of making Gishen Mariam a monastery (South Wollo Diocese, 2000 EC.). Similarly, religious tourists have commented on changing Gishen Mariam to a monastery because they think that being a monastery could make Gishen Mariam graceful place whereby only spiritual activities are being performed. In addition, Woreda and Zonal Tourism Offices were also saying the same thing. Moreover, the South Wollo Diocese decided to make Gishen Mariam a monastery following the suggestion and recommendation of the committee.

Unfortunately, the parish church and the local community have overridden the decision of South Wollo Diocese. It is because the study conducted by the committee was not inclusive of the ideas of the local residents, and as one informant from the *Sebeka Gubae* said the committee had no recognition from the parish church;

*First of all the committee is not recognized by the church, we don't know who they are therefore we didn't accept their finding. Next the diocese is saying get down from the church without providing any compensation...This is unfair! Why we leave our heritage and let it to others who could snatch all heritage Gishen posses? ... We prefer Gishen Mariam to be parish church (interview, 01-2013).*

Another informant who doesn't agree with changing Gishen Mariam to a monastery argued that it is not the right time to make Gishen a monastery because; one, there is no priest monk; two, there is no guaranty that heritages are not going to be snatched; three, there hasn't been any problem so far; four, local community has no demand of making Gishen Mariam a monastery since one church administration is changed to monastery whenever there is demand of local residents; and five, those who are monks today are not permanent residents and they are not originally from Gishen (interview, 12-04-2013).

On the contrary informants who supported making Gishen Mariam monastery argued that monastery administration structure is the best option to solve problem observed so far. Some of their reasons for making Gishen a monastery include:

1. Secular activities are outweighing the spiritual activities which shouldn't be. Spiritual activities are more worth than secular activities. This could be achieved if Gishen become a monastery.
2. There is a need to discourage illegal settlement which is a threat to lose ownership over the 26 hectare of land. The church has to be a monastery because it doesn't allow people settle in Gishen anymore.
3. Flourishing or encouraging tourist flow to Gishen throughout the year by providing religious tourism product is possible and better if Gishen become monastery.
4. There has been local government intervention on church issues for example, in matter where the church evicts illegal settler the local government has been intervened with the decision of the church. This could be ended if church structure is changed to monastery.

5. Geographically isolated. Places like Gishen Mariam are suitable for monastery than parish church.

On the other side, however its accountability had been to Woreda *Betekihnet* five and six years ago but since then it has been accountable to the South Wollo Diocese (interview, 01/2013). The reason why the church became under the diocese, an informant from Woreda *Betekihnet* replied as;

*Because the income of the parish church is bigger that could help to cover budget of other churches and monasteries under the diocese. Besides, it is difficult to manage and administer Gishen Mariam under Bêtekihnet (interview, 01-2013).*

With regard to whether the Woreda *Betekihnet* has complained on it or not, he said that they had no any complain with it, they rather even prefer Gishen be accountable to the *Menbere Patriarch* due to the complex problems of the parish church that it currently has faced. Nevertheless, being accountable to the diocese was an obstacle for the Woreda tourism office. According to informant from AWCT office, they couldn't do anything because jurisdiction and horizontal communication is being only with Woreda *Betekihnet* in which Gishen Mariam is not part of their responsibility to manage (interview, 01-2013). He added it is only the zonal tourism office that can do tourism activities at Gishen Mariam. To bold this problem informant from SWCT department said that it was indeed challenging their job not only to the Woreda tourism office.

Since good administration structure is essential for religious tourism development the researcher supports the views of informants who said the structure should be monastery for the above mentioned reasons.

#### **4.3.10.Low Level of Government Attention**

Government commitment in promoting Gishen Mariam in all level of tourism sectors is very low or absent, less interested in improving road transport infrastructure, in resettling illegal settlers and tourist facilities development.

To the question why Gishen hasn't never been a tourist destination, one informant from AWCT office answered that "Gishen has not been included in the tourist map of

Ethiopia, absence of toilets and quality road” (interview, 01-2013). Besides to this regional government was reluctant in providing financial support to road construction though they appealed many times. On the other hand, one informant from the *Sebeka Gubae* answered to the above question, as:

*We wrote many letters to MoCT in order to register Gishen as one of the tourist destinations but no positive response. They asked us about the presence of hotels, guest house and restaurants as prerequisites. We have guest house for government officials and top religious leaders and servants not for pilgrims (interview, 01-2013).*

Tourism promotion experts of MoCT told that they don't have any detail information about Gishen Mariam. With regard to whether MoCT has plans to make Gishen Mariam one of the newly developed tourist destinations, a tourism destination development expert said that Gishen is not under their future plan. Another expert from the public relation of MoCT said “it is not our jurisdiction to promote or do any activity at Gishen Mariam unless request from regional tourism and park bureau” comes. One informant from EHRCA said that the problem was not only on government but also on the church administration. He added that government has not yet studied potentials of Gishen Mariam in detail due to lack of attention. Informal discussion revealed that government was wrongly understood development of religious tourism in general in the country.

Even looking at the zonal level, except Monastery of Hayq there is no any tourist destination developed which is being utilized by international tourist. The south Wollo zone tourism department is not doing any promotion and not making tourist destination sites accessible to tourists. Because researcher couldn't find any of the resources short listed under Amhara tourism and parks bureau. Therefore, the South Wollo zone tourism department should develop tourism destinations and promote them.

#### **4.4. Prospects of Religious Tourism Development in Gishen Mariam**

Prospects are possibilities if something good could happen in the future. Finding shows that there are prospects for real development of religious tourism in near future due to the following reasons:

#### 4.4.1. Economic prospects

Each year local people, neighboring *Woredas* and local government are benefiting from religious tourism, because it is lucrative business. Due to an increase number of religious tourist flow to Gishen different stakeholders have been increasing their benefit. As a result of this religious tourism development more than before is going to be flourished and benefit many people. For example, religious tourism destinations such as Jerusalem and Mecca have receipt millions of USD each year by hosting millions of tourists with quality religious tourism products (Riazat, 2010 November). Because hosting tourists with quality products is the engine of any tourism destination. Likewise hosting religious tourists by providing quality services would become inevitable in Gishen.



Figure 6: Religious tourist arrival trend (2009-2012)  
Source: Annual Report of the Woreda culture and tourism office from 2009-2012.

On average the number of domestic religious tourist arrival is increasing by 11.8% each year for the last four consecutive years. As shown in figure 6 above, religious tourist arrival from 2009 to 2012 was increasing each year without showing decline. From this, one can expect that number of religious tourist to be increased in the coming year. Similarly demand for food and space was increasing for the last four consecutive years, this in turn had resulted in an increase in food supply; and number of employment.

According to Woreda tourism office, four Woreda have been benefiting from religious tourism each year; Delanta, Kutaber, Ambasel and Tenta. Different jobs such as horse renting, house renting, selling Cattle and Sheep, selling grasses, selling souvenir and 600 daily labors have been created each year (interview, 01-2013).

**Table 21: Local government collected money from house renters and merchants through tax**

<i>Periods</i>	<i>Tax from House renter</i>	<i>Tax from Merchants</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Meskerem 21-23</i>	60,000 birr	60,000 birr	120,000 birr
<i>Tir 21-23</i>	-	7000 birr	7000 birr
<i>Total</i>	60,000 birr	67000 birr	127,000 birr

Source: AWR office 2005 EC report

Number of house renter was estimated to be 150. Maximum tax charged per person for renting a house was 10,000 birr and minimum was 1000 birr which was 10% of their income. Average number of business men who paid tax was 79 (picture 18: vendors, hotels, restaurants, cafeterias and souvenirs). Maximum tax paid was 1500 birr while the minimum was 25 birr. In general, local government has earned more than 127,000 birr in this Ethiopian year (table 21). Compared with previous years the amount of money government gained from tourism has increased (interview). It is expected that the amount of money government is going to be increased especially if challenges are going to be reduced.

Religious tourism is also developing better because it is generating money and is solving financial problem of the church itself. Gishen Debre Kerbe Mariam as a parish church has been gaining millions of birr each year (interview, 2013). Similarly, the South Wollo Diocese which has 20% share from the income of the church is interested to develop religious tourism in Gishen Mariam.



**Picture 18: Economic benefit of Religious Tourism (photos by the Author)**

## **4.4.2. Social Prospects**

### **4.4.2.1. Attitude of Local People**

Local residents had positive attitude towards religious tourism development in Gishen Mariam because they perceived tourism positively from its economic benefit. This result shows that tourism can have potential to be developed because local people are going to support the development. Andereck *et al.* (2005) said that tourism could be perceived positively if the local people have gained economic benefit, otherwise, they ignore it and perceive tourism negatively.

Muslim religion followers of Dessie, Kutaber and other area were likely to support religious tourism development in Gishen Mariam. Experience and participant observation revealed that Muslim residents of Dessie and Kutaber towns were hosting tourists indiscriminately. Most of the horse renters and local vendors along the way to Gishen and even at Gishen were Muslims. This has made travel to Gishen peaceful.

Desplat (2005) noted that Ethiopian Muslim is interested in making pilgrimage to Christian churches and monasteries.

*Since both Islam and Christianity in Ethiopia have been highly syncretistic, moreover, their followers have not found it impossible to join in common religious observances. Muslims and Christians have reportedly taken part in one another's holiday ceremonies in Gonder and Shoa. The major pilgrimages in Ethiopia provide a particularly dramatic vehicle for such communion: huge numbers from both faiths attend the annual sacrifice at Lake Bishoftu,..., and go on the annual pilgrimage in honor of Saint Gabriel at Kulubi in Harerge province (Levine 1974 cited in Desplate, 2005).*

### **4.4.2.2. Attitude of Religious Tourist**

In addition to positive attitude of local people towards religious tourism development, positive religious tourists' attitude also plays greater role in religious tourism development. In order to measure their attitude religious tourists were asked whether they support religious tourism development or not, and why they support. Indirectly they were

asked if they are going to tell their relatives back their home. The analysis of these two questions is presented as follow.

Table 22: Reasons for supporting religious tourism development in Gishen Mariam

Cross-tabulation		Do you recommend this holy site to be open for visitors?		Total
		yes	no	
Why do you recommend?	Local community will get more benefit than today	22 (12%)	0	22 (12%)
	It will be an opportunity for solving the financial problem of the church sustainably	35 (20%)	0	35 (20%)
	It will create an opportunity for teaching Christianity	58 (33%)	0	58 (33%)
	Other	17 (10%)	0	17 (10%)
	None	0	46/26%	46/26%
Total		131/74%	46/26%	177/100%

As it is shown in table 22 above, 74% of respondents were supporting religious tourism development in Gishen Mariam. They supported if tourism is to be developed in Gishen Mariam for different reasons: because they think that religious tourism creates an opportunity for teaching Christianity (33%), because religious tourism provides opportunity to solve church's financial problem (20%), and because local community will get more benefit from tourism (12%).

With regard to whether respondents are going to inform their friends or their family, 100% of respondent are going to tell about their experience of Gishen Mariam. This shows that contribution of pilgrims in promoting Gishen Mariam will increase to the future religious tourism development. Thus word of mouth is going to play greater role in promotion of Gishen.

Table 23 shown below highlights about the different reasons of respondents why they are going to tell their friends and or their family: Gishen Mariam is holy place whereby anyone should see and visit (82%), because they were satisfied (4.5%) and it is religious

obligation to tell (4%). From this it can be understood that they are not only to tell Christians but also other religious followers. This contributes good opportunity for Gishen Mariam to be visited by any religious follower.

Table 33: Reasons why respondents promote Gishen

Reasons for telling about Gishen to friends/family	Count	Percent
It is holy place whereby any Christians should visit	145	81.9
You are very satisfied with what you saw	8	4.5
It is your religious obligation to tell others	7	4.0
Place whereby anyone should see and you are satisfied and	3	1.7
It is holy place whereby any Christians should visit and is religious obligation to tell	3	1.7
All	11	6.2
Total	177	100.0

#### 4.4.3. Geographic Location

Geographic location of Gishen Mariam is going to play greater role in religious tourism development of Gishen in the future. Because Gishen is located on the northern route whereby many historical and religious sites are found. Gishen is surrounded by tourism potential areas such as mountains of *Meqdela*, *Tenta Mickael*, *Yisma Nigus*, Lalibela, etc. It is found on the way to Lalibela if travel is on vehicle which is 230 km. From *Tenta Mickael* it is around 30 km. From *Yisma Nigus*<sup>22</sup> it is about 30-40 km. For future as few tour operators have been included in their historic northern itinerary route, it can be included under historic route if transport infrastructure going to be developed in collaboration among stakeholders.

<sup>22</sup> *Yisma Nigus* is a place whereby treaty of Wuchale was signed by Ethiopian Emperor Menelik II with Count Pietro Antonelli of Italy on May 2, 1889. Article 17<sup>th</sup> of the treaty of Wuchale was later become the cause for the battle of Adwa (the war between Ethiopia and Italy) which ended by the victory of Ethiopians. (Source: AWCT office and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty\\_of\\_Wuchale](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Wuchale))

#### **4.4.4. Abundance of Tourism Resources**

Presence of different tourism resources is an opportunity for religious tourism development in Gishen Mariam. Tourism resources described and discussed in sub chapter 4.2 have potential to attract both investors and tourists. For instance the landscape and the scenery is stunning, thus they can attract any kind of tourists. The religious promise given to believers that stated in *Metshafe Tefut* (book of history) “*for whom, who come to Gishen shall be cleansed of his/her sin*” was one of the main religious motivating factor for 90% of respondents (see fig 2). To conclude, presence of religious, cultural and natural tourism resources are going to attract tourists in the future. What is expected is just developing products so as to make them accessible for tourists.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### 5.1. Conclusion

Religious tourism is now getting more attention by many countries because it the only niche market that is slightly affected by infrastructural challenges. It is the one which could be well developed and contribute to Ethiopia's economy. The overlooked top domestic tourism destination is one of the religious tourism destinations that can help Ethiopia to get more benefit from this tourism niche market.

Findings show that religious tourism potential of Gishen Mariam is immense. There are many and different unique features and attractions that could make Gishen Mariam one of the world heritage. The landscape and scenery, the natural cave of Saint Gabriel the archangel and king Lalibela cave are resources that have potential to attract geo-tourists and nature based tourists. The religious festival, church buildings, the holy water of Saint Mary and holy waters dedicated to the four saints namely; Saint Gabriel the archangel, John the baptist, Martyrs Saint George and Saint *Arsema*, and church history have power to attract religious /cultural tourists. Movable tangible heritages, secular history, museum and live culture of the local inhabitants are some the resources that can attract cultural/historical tourists. Except museum and movable heritages, most of them were utilized by domestic religious tourist annually only on *Meskerem* and *Tir*.

But Gishen is not developed in a way that religious tourist can get access and utilize these huge resources due to different hindrances. The findings show that poor quality of road and absence of transportation services was reason for pilgrims not to come on the other time of the year. It is also reason for tour operators not to sell Gishen Mariam to international tourists. Poor marketing efforts especially poor promotion campaign and absence of religious tourism products have been hidden tourism potential of Gishen Mariam.

Settlement and inconvenient structure of the church has been contributing to secular practices and low level of spiritual activities. It is also the main cause for conflict

between different stakeholders. Reluctance of church administration and lack of government attention in minimizing illegal settlement and in making Gishen Mariam accessible for tourists were another challenges.

Each year the number of religious tourist is increasing from year to year, as a result, different stakeholders such as local people, local government and neighboring *Woredas* have been gaining economic benefit from tourism. This economic benefit is promising to be happened and increase in the future. Economic benefit in turn is reason for most local people in supporting religious tourism development in Gishen Mariam in the future. Besides, religious tourists are going to tell their families, friends and other potential visitors about Gishen Mariam. Moreover, abundance of tourism resources and Gishen geographical location give a prospect for better religious tourism development in Gishen Mariam.

## **5.2. Recommendation**

Based on the findings the present researcher made the following recommendations:

- ❖ Asphalted road that was intended to be constructed from Dessie to *Tenta* and *Delanta* via *Kutaber* should come in to ground in time. Because this road could at least reduce road problem and also could motivate volunteer EOTC followers to finish the remained 20 km road with asphalt. Its overall impact will became huge particularly in attracting international visitors at any time.
- ❖ Regarding the administrative structure of the church, unless Gishen Mariam is changed into monastery administrative structure, development of religious tourism is unthinkable, thus the present day church administration ought to be voluntary in changing Gishen to monastery. Meanwhile, since converting Gishen to monastery without moving out illegal settlers is not possible, government and the church have to sit together and try to resettle illegal settlers through negotiation or by providing compensation.
- ❖ Notwithstanding providing support to farmers, developing religious tourism in Gishen is an alternative means to alleviate poverty once for all. Religious tourism can also

increase government revenue hence it should be given attention by all stakeholders to be developed.

- ❖ In providing tourist facilities church has to be open to tourists by providing tourist facilities. Some of the facilities include: guest house, restaurants, cafeteria, lodges, bath rooms, and other related services. All these need to be at least at standard level. Workers at these tourist facilities should be from local community.
- ❖ There should be human resources that have knowledge of religious tourism so as to improve the service. This should be from both the government offices and church itself. In providing quality service, Woreda or zonal tourism office need to train local community on how to improve their service provision to the religious tourist.
- ❖ NGO's such as GAA, EU and WHO should continue providing pure portable water in order to prevent water born diseases and satisfy increasing demand of religious tourists.
- ❖ There should be strong marketing campaign especially promotion which should be done by different stakeholders such as tour operators and government tourism offices (Woreda to federal level).
- ❖ Tourism products such as mountain trekking, horse riding, guided natural cave visit, traditional church health treatment through holy waters, etc should be developed by the church as well as by the local people who live under the foot of the mountain.
- ❖ Begging should be banned using different methods.
- ❖ System of hosting religious tourist should be developed. For instance all commercial and noncommercial accommodation establishments should be first registered and then provide their service according to the price the church fixed. The church then can easily monitor.
- ❖ Further studies and researches on history of Gishen Mariam and the True Cross and on the Natural cave of Saint Gabriel the Archangel should be undertaken.

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16. How do you rate the response or the service you get from the security body?
- Very good
  - Good
  - Bad
  - Very bad

**Section IV. Tourism potential of Debre Kerbe Gishen Mariam**

No.	Attractions/tourism resources	Attractive	Less Attractive	Not attractive	NA
1	Natural cave of Saint Gabriel				
2	Church building				
3	Movable tangible heritages				
4	Semi Structural Rock Art				
5	Landscape and Scenery				
6	Religious festivals				
7	History				
8	Museum				
9	Monasticism				
10	Holy water				
11	Live culture of the inhabitants				

Remark: NA refers "not applicable"

**Section V. Challenges and Prospects: Please put tick sign in the box provided below:**

No.	Indicators	Strongly agree	Agree	Partly agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	NA
1	Road quality is encouraging to visit the site at any time						
2	The price of any goods/materials including foods and beverage is un fair						
3	Residents are inhospitable						
4	Sanitary water, electricity, tele-communication services are not provided continuously						

Remark: NA refers "not applicable"

**Section VI: Prospects of religious tourism**

- Would you recommend opening this holy site for visitors?
  - Yes .....go to question 2
  - No.....go to question 3
- Why do you recommend for visitors?
  - The money obtained from the visitors might use for different purpose especially for church

- b. You thought it provides an opportunity for the church to teach visitors about Christianity
  - c. Local people inhabited around the monastery would benefit much better than today
  - d. Other reason.....
3. Why don't you recommend? Because:
- a. There are no tourist facilities that are very important for visitors
  - b. Negative impacts on the parish church might get worse for its authentic future existence
  - c. It is far from town
  - d. There is huge infrastructural problem
  - e. Other reason.....
4. Would you recommend your friend or family to visit this holy site?
- a. Yes
  - b. No...go to section IV
5. Why do you recommend? Because:
- a. It is holy place whereby any orthodox Christian should visit every year
  - b. You are very satisfied with what you saw
  - c. It is your religious obligation to tell other to come here and get mercy
  - d. It is on the way to northern route/other sites
  - e. Other.....

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**Section VII: What is your comment or recommendation for the better religious tourism development in Gishen Mariam?**

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Appendix 2: Questionnaire (Amharic Version)

**ቤደ-በረ ከርቤ ግሽን ማሪያም ተጓዥች የሚሞላ መጠይቅ**

የዚህ መጠይቅ መሰረታዊው አላማ የጋራ ግሪ ማማያ መመሪያ ጽሁፍ በግሽን ማሪያም የቱሪዝም መስህብነትና ችግሮቹ በሚለው ርዕስ ላይ መጻፍ ነው። ስለሆነም መልካም ፍቃዳችሁ ሆኖ ይህንን መጠይቅ እንዲሞሉልኝ በትህትና አየጠየኩኝ ለትብብራችሁ ምስጋናዬ ከፍ ያለ ነው። የምትሰጡትም ምላሽ/ግላዊ መረጃ ለጥናታዊ ጽሁፌ ብቻ የምጠቀምበት መሆኑን በቅድሚያ ለመግለጽ እወዳለሁ። **ኤርምያስ ክፍሌ ከአ.አ ዩኒቨርሲቲ ቱሪዝም ፕሮግ. (ኢሜል-kifle.ermias@yahoo.com ስልክ-0920966189)**

**ክፍል አንድ: ግላዊ ጥያቄዎች**

1. ጾታ: ሀ. ሴት ለ. ወንድ
2. ሐይማኖት: ሀ. ኦርቶዶክስ ለ. ሙስሊም መ. ፕሮቴስታንት  
ተዋህዶ ሐ. ካቶሊክ ሰ. ሌላ
3. እድሜ: ሀ ከአስራ ስምንት ዓመት በታች ሐ በ 30 እና 45 አመት መካከል  
ለ በ 18 እና 30 አመት መካከል መ ከ 45 አመት በላይ

**ክፍል ሁለት: ጉዞን በተመለከተ**

1. ከየት ነው የመጡት? \_\_\_\_\_
2. በምንድነው የመጡት?  
ሀ. በ ግል መኪና ለ. በ አውቶቢስ ሐ. በእግር መ. በበቅሎ/በፈረስ ሠ. በእግርና መኪና ረ. በ አውሮፕላንና መኪና
3. በእግርዎ መጥተው ከሆነ ለምን በእግርዎ መጡ?  
ሀ. ለትራንስፖርት ለሌሎች ተዛማጅ ወጪዎች የሚሆን ሐ. የአካል ብቃቴን ለመፈተን/ለመፈተሽ  
በቂ ገንዘብ ስሌሊለኝ መ. መንገዱን በመኪና ለመምጣት ስለምፈራ  
ለ. ለበረከት ስል ሠ. ሌላ ምክንያት ካልዎት?.....
4. ከማን ጋር ነው የመጡት?  
ሀ. በግል ብቻዎትን ለ. ከቤተሰብ ጋር ሐ. ከጓደኛዎት ጋር መ. በማህበር/
5. ማደሪያዎት የት ነው?  
ሀ. ድንኳን መ. በቤተክርስቲያን ረ. የጓደኛዎ ቤት ውስጥ  
ለ. ሆቴል በረንዳ/አፀድ ውስጥ ሜዳ ላይ ሰ. ቤተ መቅደስ ውስጥ  
ሐ. ቤት ተከራይተው ሠ. የግሌ/የቤተሰብ ቤት ውስጥ እያገለገልኩኝ
6. በግሽን ማሪያም ለምን ያህል ጊዜ ይቆያሉ?  
ሀ. ከ1-2 ቀን ሐ. ከ5-6 ቀን ሠ. ከሳምንት በላይ  
ለ. ከ3-4ቀን መ ለሳምንት ረ. ለምን ያህል ጊዜ እንደምቆይ አላውቅም
7. ወደዚህ ቅዱስ ቦታ የመጡበት ምክንያት:  
ሀ. ለመጎብኘት መ. የጓደኛዎትን/የቤተሰብዎን ሰርግ ሰ. ለንግድ  
ለ. ለጸሎት ለመታደም ቀ. የሃይማኖት ግዴታዬ ስለሆነ  
ሐ. ለጸበል ረ. የሐጢያት ሥርየት ለማግኘት

- በ. ወደ ሌሎች ቦታዎች ለመሄድ እግረ መንገድ ላይ ስለሆነ  
 ተ. ለትምህርት/ለምርምር  
 ነ. የራሴ ቅርስ ስለሆነ
8. ከዚህ በፊት መጥተው ያውቃሉ? ሀ. አዎ ለ. አላውቅም  
 ፑ. ዘና ለማለት/ለመዝናናት ፎ. ህይወጥኖታዊ በዓል ላይ ለመታደም
9. ምን ያህል ጊዜ መጥተው ያውቃሉ? \_\_\_\_\_
10. ግሽን ማርያምን ያወቁት በምን ምክንያት ነው?  
 ሀ. በጓደኛዎ ሐ. በትምህርት ሠ. በሌላ ምክንያት  
 ለ. በመገናኛ ብዙሃን መ. ባጋጣሚ
11. ከመስከረምና ጥር ውጭ መጥተው ያውቃሉ/ ለመምጣት ስለሰጠው ያውቃሉ?  
 ሀ. አዎ ወደ ክፍል ሦሥት ይሒዱ ለ. አላውቅም/አላስብም
12. መልስዎት አላውቅም/አላስብም ከሆነ ለምን?  
 ሀ. በሌላው ጊዜ ቃል ኪዳን አይሰራም ብዬ ስለማስብ መ. ከሌላው ጊዜ ይልቅ በዚህ ጊዜ ብቻ መምጣት ስለሚያስደስተኝ  
 ለ. የትራንስፖርት ችግር አለ ብዬ ስለማስብ ሠ. የጸጥታና የደህንነት ችግር አለ ብዬ ስለማስብ  
 ሐ. ስራ ስለሆኑኝ ረ. ሌላ ምክንያት ካልዎት .....

**ክፍል ሦሥት: ደህንነትና ምቹነትን የተመለከቱ ጥያቄዎች**

1. በጉዞዎ ላይ ወይም በቆይታዎ ያጋጠምዎ ችግር በተለይም ወንጀል ተፈጽሞብዎታል?  
 ሀ. አዎ ለ. የለም ምንም ወንጀል አልተፈጸመብኝም
2. ለላይኛው ጥያቄ መልስዎት አዎ ከሆነ ምን አይነት?  
 ሀ. የግድያ መከራ ሐ. አስገድዶ መደፈር ሠ. የአሸባሪዎች ጥቃት  
 ለ. ስርቆት መ. ዛቻና ማስፈራራት/ስድብ
3. የደረሱበዎትን ወንጀል ለፖሊስ አሳውቀዋል?  
 ሀ. አዎ ለ. አላሳውቅም
4. ከፖሊስ ያገኙትን አገልግሎት እንዴት ያዩታል?  
 ሀ. በጣም ጥሩ ለ. ጥሩ ሐ. ጥሩ ያልሆነ መ. በጣም የወረደ

ክፍል አራት: የቱሪዝም አቅሙን በተመለከተ (እባክዎትን የ "X" ምልክት በመጠቀም የሚከተለውን ሠንጠረዥ ይሙሉ) ማስታወሻ: ከሚከተሉት መስህቦች ውስጥ የማያውቁት ወይም ያላዩት ካለ አይመለከተኝም በሚለው ስር ምልክት ያድርጉ

ቁ	በገዳሙ የሚገኙ መስህቦች	ይስባል	በክፊል	ምንም አይሰብም	አይመለከተኝም /አላውቀውም
1	የቅዱስ ጊዮርጊስ ዋሻ፤ ጸበልና ቤተክርስቲያን				
2	አራቱ ቤተክርስቲያናት				
3	የተለያዩ የቅዱሳን መጽሐፍትና ንዋይተ ቅዱሳት: በተለይም መጽሐፈ ጤፍት				
4	ቅዱስ ላሊበላ ጀምሮት የነበረው ዋሻ				
5	መልክአ ምድራዊ አቀማመጡ				
6	ሃይማኖታዊ በዓል አከባበር				
7	የቦታው ታሪክ				
8	ቤተ መዘክር				
9	የመነኮሳት ህይወት				
10	ክፍርዳኖስ ወንዝ የመጣው ጸበል				
11	የአካባቢው ሕዝብ ባሕልና ወግ				

ክፍል አምስት: ደብረ ክርቤ ግሽን ማርያምን እንዴት ይመዘኑታል/ይገመገሙታል (ምን ታዘቡ?) እባክዎትን የ "X" ምልክት ይጠቀሙ

ቁ.	ጽንሰ ሐሳቦች	በጣም እስማማለሁ	እስማማለሁ	በክፊል	አልስማማም	በጣም አልስማማም	አላውቅም
1	የመንገዱ ጥራት ግሽን ማርያምን በማንኛውም ጊዜ እንዲጎበኝ ያስችላል						
2	የማንኛውም እቃ ምግብና መጠጥን ጨምሮ የመግዣ ዋጋ ኢፍትሃዊ ነው						
3	በገዳሙ ውስጥና ዙሪያ የሚገኙ ሰዎች እንግዳ ተቀባይ አይደሉም						
4	ንጹሕ የመጠጥ ውሃ የኤሌክትሪክ እና የስልክ አገልግሎቶች ያለማቋረጥ ይሠጣሉ						

**ክፍል ሰባት: ወደፊት መደረግ ስላለበት**

- ይህ ቅዱስ ቦታ ለትብብሮች ክፍት መሆን አለበት ብለው ያስባሉ?  
 ሀ. አዎ ለ. አላስብም
- መልሰዎት አዎ ከሆነ ለምን? ምክንያቱም:

ሀ. የአካባቢው ማህበረሰብ አሁን ከሚያገኘው ጥቅም በበለጠ ወደፊት ያገኛል ብዬ ስለማስብ  
 ለ. ቤተክርስቲያኗ ያለባትን የኢኮኖሚ ችግር በዘላቂነት ለመቅረፍ አንዱ አማራጭ ነው ብዬ ስለማስብ  
 ሐ. ቤተክርስቲያኗ ስብከተ ወንጌልን ለማስፋፋት የሚያስችላት አጋጣሚ ይፈጠራል ብዬ ስለማስብ  
 መ. ሌላ ምክንያት ካልሆነት.....

3. መልስዎት አላስብም ከሆነ ለምን? ምክንያቱም:

- ሀ. በቂ የሆኑ የጎብኝዎች አገልግሎት መስጫ ቦታዎች ና ሰጪዎች ስሌሉ
- ለ. ጎብኚዎች በወደፊት የገዳሚ ህልውና ላይ አሉታዊ ተጽዕኖ ይፈጥራሉ ብዬ ስለማስብ
- ሐ. ከከተማ የራቀ ስለሆነ
- መ. በጣም ግዙፍ የሆነ የመሰረተ ልማት ችግር ስላለ

4. ጓደኛዎት ይህን ቅዱስ ስፍራ እንዲጎበኙ ይመክራሉን?

- ሀ. አዎ
- ለ. አልመክር

5. መልስዎት አዎ ከሆነ ለምን? ምክንያቱም:

- ሀ. ይህ ቅዱስ ስፍራ ማንኛውም ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋህዶ ክርስቲያን የሆነ ሁሉ ሊጎበኘው የሚገባ ስለሆነ
- ለ. ባየሁት ሁሉ በጣም ስለረከሁኝና ስለተደሰትኩኝ
- ሐ. ለሌሎቹ የመንገር ሃይማኖታዊ ግዴታዬ ስለሆነ
- መ. እግረ መንገድ ሊጎበኝ የሚችል ስለሆነ

ክፍል ስድስት: ለወደፊቱ ግሽን ማርያም ትልቅ የሃይማኖት ተጓዦች መናሃሪያ ለማድረግ ምን መደረግ አለበት ይላሉ?

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### Appendix 3. Guideline to Key Informant Interview

#### Questions to the Church

- ❖ History of the monastery
- ❖ What are the movable heritages of this church?
- ❖ How many monks and ordinary people live here? Do you have the statistics? Number of church servants both temporary and permanently
- ❖ Do you have guest houses for both domestic and international visitors? How many? Whether paid or free of charge
- ❖ Income of the church from the pilgrims/ tourist
- ❖ Do allow entering and visiting the church for the tourists who are not from the Ethiopian Orthodox? Why?
- ❖ Do you have the plan to make this holy site one of religious tourism site in Ethiopia? Why?
- ❖ Is there tourist/ pilgrim flow from abroad? Average figure annually?
- ❖ Restaurant, Hotel: number, status,
- ❖ Local guide: presence/absence- temporary and permanent
- ❖ Health center: presence/absence- their status and general situation
- ❖ Security person: who are? How many? Whether throughout the year or not?
- ❖ Church service: when, why, how?
- ❖ Road network in the monastery: current and future plan
- ❖ Local participation: whether the church participate the local community or not?
- ❖ Promotion campaign: whether they uses different methods of promotional campaign
- ❖ Official website: whether there is or not
- ❖ Communication network: internet, telephone, other
- ❖ Electricity: status, source
- ❖ Sewage , Regulations, Code of conduct, Signage, Potential stakeholders coordination

### **Questions to Police**

1. What crime offences have been registered by your office? What about the history shows declining or increasing?
2. The number of security persons involved during the annual ceremony and on the other time in the destination?
3. Do pilgrims/tourist reported any crime? How often? Or how do you describe it?
4. Are there any organized group that supports the security and safety of the pilgrims/ tourist? How do you see it?

### **Questions to Traffic Police**

5. Do you have any report about the number of vehicles comes to here? Yes or No?
6. If you have, how many vehicles are coming to Gishen each year? What about the number of cars this year?
7. Trucks are allowed to serve pilgrims/visitors. Why?
8. How many traffic police are assigned to Gishen each year? What are the problems related to the behavior and offences of the drivers?
9. Is there any transportation service to Gishen other than the two annual celebration seasons? Why?

### **Questions to the tourism office of the zone and woreda**

10. Does your office provide incentive for investment at Gishen Mariam?
11. Are there tour operators and guides in your zone? Number of tour operators
12. What Promotion/ marketing techniques does your office use?
13. Do you think that religious tourism has an impact? Why?
14. What kind of activities are you doing?
15. What are the challenges your office has faced in promoting Gishen Mariam?

### **Questions to local people/residents**

1. What sort of benefit do they obtained from pilgrims?

2. Under this question; number and type of employment, price of renting house, any other means of income, what social service is being provided such as school; health center etc could be discussed. What activities?
3. What negative impact they observed and knew caused due to pilgrims?
4. Should Gishen be opened for any visitors? Why?

#### Appendix 4: Guideline for passive and participant observation

1. Architectural designs of churches
2. The way how pilgrims celebrate Gishen Mariam
3. What environmental impacts are observed during the annual festival?
4. What difference is noticed in terms of both negative and positive impacts?
5. Buying and being user of public transport
6. Taking picture of potential resources of Gishen
7. Looking at the resources Gishen comprise
8. Measuring or qualifying road of Gishen starting from Dessie town till Gishen.
9. Attending the festival
10. Counting number of churches

Appendix 3: List of Visited Websites of Tour Operators

No.	Name of tour operators	Website address
1	13 Suns Tours PLC-nothing said about Gishen	<a href="http://www.13suns.com">www.13suns.com</a>
2	Abba Travel Agency P.L.C-	<a href="http://www.abbatravel.net">www.abbatravel.net</a>
3	Abyssinian Tours & Travel-not included even under their festival tour package	<a href="http://www.abyssiniantours.com">www.abyssiniantours.com</a>
4	Awqash Tour and Travel-nothing	<a href="http://www.awqashtravel.com">www.awqashtravel.com</a>
5	Desire Tours- nothing	<a href="http://www.desiretoursethiopia.com">www.desiretoursethiopia.com</a>
6	Dinknesh Ethiopia Tour-nothing under mesqel	<a href="http://www.ethiopiatravel.com">www.ethiopiatravel.com</a>
7	Ethio-Der tour and Travel-nothing	<a href="http://www.ethioder.com">www.ethioder.com</a>
8	Ethio-Majestic Tour Operators-nothing	<a href="http://www.ethiomajestic.com">www.ethiomajestic.com</a>
9	Fest Ethiopia Travel & Tour PLC-nothing	<a href="http://www.festethiopia.com">www.festethiopia.com</a>
10	Four Seasons Travel & Tours-nothing	<a href="http://www.fstatours.com">www.fstatours.com</a>
11	Rainbow exclusive car rental & tour services-mention Gishen under <i>Mesqel</i>	<a href="http://www.rainbowtravelplc.com">www.rainbowtravelplc.com</a>
12	Abeba Tours -nothing	<a href="http://www.abebatoursethiopia.com">www.abebatoursethiopia.com</a>
13	Aberus Ethiopia Tours-nothing	<a href="http://www.aberusethiopiatours.com">www.aberusethiopiatours.com</a>
14	Abol-Touch Tour and Travel-nothing	<a href="http://www.aboethiopia.com">www.aboethiopia.com</a>
15	Action Tours Ethiopia-nothing	<a href="http://www.actiontourethiopia.com">www.actiontourethiopia.com</a> <a href="http://www.actiontours.com.et">www.actiontours.com.et</a>
16	Amazing Ethiopia Tours-nothing	<a href="http://www.amazingethiopia.com">www.amazingethiopia.com</a>
17	Authentic Ethiopia Tours-under meskel	<a href="http://www.authenticethiopiatours.com">www.authenticethiopiatours.com</a> <a href="http://www.travelandtoursinethiopia.com">www.travelandtoursinethiopia.com</a>
18	Caravan Travel and Tour Agency –nothing	<a href="http://www.caravantravels.info">www.caravantravels.info</a>
19	Daketta Ethiopia Tours-nothing	<a href="http://www.dakettaethiopia.com">www.dakettaethiopia.com</a>
20	Passion Ethiopia Tours-nothing	<a href="http://www.passionethiopiatours.com">www.passionethiopiatours.com</a>
21	Pharez Ethiopia Tour Operator-under <i>Mesqel</i> is celebrated to signify existence of true cross in Gishen Mariam	<a href="http://www.pharezethiopiatour.com">www.pharezethiopiatour.com</a>
22	Priceless Ethiopia Tours-nothing	<a href="http://www.pricelessethiopia.net.et">www.pricelessethiopia.net.et</a>
23	Untouched Ethiopia Tours-nothing	<a href="http://www.untouchedethiopiatours.com">www.untouchedethiopiatours.com</a>
24	Yama Ethiopia Tours-nothing said about Gishen Mariam	<a href="http://www.yamatoursethiopia.com">www.yamatoursethiopia.com</a>

25	Elmi tours plc has fixed packaged tour that include Gishen Mariam festival for day visit only (excursion)	<a href="http://www.elmitourethiopia.com">www.elmitourethiopia.com</a>
26	Red jackal tour operator-nothing	<a href="http://www.redjackal.net">www.redjackal.net</a>
27	Stunning Ethiopia Tours-mesqel signifies physical presence of true cross	<a href="http://www.stunningethiopiatus.com">www.stunningethiopiatus.com</a>
28	Overland tours- include under its package for day out visit the way to <i>mekdela</i>	<a href="http://www.overlandethiopiatus.com">www.overlandethiopiatus.com</a>
29	Ethiopian treasure-under mesqel	<a href="http://www.ethiopiantreasure.co.uk">www.ethiopiantreasure.co.uk</a>
30	Witness Ethiopia tours	<a href="http://www.witnessethiopiatus.com">www.witnessethiopiatus.com</a>



**Appendix 6: Declaration**

Ermias Kifle hereby declare this thesis is my original work and has not already been presented or is being currently submitted for a degree in any university or for publication. It is free for use as far as proper citation and acknowledgment is made.

  
Ermias Kifle

17/08/2013  
Date

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as university main advisor.

  
Dr Mulugeta Feseha (Associate Professor)

17/08/2013  
Date