## College of Social Sciences

### Department of Archaeology and Heritage Management


# An Archaeological Investigation on the Significance of the Stelae of Fato, and Aguffi, Sodo District, Central Ethiopia


BY

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Supervisor; Tekle Hagos (Assoc. Professor)



**December, 2024**

**AAU, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

# Addis Ababa University

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## Department of Archaeology and Heritage Management

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Adam Melese Nigussie entitled ” **An Archaeological Investigation on the Significance of the Stelae of Fato, and Aguffi, Sodo District, Central Ethiopia”**. Submitted in partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Archaeology compiles with the regulations of the university and meets the accepted standard with respect to originality and quality.

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A Thesis Submitted to the College of Social Sciences in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Archaeology Department of Archaeology and Heritage Management

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## GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

The terminologies and abbreviations used in this thesis are provided below.

**Anthropomorphic stelae:** are stone slabs or pillars carved with human figures, commonly used as burial markers or memorial monuments in ancient societies.

**Broken stelae:** are Split or cracked at the upper, middle, or base end of the stelae.

**Conical and cylindrical stelae:** have a circular cross-section.

**Decoration:** consists of engraved swords and pixels, often with mysterious meanings.

**Edge:** refers to the far end of a stela, which is one-third of its total length from the middle to the base of the stele.

**Erected stelae:** Those are remaining standing at the site without falling over.

**GPS** - Global Positioning System: an electronic satellite-based tool used for collecting, surveying, mapping, and continuously providing the three-dimensional position of objects, whether in motion or stationary, around the clock.

**Lay:** refers to stelae that have fallen or are lying on the ground at the site.

**Length;** refers to the maximum dimension parallel to the axis of the stele.

**Middle:** refers to one-third of the total length of the stelae measured between the bases and upper parts of the stelae.

**Monuments:** refers to structures made of large, roughly dressed and undressed stones erected as funerary monuments or memorials representing specific cultural traditions

**Site:** refers to a place where the stelae are located or in some cases referred to as a study area.

**Stelae:** a single erected stone used for memorials, burials, religious, commemorative, and ritual activities.

**Unbroken stelae:** those that are intact, not damaged, and retain their original shape

**Unidentified (irregular) stelae:** refer to those stelae that are broken and no longer bear their original markings.

**IES** - Institute of Ethiopian Studies

**AAU**– Addis Ababa University

**EHA** - Ethiopia Heritage Authority

**CFEE -** French Center for Ethiopian Studies.

**SNNPR –** Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Regions

**An Archaeological Investigation on the Significance of the Stelae of Fato, *and Aguffi* Sodo District, Central Ethiopia**

Adam Melese Niguse

***ABSTRACT***

*This study is an archaeological investigation of the significance of the stelae of Fato and Aguffi located in the Central Ethiopia region of Gurage Zone's, Sodo district. The study included twenty-three stelae from the Aguffi site and sixty-two stelae from the Fato site. Pre-field and fieldwork data acquisition techniques were used in the study; for example, fieldwork data acquisition techniques included physical observation, measuring, documenting, describing, interviewing, and taking pictures of each stelae was conducted in May 2024. Pre-field data acquisition techniques included reviewing previous research and consulting with experts. I used qualitative and quantitative methodologies to assess the information I collected in the field. A significant number of irregular and clustered stelae that are ascribed to the stelae tradition of the region were identified. Out of the sixty-two stelae of Fato, four of them are clustered, while the remaining ones are found in semi-organized rows. Different types of stelae were identified from both sites, like decorated, irregular, conical, drum, and circular. For analysis, a typological comparison was made with surrounding stelae sites. In addition, the technological comparison reveals that the stelae of the study area appear to be older than the stelae of Tiya. Based on their functional attributes, the Site resembles the funerary practices of the ancient inhabitants of the area. However, the existing context of these sites is deteriorating due to human and natural factors. Therefore, the study concludes by recommending protective measures that should be taken as quickly as possible by the concerned bodies.*

*Keywords: Stelae, Conservation, Clustered, Fato, and Aguffi.*

# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the research and its context, as well as the study's introduction, problem statement, research hypothesis, objectives, Significance, scope, limitations, organization of the thesis, and definitions of keywords.

## 1.1 Background of the Study Area

The Stelae of Fato is located in the Sodo district of the Gurage Zone in the recently established Central Ethiopia Region. It is located 123 kilometers south of Addis Ababa and 20 kilometers west of the administrative town of Bui, situated within the boundaries of Gereno village. Its geographical coordinates are 8.370113° N latitude and 38.491021° E longitude. It is situated at an altitude of 2524 meters above sea level and is surrounded by agricultural land and the Euserbi River. The geological structure of this study area is comparable to that of the southwest central highlands plateau (Merla, 1979).

Furthermore, the surface rock in the study area is primarily Pleistocene [1]in age and resulted from volcanic eruptions that occurred millions of years ago. These volcanic rocks show that the area has seen significant geological activity in the past, which shaped the current landscape (Merla, 1979). This is due to the existence of numerous heavily layered volcanic rock formations in the surrounding region.


*Figure 1: Map of Ethiopia showing the location of Gurage Zone, Sodo Weredain the red dot (by Amanuel; 2024)*

[1]*The first epoch of the Quaternary period (also known as the Age of Humans), between the Pliocene and Holocene epochs, or the system of deposits laid down during these epochs.*

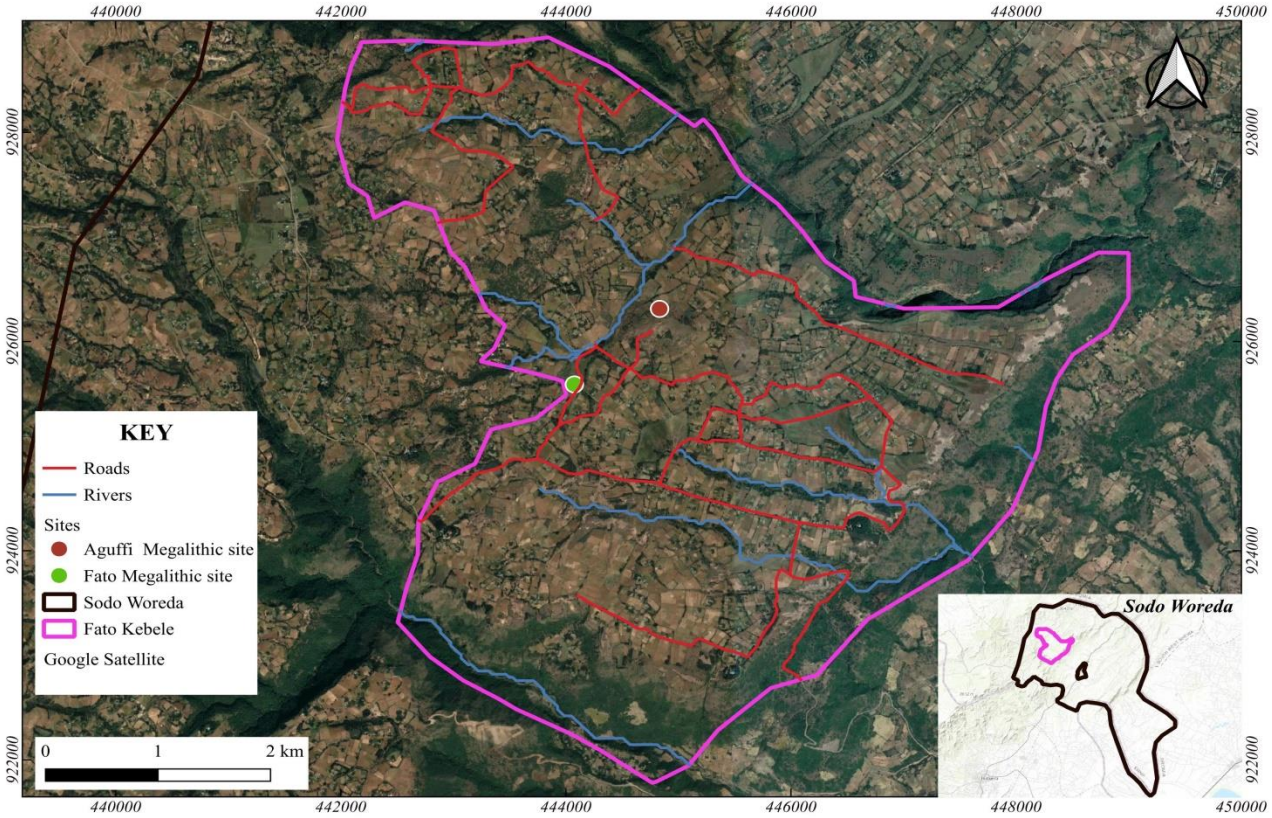



*Figure 2; Map Showing the study area (by Amanuel Getachew; 2024)*

## 1.2 Background of the Study

Scientific archaeological investigation of the region began in 1905 (Joussaume, 1974; Anfray, 1982). This early archaeological work revealed the presence of various monuments in Sodo (Gurage), Sodon, and Amibot (Aklilu, 2003). In the second decade of the twentieth century, Azias and Chambard re-examined the site of the region, including the ancient Sodo, Selti, and Meskan areas, and they conducted excavation Gatira Dimma, Tiya, Dimboder, and Amorigé (Anfray, 1982; Joussaume, 2007). In addition, in the Sodo region, both domestic and international researchers have conducted several archaeological studies. The stelae of Fato, however, have not been mentioned. Francis Anfray initially referred to the Site of Fato in 1982 while conducting inventory work in central Ethiopia. Then, in 2005 and 2006, another French scholar named Claude Tournemire used GPS to record the site's location .He also made sketches and photographs' of the stelae. In addition, the Sodo Woreda Culture and Tourism Office enclosed the Site in 2009. However, archaeologists have never systematically investigated the site. Our knowledge of the purpose, the typology, and the chronology of the stelae is very limited.

Therefore, this thesis intended to address the previously mentioned gaps, Focused on detailed documentation and description of the site to explore the archaeological significance of the site.

## 1.3 Statement of the Problem

Ethiopia is home to a large number of stelae sites. However, the initial responsibilities of carrying out an extensive site survey to locate and characterize them have been restricted because of their widespread distribution throughout the region. Because they serve as tangible reminders of the technological, political, cultural, and historical accomplishments of the past, stelae sites are extremely valuable (Fattovich, 2005, Phillips, 2010).

Despite its potential, the stelae of fato have never been thoroughly studied or documented, and our knowledge about the site is limited. These sites are poorly understood. The purpose of the stelae is not yet well addressed. The typology of the stelae requires further archaeological study. Therefore, proper documentation and descriptions through systematic study are needed to understand the significance of the sites, which this thesis intends to address.

## 1.4 Research Questions/hypothesis

This thesis has the following research questions:

- What are the purposes of the stelae of Fato and Aguffi district?
- What are the current conservation concerns with the stelae of the Fato and Aguffi districts in the Gurage Zone?
- What are the possible measures to be addressed for the stelae of the Fato and Aguffi districts of the Gurage Zone?

## 1.5 Objectives of the study

### 1.5.1 General Objectives

The general objective of the study is to conduct an archaeological investigation on the significance of the stelae of Fato and Aguffi, located in the Central Ethiopia, Region of Gurage Zone Sodo District.

### 1.5.2 Specific Objectives

This thesis has the following specific objectives:

- To assess the purpose of the stelae of the Fato and Aguffi district
- To Study and document the typology of the stelae of the Fato and Aguffi district
- To describe the current conservation concerns of the stelae of the Fato and Aguffi district
- To present the possible measures to be addressed for the stelae of the Fato and Aguffi district

## 1.6 Significance of the Study

This research set out to discover, measure, identify, characterize, and record each individual stela. This in turn makes it easier to comprehend the site's historical, archaeological, and economical value. The thesis can offer insightful information about the conservation, protection, promotion, and advancement of local knowledge and cultural assets. This thesis lists the problems that exist, makes recommendations for the appropriate bodies, and offers some potential fixes. Additionally, the study provides academics with important data, making it a useful resource for a more through in this area in the future.

### 1.7 Scope of the study

This thesis focuses on the documentation, description, and mapping of the Fato and Aguffi Stelae sites. However, due to various constraints, including political instability, time constraints, and funding restrictions, further comparative analyses were not conducted. Moreover, it is recommended that future research expand the scope of the study by undertaking comparative analyses with other sites in the vicinity. This approach would facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the archaeological context and enable comparisons with similar sites.

### 1.8 Limitations of the Study

The main limitation of the study is lack of proper time to compare the stelae of Fato and Aguffi with related site known in the literatures. The second one is thematic issue that is bound only megalithic research discipline and concerned with the stelae of the study area.

Furthermore, the study is a subject to several limitations, including a lack of reliable sources, remoteness of the study site, financial constraints, political instability, and an unsuitable topography for transportation services are the major problems encountered. These factors have presented significant challenges throughout the fieldwork period. Additionally, the sites have covered by grass and bushes. Irregularities of some stelae have made it difficult to accurately measure, them presenting a challenge for the researcher.

### 1.9 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into five chapters: Chapter One deals with the background, statement of the problem, research questions/hypothesis, objectives, significance, limitations, and scope of the study; Chapter Two deals with a review of the literature; Chapter Three deals with about materials and methods; Chapter Four deals with Data Presentations and Descriptions; and Chapter Five deals with discussion, conclusions, and recommendations.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Concepts, Definitions, and Functions

Stelae (Singular: stela) denotes monuments composed mainly of stone monoliths. The word stelae come from the Latin term "stele," which refers to a stone that was erected as a memorial in antiquity (Collon, D.et, al. 2015). They are found all across the world and have a fascinating millennium-long history. People have respected them for their cultural value and used them as holy sites and authority symbols throughout history (Collon, D.et, al. 2015). Stelae carving were a widespread custom in antiquity, especially in agrarian societies (Joussaume, 2007; Holl, 2021). Stelae were frequently built by ancient societies as a means of marking boundaries or territories, honoring and remembering the dead, burial markers, memorializing important events, and participating in religious and ritual acts (Renfrew, 2005; Joussaume, 2007; Holl, 2021).

## 2.2 Archaeological Research on the Stelae of Southern Ethiopia

Researchers have been able to identify stelae in southern Ethiopia since the early 1900s (Metasebia, 1997). In response to these discoveries, French and German scholars conducted the first archaeological study in southern Ethiopia in the 1920s. Pierre Azaïs and Chambard made particularly significant contributions. They made four expeditions between 1922 and 1926 and proved the existence of over 10,000 stelae in southern Ethiopia. A portion of these findings was published in 1931 (Joussaume, 1995). The result of this research revealed the presence of stelae in Kembata, Hadiya, Sidama, and Gedeo, making southern Ethiopia recognized as the "belt of stelae (Anfray, 1982; Buzuayehu & Menasse, 2004).

The investigation of the Tuto Fela site by a German research team from the Frobénius Institute, led by Adolf E. Jensen, marked the beginning of the study of the Gedeo stelae in 1930. According to this research, a large cemetery area marked by stelae was discovered characterized by anthropomorphic and phallic[2] shapes (Sophia, 2020). However, due to the ongoing political unrest, both international and indigenous scientists discontinued an archaeological research in the region until the 1970s. In the 1980s, another French team returned to the archeological sites of Chalba tututi and Tuto Fela to continue their comprehensive investigation after the upheavals. This research was continued for over

[2] Phallic – having to do with the penis especially in terms of shape denoting the male virility

three decades, aimed to explain the typologies, chronologies, and distributions of the stelae (Anfray, 1982).

Joussaume, and his colleagues, carried out comprehensive surveys and excavations in the area during the 1990s. It was identified that there were more than a thousand stelae (Joussaume, cross, & Bernard, 2010). Nevertheless, according to Metasebia (1997), the Gedeo Zone has the greatest number of stelae in Africa and the southern parts of Ethiopia (Joussaume, 2007; Joussaume, cross, & Bernard, 2010). Joussaume says that this area features a number of noteworthy Stelae sites. Of these, Chalba Tututi site is well known for having a lot of phallic stelae, while Tuto Fela is admired for having a variety of stelae, including both phallic and circular stelae (Metasebia, 1997).

In 2006, Abiyot conducted surveys and test excavations at the site of Chalba tututi, located 50 km south of Dila town. According to the study's findings, more than 1,300 stelae were found. He concluded that these stelae were not built for ceremonial purposes, but rather for religious objectives (Abiyot, 2006; Azaïs & Chambard, 1931). A variety of lithic [3]materials, including obsidian[4], and a small number of ceramic sherds were found during the site's excavations. His work revealed that, instead of being used as tomb markers, phallic stelae were built for ceremonial purposes (Abiyot, 2006). Based on the earlier studies of Azaïs and Abiyot, a French archaeological mission headed by Jossuame carried out additional study at Chalba tututi in 2009 and 2010 (Joussaume, cross, & Bernard, 2010). That being said, The Abaya Archaeological Mission project continues under the leadership of Anne- Lise Goujon, who is still responsible for ongoing work at the site. She identified a series of stelae structures connecting the phallic stelae to low mound structures. In addition, phallic stelae are associated with specific stelae Structures, decorations and interactions between different regions (Goujon, 2013).

Francis Anfray reported 40 stelae in the Hadiya and Kembata regions in 1979; distinguishing 26 sites with eight different forms of stelae (Abiyot, 2006; Joussaume, 1995;2009).Subsequently Adisalem, (2009) postulated that the individuals who curved these stelae were Muslim. In terms of their

[3] Lithic – related or Pertaining to stone

[4] Obsidian – it is a mineral or type of black glass produced by volcanoes

typology, anthropomorphic[5]and figurative stelae have found at the Sites, these stelae were built to honor the departed (Joussaume, 1995;2009).

Joussaume undertook a survey in the Wolaita Zone, where he documented 31 phallic stelae that exhibit similarities in both shape and decorations with those found in the Sidamo zones. The discovery of similar stelae in Damot Gale, Boloso Sore, Kindo Koisha, and Sodo Zuria Woreda [6]attests to the presence of carved rings on these stelae. Furthermore, the area displays a sequence of stelae, or stone buildings, that reach into the Sidama districts (Joussaume, 1995; Metasebia, 1997).

Yem, another stelae site, is located in the southwestern region of Ethiopia, 297 kilometers south of Addis Ababa. Various archaeological studies were conducted in the area between 1989 and 1992 by a French team collaborating with an Ethiopian archaeologist (Menasse, 2010). Therefore, about 160 stelae from the Zeikar and Melisa sites were identified. Of these, a considerable proportion of stelae taller than two meters have been recorded. However, Metasebia (1997) has classified them into two groups—phallic and non-anthropomorphic Stelae —based on their typology. Furthermore, the sites were found to include a variety of grave goods, such as glass, beads, ceramic sherds, and iron bracelets (Kinahan, 2013).The site is thought to have been destroyed during the Oromo expansion in the sixteenth century (Menasse, 2010).

Konso is located approximately 595 kilometers to the southwest of the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa and 365 kilo meters from the city of Hawasa. The people of Konso have a longstanding tradition of erecting stone and wooden figures to commemorate the living and the deceased (Gellebo, 2018; Hallpike, 1972; Joussaume, 2013) Poissonnier, 2014). As Murdock (1956) noted, the people of Konso were renowned for their skill in stone monolith erected and their ability to curve stelae from both stone and wood. Despite of this, Metasebia most recently conducted a detailed examination of the stelae traditions observed in the Konso and Gewada regions. He was primarily concerned with elucidating the funerary rituals and the connection between the use of stone and wood to commemorate the deceased and symbolize the heroes (Metasebia, 2007).

Unlike the stelae culture observed in other parts of the southern region of the country, stelae are found in the Southern Omo region of the SNNPR. These structures are known locally as 'Benna

[5] Relating to or characterized by anthropomorphism or "explanations of animal behavior in anthropomorphic terms" having human characteristics.
[6] One of the unit of Administration that contains a number kebeles' in turns are the smallest unit of administration.

kulugto' or stone platforms built in the form of concentric rings and served as ceremonial sites for the pastoral Bodi people (Timothy & Marcus, 2010).

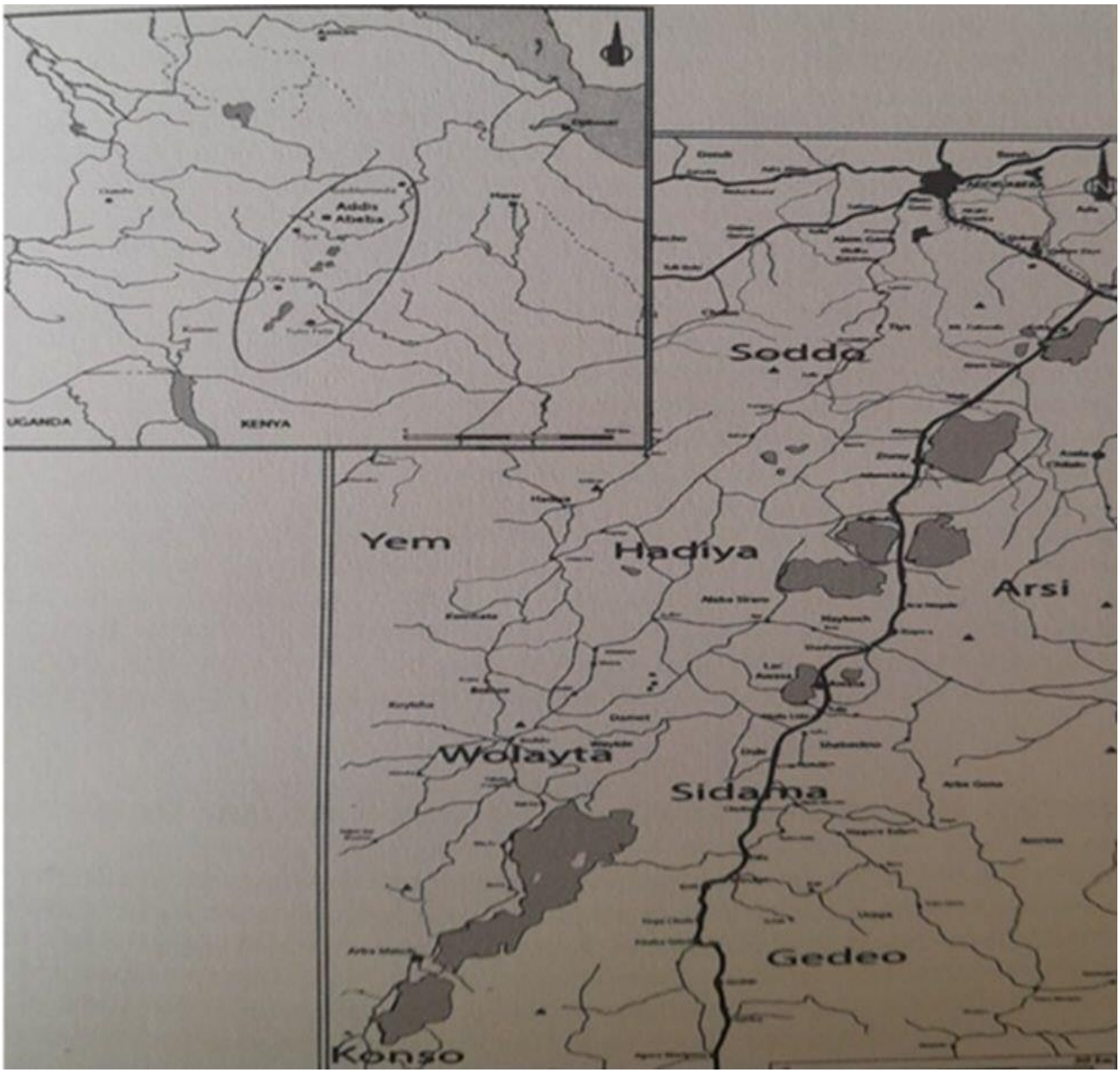



*Figure 3: Map showing the distribution of stelae in southern Ethiopia (Source: Anfray, 1982)*

## 2.3 Contextual Review - Archaeological Research on the Stelae of Central Ethiopia

### 2.3.1 Stelae of Sodo, Meskan, Selti, and Dobi

In Central Ethiopia, especially in the Gurage districts, stelae have been studied by travelers, anthropologists, and archaeologists who carried out in-depth studies in the Soddo region starting at the end of the nineteenth century. This resulted from its convenient location along the path leading to and from the political and economic hubs of the country (Cholet & Neuville, 1905). After that, in the early twentieth century, archaeologists' focus in the Sodo regions significantly increased. A considerable number of stelae in the area were identified as a result of this study .Collet and Neville carried out the first recording of these stelae in 1905, as described in "Note Préliminaire Sur Des Megaliths Observer Dans Le Soddo" The Meridionale Abyssinie encompassing the Amibot and Seden regions (Cholet & Neuville, 1905).

The French archaeologists Azaïs and Chambard recorded several stelae from the ancient Sodo, Selti, and Meskan areas in the 1920s (Anfray, 1982). In 1935, a German study team discovered 27 stelae sites in the Gurage region's lowlands. However, due to the Ethio-Italian War and domestic political unrest delayed the archaeological research advancement until 1974 (Anfray, 1982). After this, the Institute of Ethiopian Archaeology, led by Francis Anfray, started conducting archaeological research in these areas again in 1974. In the process, he classified the stelae found in the districts of Soddo, Selti, Meskan, and Dobi into two separate sectors, known as Sectors A and B. The Sodo localities are included in Sector A, and the Meskan, Selti, and portions of the Damu and Dobi districts are included in Sector B (Anfray, 1982). Anfray's works revealed the extensive use of stelae in the area when he recorded 150 stelae sites in the Sodo districts (Anfray, 1982).

### 2.3.2 Prior Studies on the Tiya Stelae

The Tiya stelae are positioned in a curving alignment that stretches 45 meters from southeast to northwest (Anfray, 1982). Currently, Tiya consists of 36 erected stelae that are currently measured between 2 and 5 meters above the ground. Many of these stelae have geometric and figurative engravings (Joussaume, 1985;1995). Human bones and a variety of artifacts were found during the two excavation expeditions that Joussaume undertook at Tiya in 1982 (Anfray, 1982). Francis Anfray and Jossuame have divided the Tiya stelae into the following categories based on the results of their surveys and excavations, includes: - phallic, anthropomorphic, decorated, well-dressed, undressed, rectangular, circular, or semi-circular. However the exact sites of the quarries where the Tiya Stelae were taken remain unknown. On the other hand, hypothesis suggests they might be located near the

Alelittu River (Anfray, 1982; Metasebia, 1997). Chronologically, Tiya stelae were dated from the 11th to the 13th century AD using radiocarbon dating, which would align with the hypothesis that the site served as a cemetery (Azaïs & Chambard, 1931).

To the Northeast of Tiya, there is another site with stelae known as, Gatira-Demma. Anfray conducted thorough excavations at the site, which led to the discovery of human remains. The stelae in Gatira-Demma are thought to have dated to the 12th century CE, based on radiocarbon dating (Anfray, 1982).

Situated in the Sodo border, the Amibot Stelae Site is home to several notable carved stelae, such as anthropomorphic stelae and two "masked" stelae that show a sword. Alfred Ilg, Azais, and Chambard analyzed this site found in chronological order between 1923 and 1926. Francis Anfray carried out additional investigation on this site in the 1970s (Tournemire, 2014) , According to, Tournemire, (2014) the sites improve our understanding of past cultures and have given us important insights into ancient history. These stelae are dispersed throughout a 100-kilometer stretch along the route from Addis Ababa to Butajira and Hosanna, between Sodo and Silte regions (Tournemire, 2014).

To the southwest of Buie town, in the Soddo districts, lies the Amorigé Stelae Site. The site has two pendant swords and anthropomorphic stelae with compartmented faces and images of male figures (Joussaume, 2013).based on the radiocarbon dating confirmed that it was dated between the 12th and 13th centuries AD. Additionally, in terms of purpose, it has been speculated that they were used as grave markers (Joussaume, 2013). However, further archaeological study was conducted by Jossuame, which explored the eastern areas of Soddo, including Dubis and Oddo-Tibo, as well as the western regions of Botoné-Téklé-Haymanot. This was with the aim of potentially discovering new sites in the regions (Jossuame, 2011).

Additionally, a number of stone monuments from various regions have been transferred to Addis Ababa. As Chekroun (2011) noted, Azaïs transferred 13 stelae from the Soddo (Gurage) and Mareqo regions to Addis Ababa University. Similarly, the largest stelae from Tiya and Silte have transported to Addis Ababa and then Erected in front of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies on the main campus of Addis Ababa University (Anfray, 1982).

In 2008, Worku Derara carried out inventory work in the Gurage highland regions of Sodo and Muher Aklil. He identified Mysterious symbols like these were believed to make it difficult to

understand the carvings on the stelae, which included decorations, wooden headrests, and a sword representing a warrior, found at sites like Oddo-Tibo, Gimise, and Firshi (Worku, 2008).

In general, various literatures on stelae sites are available in central Ethiopia, particularly in the Sodo area, that provides an extensive overview of the significant distribution of stelae sites throughout various geographical areas. However, when considering the spatial distribution of these sites, scientific research carried out in the Stelae of Fato has been limited in depth and scope.

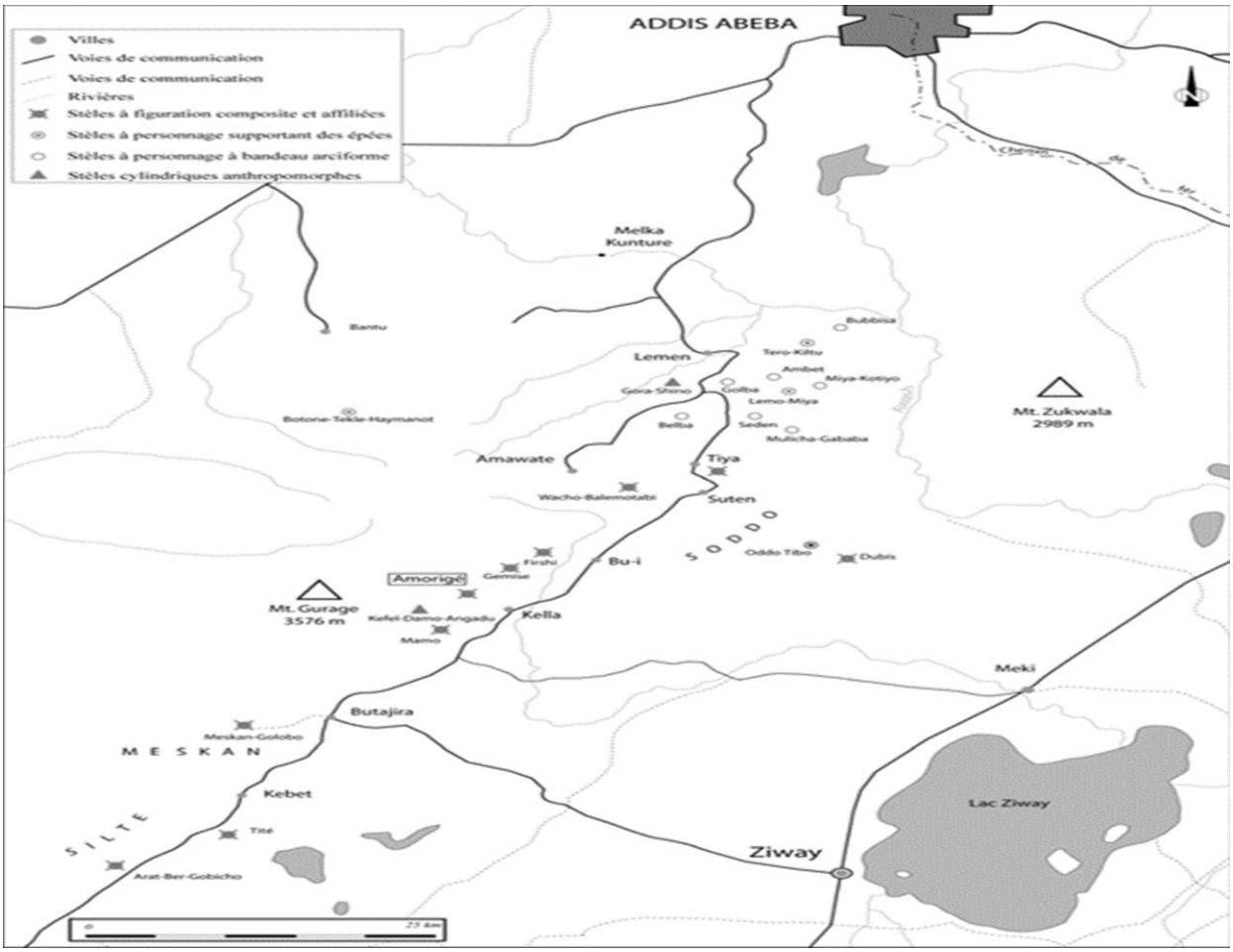



*Figure 4: Map showing the distribution of stelae in Soddo, Meskan and Silté (Source: Jossuame; 2008)*

# CHAPTER THREE

# 3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

## 3.1 Introduction to the Research Methodology

Using case study methodology, both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, the study was both exploratory and descriptive in character. When detailing certain features of phenomena, descriptive research works better, which helps with topic understanding and makes causal analysis easier. Investigating the existing situation through exploratory study has been more appropriate (Kothari, 2004). Also in this chapter, the materials and methods used to conduct the study has clearly defined. It also explains how the researcher obtained the necessary data and information to carry out the research, and how they collected, presented, and analyzed the objectives and questions. In addition to that, Sources of data, and techniques used to collect, present, and analyze the data are presented as follows.

## 3.2 Site Selection

Preliminary information about the presence of stelae in the study area was obtained through personal communication with Tekle Hagos of Addis Ababa University and the Sodo Woreda Cultures and Tourism Office. Based on this information, I visited the site in July 2023 and decided to write my M.A thesis on the Stelae of Fato. After conducting a preliminary visit to the study areas in July 2023, it was possible to ascertain the number and types of sites. Also, a further ground reconnaissance was conducted to identify and locate more sites and features relevant to the study.

**Quarry site and raw material identification** - To identify the quarry site used for extracting raw material for the stelae, a ground reconnaissance survey was conducted. During this survey, potential quarry sites were examined to trace the source of the stone used in the stelae. Rock samples were systematically collected from these sites for further analysis. The collected rock samples were stored in plastic bags to prevent contamination and preserve their integrity. Then the samples were presented to my supervisors for visual identification and preliminary assessment. This process is aimed to determine the types of rock used in the stelae and establish a link between the quarry sites and the stelae themselves.

### 3.3 Types and Sources of Data

To address the objectives of the thesis, I employed both pre-fieldwork and fieldwork data acquisition methods. To achieve the study's goals, both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed to gather and analyze the data. To ensure the validity and reliability of the collected data Purposeful sampling methods were used and selected the most suitable informants or stakeholders, based on specific criteria. Eight informants were systematically chosen based on their in-depth knowledge of the site and its cultural significance, as well as their willingness to share information. Their perspectives provided valuable insights into the local context and conservation efforts, making their contributions essential to the research.

#### 3.3.1 Pre-field Data Sources

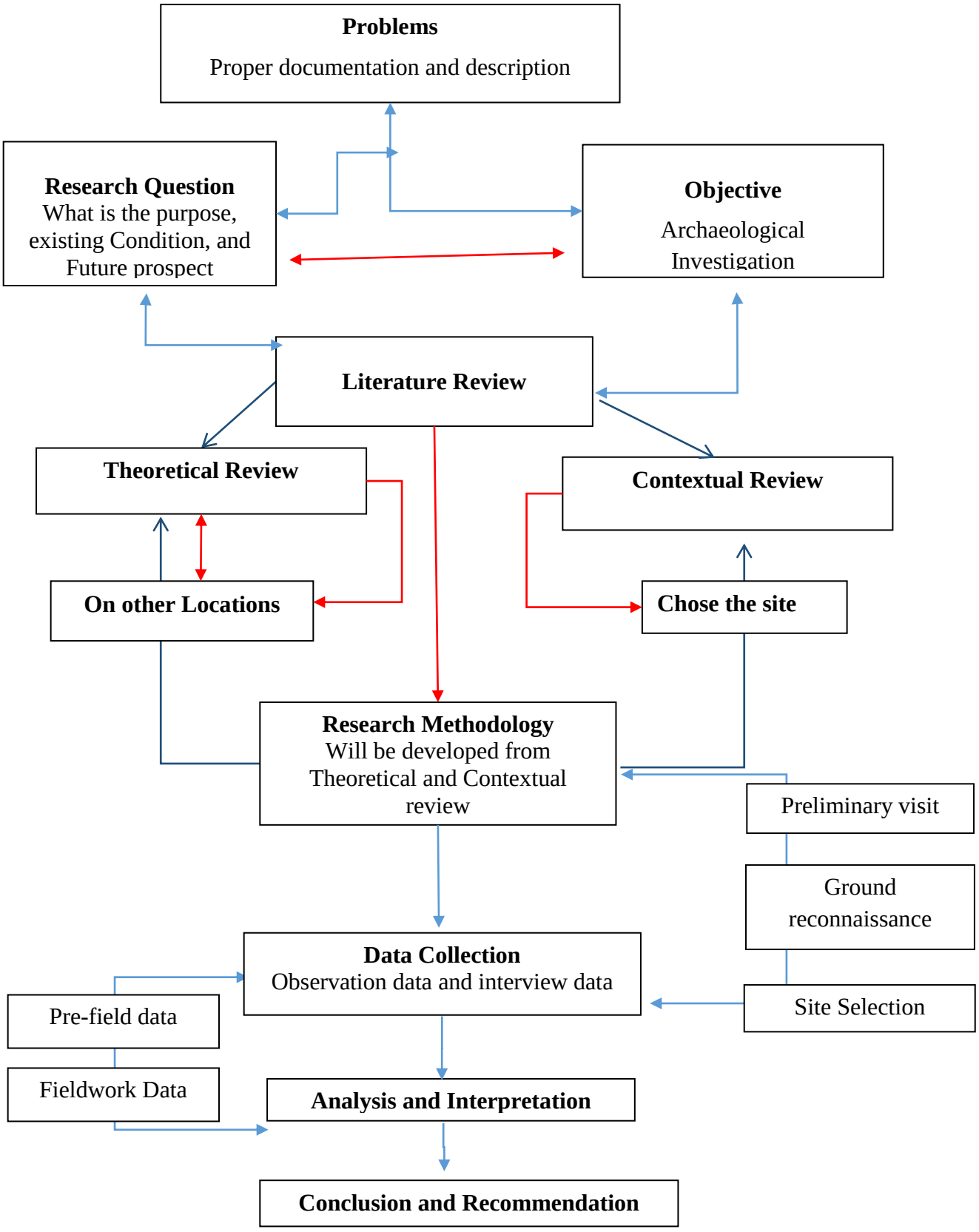
Pre-field data acquisition is a method that includes a review of existing literature, consultation with local experts, and preliminary field visits to assess the area's suitability for the study. In addition, I consulted journals, books, brochures, and various published and unpublished materials relevant to the study of stone monuments from libraries such as the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES), AAU Graduate Library, Kennedy Library, Ethiopia Heritage Authority (EHA) library, and the CFEE Library.

#### 3.3.2 Fieldwork Data Sources

Fieldwork at the site began in May 2024 and continued until mid-June 2024. The research employed archaeological techniques to gather data. Methods used during the fieldwork included photography, measurement, and interviews to collect primary data. The study site was documented and described through personal observations, providing essential background information on the archaeological sites and their current conditions. The site was mapped using a global positioning system (GPS) to provide valuable geographical data for analysis. Measurements and photographs were taken to further document and examine the stelae. All individual stelae were photographed using a smartphone camera. All stelae were photographed using scales for accuracy. In addition to photography each stelae was assigned a specific code number during the fieldwork.

An archaeological survey was conducted on foot to assess the site's potential. An additional survey was carried out at the Aguffi Stelae site in the Sodo district, adjacent to the Fato Stelae site, to evaluate its archaeological significance.

### 3.4 Research Design



### 3.5 Data Collection Methods

**Data Collection Form**- All stelae found at the site was individually documented using a standard format adopted by the Ethiopian Heritage Authority (EHA). Based on observations from the initial field survey and literature review, basic attributes important for characterizing the site were selected and defined. Given the site's remarkable nature and the significant number of stelae to be analyzed, only these basic attributes were examined. Each stela was recorded, and data was collected using the data collection form provided in the annex.

**Interview -** In this study, the researcher used a majorly semi-structured close-ended interview because it helps to extract in-depth information about the challenges and opportunities (Kothari, 2004); and the researcher and participants set some broad parameters for a discussion.

**Observation** -This method implies the collection of information by way of the investigator's observation, without interviewing the respondents (Kothari, 2004). The information obtained relates to what is currently happening in our case to describe the shape, size, especially features and character of the stelae observation was employed

**Measurement** – using rulers scales and meters the height, width, and breadth of each stelae were measured. Using GPS and smartphone software, the location and orientation of the stelae were recorded.

**Photography** – to show the shape, size, tilt angle, typology, and decoration (features) of each stelae the method of photography was employed.

### 3.6 Sampling methods

One of the main criteria is that we should select the most unknown or a subject that has not been studied previously. based on this deliberate sampling: which is also known as purposive or non-probability sampling was used. This sampling method involves the purposive or deliberate selection of particular units of the universe in our case the Fato district. This purposive sampling is considered desirable when the universe happens to be small and a known characteristic of it is to be studied intensively (Kothari, 2004). Again in our case a group of stelae that exist in 1 hectare of land. There were several sites in different districts in Gurage Zone but after discussion with professionals and local officials, the Fato district was selected deliberately based on the main criterion.

After selecting the study area, which is around 100 meters by 100 meters or around one hectare of land another sampling was used. Based on the convenience in our case stelae that are not buried or covered by grass are selected for detailed study. Therefore, it is convenience-sampling meaning when population elements are selected for inclusion in the sample based on the ease of access, it can be called convenience sampling.

### 3.7 Data Analysis Methods

As the first and second questions of the research descriptive questions and the method used was the survey method. The best-suited analysis would be descriptive analysis and inferential analysis (statistical analysis) (Kothari, 2004). In addition, this study works out various measures that show the size and shape of the stelae along with the features of Stelae in the study area.

Statistical methods were employed to analyze the physical state, decoration, shape, and size of the stelae. The results were evaluated based on attributes such as type, current physical state, decoration, shape, and size. Data was visualized using tables, bar graphs, and figures created in Excel to illustrate various attributes of the stelae, including height ranges, decoration, present state (erected versus fallen, broken versus unbroken), shape, and size. In addition to statistical methods, descriptive techniques were used to interpret non-numerical observations and provide a comprehensive understanding of the stelae.

**Data Presentation**

Each stelae are photographed to show the existing context, and features of the stelae, again the study measured the height and width, so it presents the measures in written form. Therefore, all stelae are presented in pictures and described in written words. In general, their size, shape, orientation, and typology are tabulated, graphed, and presented in a simplified way.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# DATA PRESENTATIONS AND DESCRIPTION

## 4.1 Introduction

The Gurage Zone, Central Ethiopia's Sodo district, is home to the Stelae of Fato. It is located 123 kilometers from Addis Ababa and 20 kilometers west of Bui, the administrative town of Sodo Woreda. This location is 2524 meters above sea level and is in Gereno Village. Its coordinates are 8.370113° N and 38.491021° E. These stelae sites are located close to a hillside, approximately 300 meters east of the Euserbi River. It is conceivable that the Euserbi River may have served as a quarry site, considering the number of fallen stelae in the vicinity. These stelae are found in a semi-organized row. The stelae are currently situated on cultivated land that is owned by Sodo Woreda and is overseen by the Tourism Office. The rock samples were present to the geology department Addis Ababa University. It is confirmed that a soft basaltic rock. These stelae are made of soft basaltic rocks.

There are stelae at the site either tilted or erected state and others that are just lying horizontally. Furthermore, it has been observed that several stelae have been relocated from their original sites to make way for residential development terracing, and boundary making.

A total of 95 stelae, including those that are inclined or erected, were recorded in the study Area. Out of these, 62 stelae that could be seen were chosen for additional examination, with the remaining stelae being either horizontally buried or covered in vegetation. Some of the erected stelae are broken at the tops. Moreover, thirty- three stelae have been either removed from their original locations, and the remaining’s hidden by shrubbery and grass.

Morphologically; the most evident that various in morphology was witnessed on the stelae. They displayed different shapes that range from anthropomorphic, irregular, and rectangular shapes. Fifty three of the stelae are Irregular in shapes, of these three of them are decorated; two of these decorated stelae are broken at the top, and they are found in erected state. These broken stelae may indicate that they have sustained deterioration over time, while nine of them are Anthropomorphic in shapes. They are undressed structures. They are found in erected state. However, the remaining thirty three stelae are difficult to determine their shape due to the removal of the site and covered by grass and shrubs.

These stelae typically feature sharp edges and an irregular shape at their tops. based on their structural composition and decorated patterns resemble those found in the Tiya region and the proximity of the Sodo districts. Regarding the stelaes purpose, it is difficult to pinpoint it precisely at this early stage; yet, hypothesis can be developed. It is possible that these stelae, like those in the Tiya and Sodo districts, were used for burial purposes. based on the range of stelae structures found there the site may have served as a cemetery for people of various social classes and statuses, including those with military, political, religious, and other positions within society.

Chronologically, it is challenging to estimate the stelaes age at this early stage. Nonetheless, their age can be inferred by contrasting them with stelae from Tiya and other near by sites. These stelae may be one of the oldest stelae sites in the area based on the lack of decorations and the large number of uneven stelae. However, additional archeological study is required to determine the precise date of the stelae.

### 4.2 Existing Context of the Stelae

The study established its description of the stelae current context or status on whether they are fallen or erected, broken or unbroken, and decorated or not. Similar to the description of the stelae age, certain statements of the stelae condition call for greater precision and specificity. Thus, the study often offered the data in a tabular and graphical format depending on the aforementioned categories.

#### 4.2.1 Erected and Fallen Stelae

In the studied site, 62 stelae were identified, 35 of which were found to be erected state. The tallest stela that has been erected is 250 cm tall, and the shortest is 45 cm. There were 27 stelae that had fallen and were horizontally buried. These stelae are undressed and lack of decorations. Of them, two of them are fractured, (broken), while the other twenty-five are complete but arranged horizontally.

The tallest fallen stela, which measures 263 cm tall, is broken, has an uneven edge, and is plainly decorated on the surface. The smallest fallen stela is ninety centimeters tall. All in all, these fallen stelae have many traits with the erected stelae, erected with lack of any decoration.

| Fato | number of stelae | Percent | Longest stela(cm) | Smallest stela(cm) | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Erected** | 35 | 56.45% | 250cm | 45cm | 62 |
| **Fallen** | 27 | 43.55% | 263cm | 90cm | |
| | | 100% | | | |

*Table 1: Distribution of Erect and Fallen Stelae*

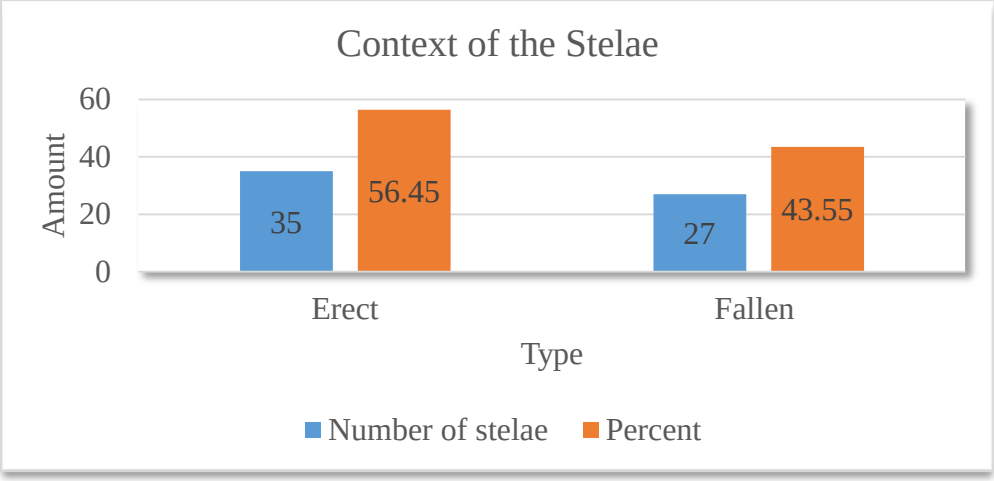



*Figure 5: Graphic representation of Erected and Fallen stelae*

As shown in Table 1 and Figure 6, erected stelae are more prevalent than fallen stelae. This accounts for 56.45% of the total, while fallen stelae make up 43.55%.

### 4.2.2 Broken and Unbroken Stelae

Thirty-three of the total stelae were found to be broken state. The longest broken stela, which was found in a fallen state, measures 263 cm tall, while the shortest one is 45 cm in height. The shapes of these broken stelae are irregular. On the other hand, 29 stelae were found to be in unbroken condition. The longest intact or unbroken stela is 240 cm tall; while the shortest is 56 cm tall. These unbroken, stelae are in an erected state at the moment.

The following table shows the number of broken and unbroken stelae in the site.

| Name of site | Broken | | | | Un broken | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No of stelae | Percent | Longest(cm) | Smallest(cm) | No of stelae | Percent | Longest(cm) | Smallest(cm) | |
| | 33 | 53.23 % | 263cm | 90cm | 29 | 46.77 % | 240cm | 45cm | 62 |

*Table 2: Tabular representation of broken and unbroken stelae*

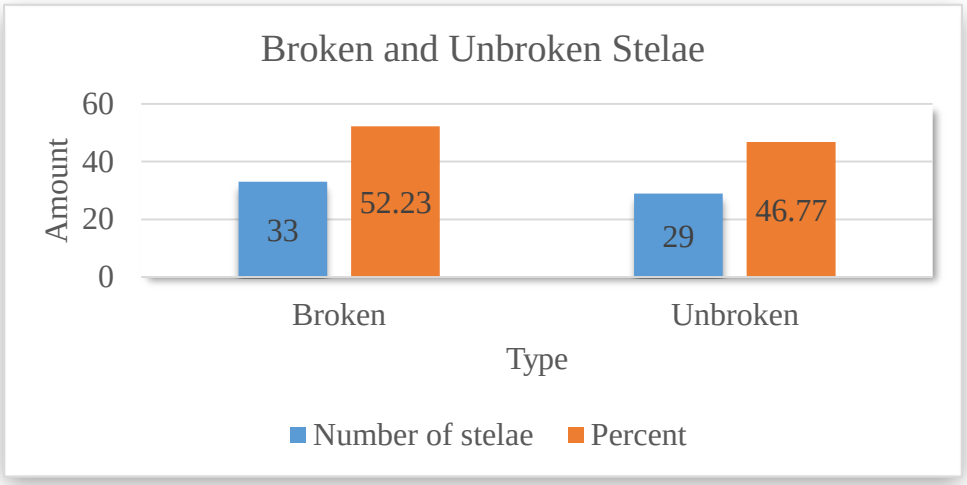



*Figure 6: Graphic presentation of broken versus unbroken stelae*

Out of the entire number of stelae at the site, 52.23% are broken, as can be seen in Table 2 and Figure 7, while 46.77% of that remains unbroken stelae.

### 4.2.3 Decorated and Undecorated Stelae

From the study site, three decorated stelae have been identified (see Figures; 4, 12, and 35, respectively). It should be mentioned that the edges of two of the stelae—Stela 12 and Stela 35—are broken at the tops. The stelae vary greatly in height, measuring 135 cm, 230 cm, and 240 cm in height, respectively. The smallest decorated stela is 135 cm in length, while the longest is 240 cm in height. They are found in an erected position. The engraved symbols are located at the center of the stela. In addition, 59 of the total stelae are undecorated. The longest undecorated stela measures 263 cm in height, while the smallest undecorated stela is 22 cm in height.

The following table shows the distribution of the decorated and undecorated stelae in the study area. It also includes the longest and smallest stelae from both categories of decorated and undecorated stelae.

| Name of site | Decorated | | | | Undecorated | | | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No of stelae | percent | Longest (cm) | Smallest (cm) | No of stelae | Percent | Longest (cm) | Smallest (cm) | No of stelae | Percent |
| Fato | 3 | 4.84 % | 240cm | 135cm | 59 | 95.16 % | 263cm | 22cm | 62 | 100% |

*Table 3; Representations of Decorated and undecorated stelae*

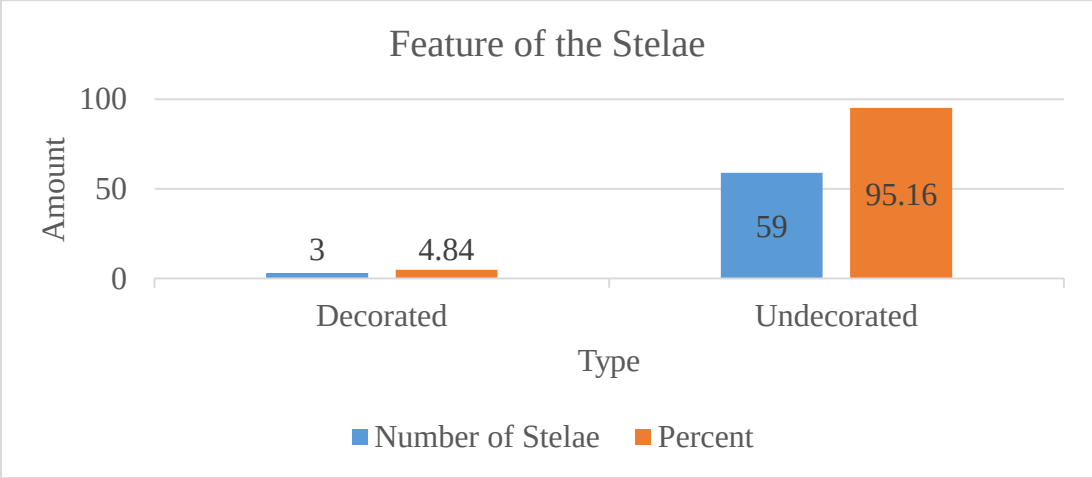



*Figure 7: Distribution of the decorated and undecorated stelae*

Most of the stelae are simply undecorated, as Table 3 and Figure 8 are abundantly evident. This makes up 95.16% of the stelae in the site are undecorated, and the decorated stelae make up the remaining 4.84%.

Before going to a detailed description of the area the map below shows the general setup of the area.

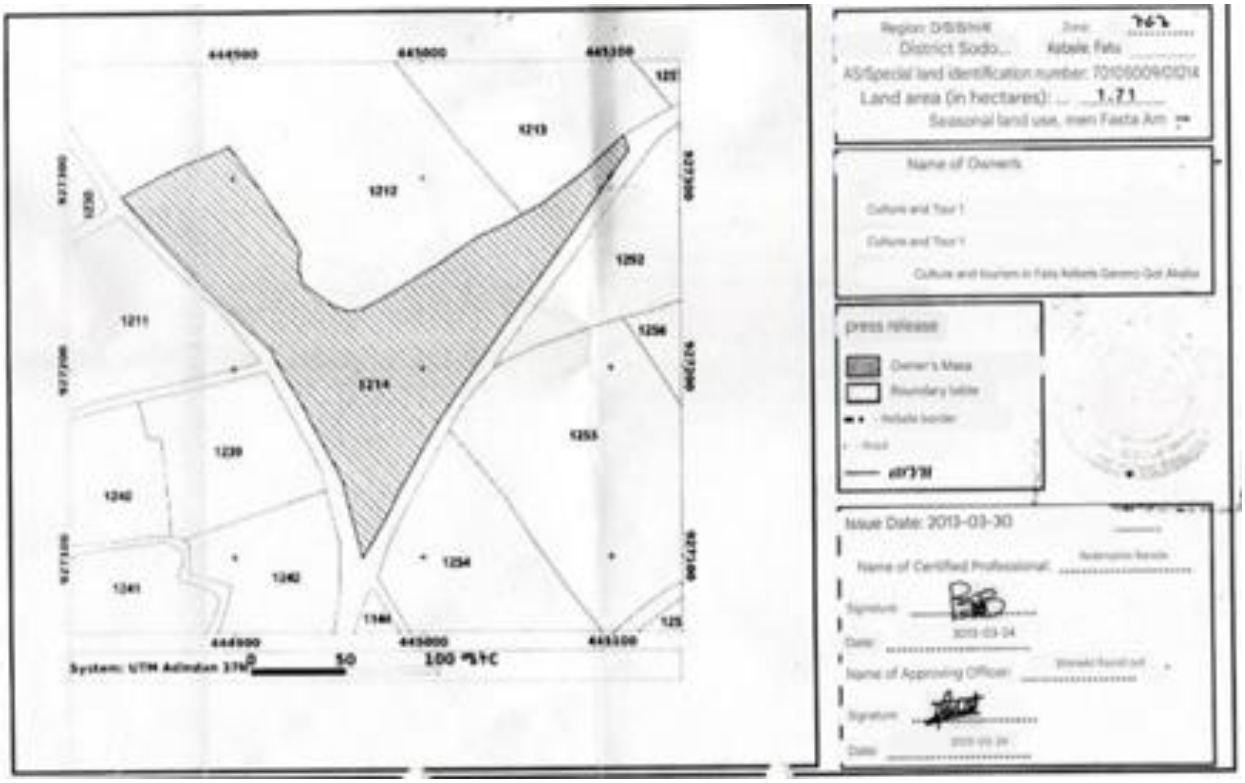



*Figure 8: Fato site plan by Sodo Woreda Tourism office, 2024*

*Figure 9; View of Fato Stelae Site by Adam Melese: 24/5/ 2024*

### 4.3 Description of Individual Stela of Fato Site

**Stela -1**

It is found that Stela-1 is erected and it is anundressed stela. Its dimensions or its thickness varies in width that is 40 cm at the top, 80 cm at the bottom, and 140 cm in height. This stela is ornamented. It is narrow at the top and very wide at the base. This northeast-facing stela is distinguished by its irregular structure or irregular construction.

*Figure 10: Irregular Stela by Adam Melese: 24/5/ 2024*

**Stela – 2**

*Figure 11: Broken Stela by Adam Melese: 24/5/2024*

Stela-2 is found in an erected state. It measures 34 cm in height and 19cm in width. At its side, it is broken more distinguished by its irregular shape. It faces to the northeast.

**Stela-3**

East of Stela1 and 2, is where found Stela-3. It is an anthropomorphic shape characterized by its varying thickness. It Measures 80 cm in height and 68 cm in width. The thickness extends from 51 cm at the base to 20 cm at the head. This stela is in an erected state, facing northeast directions, and it is erected without a hole and devoid of embellishment.

*Figure 12: Anthropomorphic Stela by Adam Melese: 24/5/2024*

**Stela – 4**

Stela-4 is found in an erected position, and it is decorated stela. There is an engraved sword sign on this stela. It measures 240cm in height and 133 cm in width. The dimensions of its symbol are 80 cm in length, 21 cm in width, and 5 cm at the top. The carved symbol is entirely worn away, though, which would imply that both human and animal activity may have contributed to its disappearance.

*Figure 13: Decorated Stela by Adam Melese: 24/5/ 2024*

**Stela-5**

The stela 5 is found in a fallen and buried state. Its dimensions are 150 cm in width and 33 cm in height. The stela's upper portion is broken, and it was taken out of its original placement for either personal or consequently, the upper portion is covered by grass and has an uneven edge. It faces northwest and is oriented in line with Stela No. 4.

*Figure 14: Buried Stela by Adam Melese: 24/5/*

**Stela - 6**

Stela-6 is found in a partially buried state. It is characterized by an irregular structure, and it measures 22 cm in height and 55 cm in width. It is found in a poorly conserved state and might have suffered damage from environmental or human causes, currently, it is covered by grass. Its direction is uncertain.

*Figure 15: Irregular stela by Adam Melese: 24/5/2024*

**Stela- 7**

Stela-7 is currently situated in a degraded and incomplete state. Its dimensions are 50 centimeters high by 98 centimeters wide. Its thickness fluctuates a great deal. The precise orientation of this stela is still uncertain, despite its notable width at its base.

*Figure 16: Buried Stela by Adam Melese: 24/5/ 2024*

**Stela-8**

Currently Stela-8 is found in an elevated position to the west. It measures 31cm in height and 41 cm in width. It looks to be broken at the edge and has a semicircular form at the top. It faces to northwest in orientation.

*Figure 17: Broken stela by Adam Melese:24/5/ 2024*

**Stela-9**

Stela -9 is anthropomorphic in form. Its present state is found in an erected condition .It measures 98 cm in height, 180 cm in width, 28 cm at its apex, and 28 cm at the shoulders. Two holes existed on either side of the stela. It has no decoration or incised embellishments. It can be defined as an erected stela. The stela is oriented to the northeast.

*Figure 18: Anthropomorphic stela by Adam Melese: 24/5/ 2024*

**Stele -10**

The form of Stela-10 is described as anthropomorphic shape. It is 56 cm in height and 88 cm wide, with a 44 cm shoulder-to-base measurement. Its head-to-shoulder is measure26 cm in length and because of the way its shoulders are tilted to one side, its thickness is varies. The stela is oriented toward the northeast direction.

*Figure 19: Anthropomorphic stela by Adam Melese; 24/5/2024*

**Stela-11**

Stela-11 is found in an erected state and has an anthropomorphic shape. Its dimensions are 83 cm high by 79 cm wide and 69 cm high by 28cm wide from shoulder-to-base. Its thickness is 100 cm, while the length of its head is 26 cm. It has a hole on each side, but more research is needed to determine how these holes made. The stela is oriented toward the northeast.

*Figure 20: Anthropomorphic Stelae by Adam Melese 24/5/2024*

**Stela -12**

The state of Stela-12 is erected .This stela is decorated. It is 250 cm tall and 76 cm wide, with one engraved sword symbol at the center. The symbol has a length of 28 cm and a thickness of 2 cm. Its handle is 20 cm in length. However, its lack of clarity that makes the symbol invisible. Currently facing to southwest, it is broken at the top.

*Figure 21: Decorated Stela by Adam Melese/24/5/2024*

**Stela -13**

*Figure 22: Irregular Stela by Adam Melese: 24/5/2024*

Stela-13 is found in an erected and unbroken state. Its dimensions are as follows: 240 cm in height, 60 cm in width, and 70 cm in thickness .This stela also displays various ranges of thickness. The red arrows show a hole is present at the edge, though it is not clearly visible. It is wide at the base and narrower at the top; with an irregular edge, .It is oriented to the southeast.

**Stela 14**

This stela is found in an erected position. It is an unbroken state. Its dimensions are 225 cm high by 80 cm wide and 180 cm thick. It is narrow at the top and wide at the base. It is characterized by an irregular edge, and it is sharp at the edge. It faces eastward in its orientation.

*Figure 23: Irregular Stela by Adam Melese: 24/5/2024*

**Stela- 15**

This stela is found in an erected position. It is damaged on the right-hand side and at the top. This stela is measures 53 cm in height, 81.5 cm in width, and is of varying thickness. The irregularity near the edge makes it difficult to establish its exact shape .It is a southeast orientation.

*Figure 24: Irregular Stela by Adam Melese: 24/5/2024*

**Stela- 16& Stela- 17**

Stela -16 is currently found in a partially erected state. It measures 45 cm high and 78 cm wide, with an irregular shape, and its orientation is to the northwest. **Stelae -17**: This stela is found in a fallen state. It is covered by grass. It measures 45 cm in height 78cm in width and an uneven shape at the edge .It faces northwest in orientation.

*Figure 26: Irregular Stela by Adam Melese: 24/5/2024*

*Figure 25: Irregular Stela by Adam Melese: 24/5/2024*

**Stela 18**

Stela -18 is found in an erected state. It measures 130 cm in height and 86 cm in width, with a variable thickness as a result of the irregularities observed in the upper part of the stela. Its shape is irregular, with a narrow top and wider at the base. The upper part of the stela is 60 cm in height and is broken at the edge. Furthermore, the arrow indicates the presence of a smaller stela to the east of the erected one. This smaller stela is measures 60 cm in height and 90 cm in width. It faces to northwest in direction.

*Figure 27: Irregular Stela by Adam Melese: 24/5/2024*

**Stela -19**

*Figure 28: Broken stela by Adam Melese: 24/5/2024*

Stela-19 is currently located in a horizontally buried state. It measures 67 cm in height and 120 cm in width, and it is broken on both sides. A hole is present at the center of the stela; however, the purpose of this hole is currently unknown and requires further study. It seems to have a rectangular shape at its upper part. The orientation of this stela is towards the north-west of stela 20.

**Stela- 20**

Stela 20 is located to the west of Stela 21. It is an undecorated stela that exhibits irregular characteristics at its upper edge. The upper part of this stela is damaged, may be resulting from a series of destructive processes that have reduced its height to 54 cm and width to 50 cm. It is oriented in a northwest direction.

*Figure 29: Irregular shape stela by Adam Melese: 24/5/20224*

**Stela-21**

Stela-21 has a fractured peak and an uneven edge .It was discovered partially buried .The fractured portion of the stela is indicated by the arrow. It has varying thicknesses and measures 60 cm in height and 70 cm in width. Its orientation has yet to be determined.

*Figure 30: Irregular stela by Adam Melese: 24/5/2024*

**Stela-22**

Stela 22 is currently found in covered by grass. It measures below 50 cm in height and 90 cm in width. Its irregular edge is a result of damage at its upper end, giving the impression that it has been buried and is found lying on the ground. However, the orientation of this stela remains unknown.

*Figure 31: Irregular Stela by Adam Melese: 24/5/2024*

**Stela-23**

Stela-23 is currently found in covered by grass .It measures 23 cm in height and 85 cm in width. Its shape is irregular, and in its present state, it is partially buried .However, the orientation of the stela is unknown.

*Figure 32: Buried stela by Adam Melese: 24/5/ 2024*

**Stela- 24**

This stela is found in an erected state .It has been erected without any decoration .It measures 150 cm high and 73 cm wide .It is characterized by an irregular edge that shows a variable thickness. It is wide at the base and narrower at its top. It is an undecorated stela with orientation towards the northeast.

*Figure 33: Irregular stela by Adam Melese: 24/5 2024*

**Stelae-25; Clustered stelae**

Stela (a) is measures 50 cm from stela b; it measures 56 cm high and 157 cm wide. Stela (b) is found at 50 cm from stela and 53 cm from stela c. It is broken at its edge and has a remaining height of 43 cm. Stela (C) is at a distance of 53 cm from the stela b and 103 cm from the stela a; it is found in an erected state. It measures 50 cm in height and 74 cm in width. This structure has a diameter of 9.20 m. The purpose of these clustered stelae remains uncertain. Given the similarities observed with neighboring sites, it may be plausible to suggest the site has served as grave markers. Therefore, further archaeological research is required to understand the purpose of this structure. It faces to south-west. **Stela 26:** This stela is a broken and is found in a fallen condition. It measures 50 cm high and 69 cm wide. Its shape is uneven. It is broken at its edge, and is a very thick stela. Its orientation is to the south-west.

*Figure 34: Clustered stelae by Adam Melese: 25/5/2024*

**Stela -27**

Stela 27 is found in a fallen state. It is broken and fallen structure. It measures 263 centimeters high and 72 centimeters wide. It has uneven edgewith varying thickness. It is the longest among the fallen stelae and it is wide at the base and narrow towards the top. The orientation of the stela is towards the south-west direction.

*Figure 35: Broken &fallen Stela by Adam Melese: 25/5/2024*

**Stela -28**

Stela 28 is located at a distance of 2 meters from Stela 27. It is broken at the top and measures 55 cm in height and 47 cm in width. In addition, this stela is likely to have had a semi-cylindrical structure at the top; it has no decoration, and it is oriented to the south-west.

*Figure 36: Broken stela by Adam Melese: 25/5/2024*

**Stelae -29: Clustered Stelae: B**

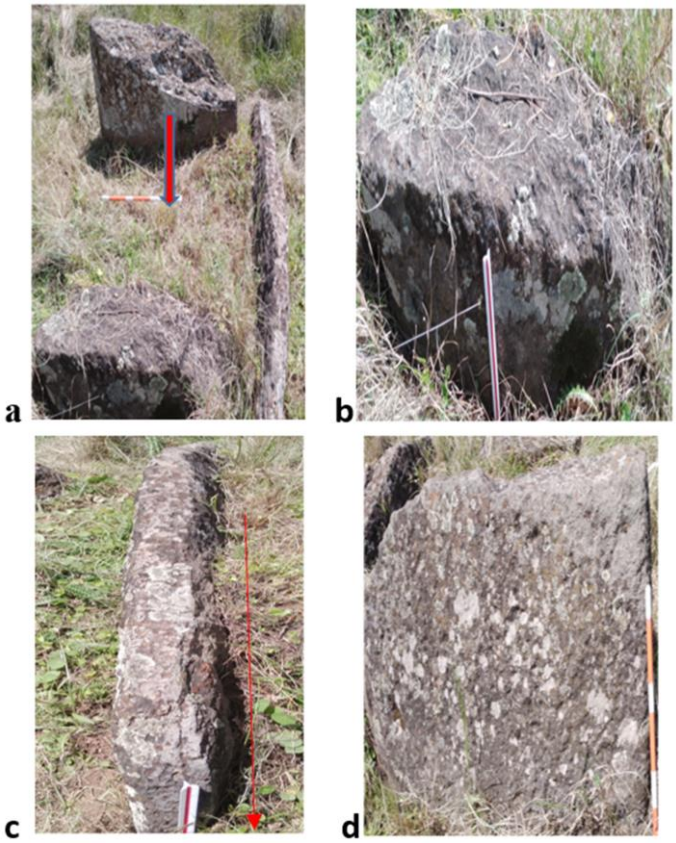



*Figure 37: Clustered stelae a, b, c, & d by Adam Melese: 25/5/2024*

Stelae-29 is found in clustered form. The height of the stelae is ranges from 62 to 73 centimeters. These stelae display three distinct shapes; however, the purpose of the stelae is currently unknown. Based on the analogues structures to the earlier mentioned clustered stelae, most of these stelae may have served as a grave marker. However, further archaeological studies are required to ascertain their intended functions. These stelae are designated as (a), (b),(c) and (d). Stela (a) is found in an erected state, and it measures 70 cm in height and a width of 100 cm, making it comparable in size to the clustered stelae. Stelae (b) measure 62 cm in height and 112 cm in width. It is a horizontally buried stela with a hole at the edge; though the purpose of this hole is unclear .It is characterized by an irregular edge. Stelae (c) measure 73 cm in height and 95 cm in width. The surface of these stelae is undressed, and this stela has been found in an erected state. The orientation of the stela is to the north-west.

*Figure 38: Anthropomorphic stela by Adam Melese: 25/5/ 2024*

**Stela-32**

Stela-32 is found in an erected state with its anthropomorphic shape. It measures 90 cm in height and 180 cm in width, exhibiting varying thicknesses. The shoulder-to-base is measures 42 cm, the neck-to-shoulder measures 15 cm, and the head thickness is measures 27 cm. This stela has undecorated and undressed surfaces, and it is oriented to the north-west.

**Stela -33**

Stela-33 is currently located in a horizontally buried state. It measures 60 cm in height and 180 cm in width. This stela seems to have been rectangular structures at the upper edges. Its orientation is aligned with a north-west direction.

*Figure 39: Rectangular Shape stela by Adam Melese: 25/5/ 2024*

**Stela -34**

Stela 34 is situated to the west of Stela 33. It measures 63 cm in height and 196 cm in width, with an irregular edge and a broader base. It is buried horizontally on the ground at a distance of 3 m to the west of Stelae 33. Its orientation is similar to that of Stela 33, inclined to the northwest.

*Figure 40: Irregular shape stela by Adam Melese: 25/5/ 2024*

**Stela- 35**

This stela-35 is currently found in an erected state. It measures 135 centimeters in height and 110 centimeters in width. It is wider at the base and narrower at the top. This stela exhibits a decorated symbol representing a sword. The upper part of the stela is broken, and it is characterized by an irregular edge. It shares comparable structural features with the Tiya stelae and is oriented to the northwest.

*Figure 41: Decorated Stela by Adam Melese: 25/5/2024*

**Stela 36 & 37,**

These two stelae are situated in an area covered by grass. They measure below 50 cm in length and exhibit an uneven and irregular shape; it broken at the edges. They are located 4.5 meters to the west of Stela 35, with a distance of 1 meter between them. based on the observations, they appear to be oriented in a northwest direction relative to Stela 35.

*Figure 42: Stelae 39 &40; Buried Stelae by Adam Melese: 25/5/2024*

**Stela -38**

Stela-38 is found in a fallen state. It measures 90 cm in height, 40 cm in width, and 80 cm in thickness. Its shape is most likely either phallic or cylindrical. It is broken at the base .It is characterized by a wide base and a narrower top. However, the broken part is not found on the site and has been either removed by the local people for domestic purposes.

*Figure 43: (Phallic) or cylindrical Shape Stela by Adam Melese: 25/5/ 2024*

**Stela-39**

Stela -39 is currently set up in an erected state. It measures 150 cm in height and 95 cm in width. The stela is exhibiting fragmentation or damage at the apex. At the sides of the stela, there are other stelae laid horizontally, sharing a similar structures with the earlier mentioned stela. It is erected without decorations and is oriented towards the northeast

**Stela -40**

Stela 40 is found in an erected state; its height is measures 50 cm, its width is 92 cm, and its thickness is 1 m. This stela is broken at the top and it is characterized by an irregular edge. It is oriented towards the northwest.

*Figure 44: Irregular stela No. 39 and 40 by Adam Melese: 25/5/2024*

**Stela-41**

Stela-41 is located in a partially buried state. It measures 59 cm in height and 160 cm in width, exhibiting variable thicknesses. It iswider at the base, while its irregular edge is characterized by lack of uniformity. Currently, this stela is covered by grass. Its orientation is to the northwestern direction.

*Figure 45: Irregular stela by Adam Melese: 25/5/ 2024*

**Stela- 42**

Stela-42 is an anthropomorphic form. It is found in good condition .It measures 78 cm in height and 1 m in width; its base is broad. Its shoulder measures 50 cm in length; the neck is 36 cm in length, and the thickness of the neck measures 94 cm. Its purpose is unknown. Yet it may have been served as a grave marker. Therefore, further archaeological work is needed to confirm this hypothesis .This stela is currently in an upright position, and it is oriented to the northeast.

*Figure 46: Anthropomorphic stela by Adam Melese: 25/5/2024*

**Stela -43**

*Figure 47: Irregular Stela by Adam Melese: 25/5/ 2024*

Stela-43 is found in an upright state. It measures 110 cm, with a width of 97 cm. It is narrower at the top and wider at the base. A smaller stela is also present in the buried state, positioned at an angle. The stela is unadorned and exhibits a broken state on the right side of the base .It is characterized by an irregular shape at the edge. The orientation of this stela is towards the northeast.

**Stela - 44**

Stela-44 is in an upright state, and it is not broken at all. Its dimensions are 68 cm in width, 125 cm in height, and its thickness is 150 centimeters. It is wider at the base and narrower at the top. It is characterized by a sharp edge. This stela is also characterized by an irregular shape, and its orientation is to the northeast.

*Figure 48: Irregular Stela by Adam Melese 2024*

**Stela – 45&46**

Stelae 45 at the moment, is buried beneath the surface and hidden by grass .It is less than 50 centimeters in size and is facing to the northwest.

Stela-46 is also buried .Its shape is uneven because it is broken at the edge. The stela has an irregular structure and is less than 50 cm in height and width. It faces to the northwest in orientation.

*Figure 49: Irregular stela by Adam Melese 2024*

**Stela - 47**

Stela-47 is 60 cm in height, 47 cm in width, and 97 cm in thickness .It has been erected without any decoration, and it is currently covered by grass .It is characterized by an irregular shape at the edge .Currently this stela is found in a deteriorated condition, and it is oriented towards the southwest.

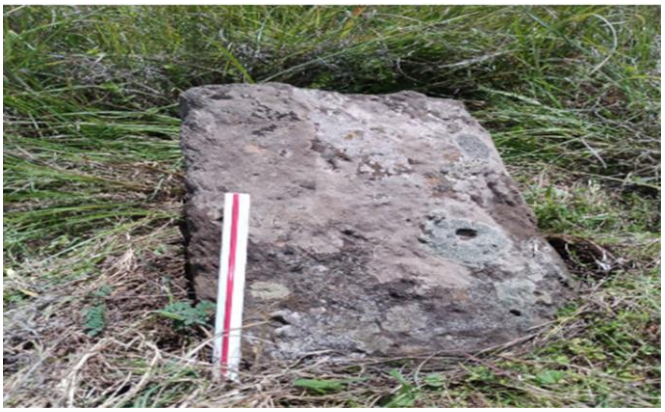


*Figure 50: Irregular Stela by Adam Melese: 25/5/2024*

**Stela- 48**

Stela-48 is located in an erected state. It is undecorated stela; it measures 110 cm in height, 90 cm in width, and 80 cm in thickness. The surface exhibits an irregular shape at the edge. It is narrower at the top and wider at the base .This stela has an undressed surface. It is oriented southwestward

*Figure 51: Irregular stela by Adam Melese: 25/5/ 2024*

**Stela – 49 Clustered Stelae: C**

*Figure 52: partially buried and partially erected stela by Adam Melese: 25/5/2024*

Stela-49 is found in a clustered structure with a height ranging from 51 cm to 55 cm and a width of 190 cm. It bears resemblance to the stelae found at the Soddo burial sites and at Tiya. This stela is an uneven shape and has a hole at the edge but the purpose of this hole is currently unknown .To determine its function, more archeological research is needed and the direction or orientation of the stela is northeast.

**Stela 50** is found in a partially buried state. This stela measures 43 cm in height and 50 cm in width. It is broken along its sides and displays an irregular edge. The direction of the stela is northeast.

**Stela-51**

Stela-51 is currently located in an area that is partially buried .It measures 51 cm in height and 75 cm in width. It is characterized by an irregular edge. The stela is covered by grass, which covers the majority of its surface. Its orientation is to the northeast.

*Figure 53: Partially buried stela by Adam Melese: 25/5/ 2024*

**Stela -52**

*Figure 54: Broken stela by Adam Melese: 25/5/ 2024*

Stela-52 is located in a fallen and horizontally buried position or state. It is broken at its sides and measures 53 cm in height and 175 cm in width. It has a hole at the edge, resulting in an irregular structure at the upper part, and its orientation is currently unknown. Further studies are necessary to confirm this assessment.

**Stela-53**

Stela-53 is currently found in an erected state. The monument measures 82 cm in height, 90 cm in width, and 165 cm in thickness. The upper part of the stela is broken; it seems to have an unfinished surface, and it displays an irregular shape at the edge .This stela is oriented in a northeast direction.

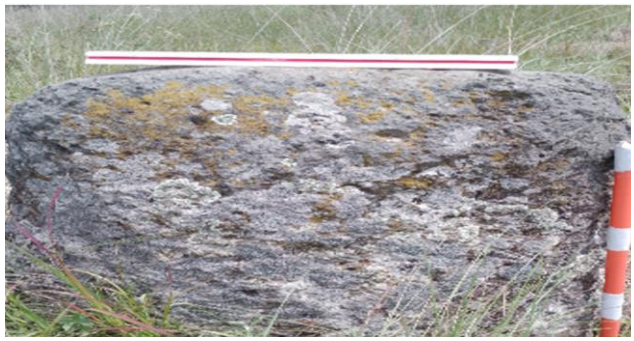


*Figure 55: Irregular Stela by Adam Melese: 25/5/ 2024*

**Stela-54**

The stela-54 is found in a buried state. It measures 57 cm in height, 73 cm in width, and 143 cm in thickness. It is broken on the lateral left side and exhibits an irregular shape in its upper edge .Currently, it is covered by grass and it is oriented to the northeast.

*Figure 56: Irregular stela by Adam Melese:25/5/ 2024*

*Figure 57: Buried stela by Adam Melese: 25/5/ 2024*

**Stela-55**

Stela-55 is found in a horizontally buried state. It is characterized by an irregular shape. This stela measures below 50 cm in height and 135 cm in width. It is covered by grass. It exhibits broken edges at the top and its sides and is oriented towards the northeast.

**Stela-56**

This Stela 56 is characterized by an anthropomorphic shape .It measures 50 cm in height and 100 cm in width, and its distance from the ground to the shoulder is 27 cm, while the upper part of the stela is difficult to measure due to its broken state at the edge .The neck has never been found at the site. It is in a partially buried state. It is oriented to the southeast.

*Figure 58: Anthropomorphic stela by Adam Melese: 25/5/2024*

**Stela-57**

Stela-57 is found in an erected state. It is anthropomorphic in form. It measures 55 cm in height, 100 cm in width, and has a thickness of 180 cm. It has two cut-mark holes on both sides; the purpose of this hole is yet unknown. It requires further study. In addition, this stela has a broken neck; however, it is uncertain whether this was removed by locals or if it was intentionally broken for various purposes. Therefore, further studies are required to confirm the structure of the stela, and its orientation is to the northeast.

*Figure 59: Irregular Shape Stelae by Adam Melese:25/5/ 2024*

**Stela-58**

Stela-58 is found in a horizontally buried state. It measures 70 cm in height and 240 cm in width, with an elongated horizontal length. Its shape is characterized by an irregular surface at the edge, and it is devoid of surface decoration. This structure seems unfinished, and currently, this stela is covered by grass. also the orientation of the stela is to the northeast.

*Figure 60: Irregular Shape Stelae by Adam Melese: 25/5/ 2024*

**Stela-59**

Stela-59 is currently observed in an erected state. It measures 91 cm in height and 135 cm in width. Its surface is undressed, and it is erected without decorations. This stela is rectangular in shape at the upper part, and based on the observation, it seems that the upper part of the stela is unfinished. However, further archaeological study is required to confirm this hypothesis. Further clarification is needed regarding this stela. It is oriented to the northwest.

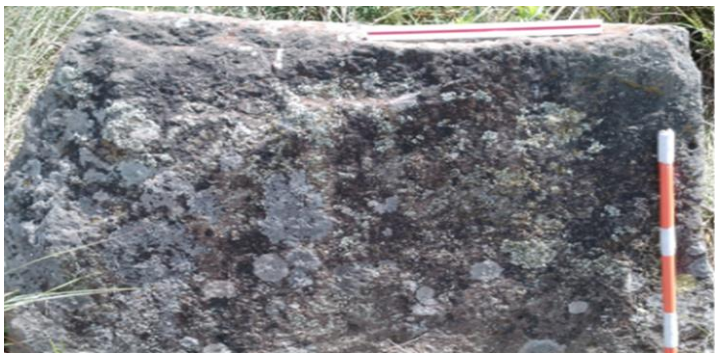


*Figure 61: Rectangular shape Stela by Adam Melese: 25/5/2024*

**Stela-60**

Stela-60 is found in a horizontally erected state. It measures 57 cm in height and 210 cm in width. It has a broken edge at the top, as well as a hole at the side of the edge. However, the purpose of the hole is unclear and requires further study. It is characterized by an irregular shape, similar to other structures found in the area, including Tiya's stele and the surrounding areas. And it is oriented to the northeast.

*Figure 62: Irregular shape stela by Adam Melese: 25/5/ 2024*

**Stela-61**

Stela-61 is located in the south-western region .It is found in an erected state. This stela is anthropomorphic in shape. It measures 55 cm in height and 95 cm in width. Its base to shoulder is measures 27 cm, while distance from shoulder to neck is 33 cm length, and from the neck to base measures 89 cm. The stela is 185 cm thick. The head of the stela is 82 cm thick and is an undecorated stela .It is covered by bush, with two holes on either side, similar to those observed on the previously mentioned stela. This stela is oriented to the southeast direction.

*Figure 63: Anthropomorphic stela by Adam Melese: 25/5/ 2024*

**Stela - 62**

Stela-62 is found in a fallen state. It is a broken stela. It measures 154 cm in length and 60 cm in width. It is an undecorated stela, exhibiting a wide base and narrower top. It is characterized by an irregular shape at the edge. It is currently in a state of poor conservation, having been covered by grass and bush. It is oriented to the southeast direction.

*Figure 64: Broken & fallen stela by Adam Melese: 25/5/ 2024*

### 4.4 Description of Individual Stelae of Aguffi Site

The Aguffi Stelae site is located at a distance of 1.5 km from the Fato Stelae site, which is found in Soddo district. It is located 12 km to the west of the Tiya stelae site. Geographically, it is located at 8.25644° N latitude and 38.8276° E longitude at, elevation of 2606 meters above sea level. These stelae are found in cultivated areas and farmlands, owned by Ato Mulugeta Molla and Waziro Chalitu Wolde Amanuel.

During the archaeological survey at Aguffi site, 23 stelae were recorded. of these, seven of them are erected and undressed state, accounting for 30.43% of the total number of stelae. The tallest erected stela is measures 83 cm high, while the shortest is 45 cm. Four stelae are in a fallen state, representing 17.4% of the total stelae. The dimensions of the fallen stelae range from 83 cm to 45 cm in height. These stelae are undecorated. Additionally, ten stelae are found in buried state, which constitute 43.5% of the total. The dimensions of these buried stelae have yet to be determined. The remaining stela, which represents 8.69% of the total, is yet to be identified.

Various types of stelae are identified, including irregular, circular, semi-circular, conical, and drum-shaped forms. These stelae are morphologically remarkably similar to Dimboder stelae. Those are found in erected state. Some of these stelae are tilted to the ground.

Their purpose is remains unclear. Further archaeological research is needed to determine their purpose and establish their chronology, which is challenging at this preliminary stage. It is recommended that additional studies should be conducted to gain a deeper understanding.

The following Table shows the typology of the stelae of Aguffi.

| Typology | Number of stelae | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| **Irregular Shape** | 9 | 34.8% |
| **Conical** | 5 | 21.74% |
| **Circular shape** | 3 | 13.04% |
| **Semicircular shape** | 5 | 21.74% |
| **Drum Shape** | 1 | 4.35% |

*Table 4;The typological distribution of the stelae of Aguffi site.*

The following Charts represent the typological distribution of the stelae of Aguffi site.

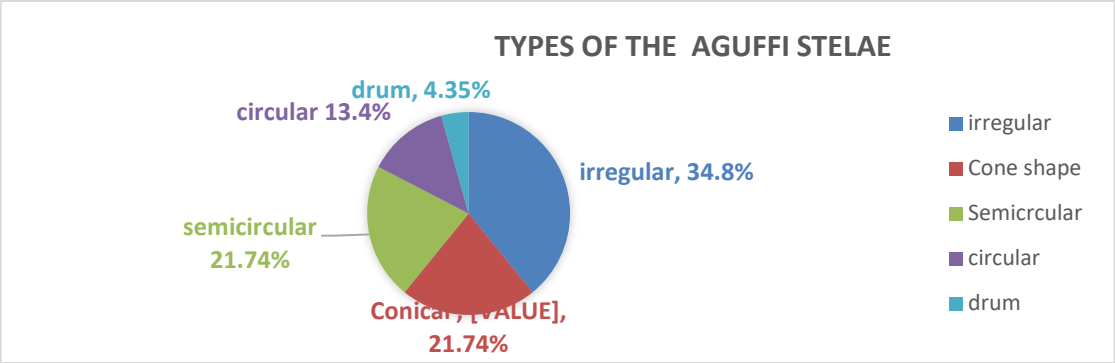



*Figure 65: Typological distribution of the Stelae of Aguffi.*

As clearly indicated on table 4 and figures 65 the majority of the stelae are irregular stela .This represents 34.8% of the total stelae in the site. Detailed descriptions of each stela are presented below.

*Figure 66: View of the stelae site of Aguffi by Adam Melese: 13/6/ 2024*

**Stela-1**

Stela-1 is found in an erect state. It measures 60 centimeters in height and 48 centimeters in width. This stela is in partially broken and erected stela without any decoration. It is characterized by an irregular edge. The arrow indicated that it has been partially concealed by vegetational growth. It is oriented in a southeastern direction.

*Figure 67: Irregular stela by Adam Melese: 13/6 / 2024*

**Stela- 2**

Stela-2 is found in a horizontally buried condition. It measures less than 50 cm in height and 48 cm in width. And it has variable thicknesses. It is characterized by an irregular edge and is buried without any decorations. The stela is found in a poor state of conservation and is currently located in farmland .Its orientation is to the southeast.

*Figure 68: Irregular shape stela by Adam Melese: 13/6/ 2024*

**Stela -3**

Stela-3 is located in a cultivated area. It measures 83 cm in length and 67 cm in width. Its base is wide and it is narrower at the top, resulting in a variety of thicknesses .It is characterized by a drum shape. In addition, its present state is a horizontally buried stela without decoration. This stela is facing to northwest.

*Figure 69: Drum shape stela by Adam Melese: 13/6/ 2024*

*Figure 71: buried Stelae by Adam Melese: 13/6/ 2024*

**Stela 4 &5**

These stelaes are situated in a buried context with in the agricultural landscape. They exhibit a height of below 50 cm and a width of approximately 80 cm, with a variable thickness .The surface is devoid of any decoration and characterized by an irregular shape. It is found in poor conservation state. At this stage, it is impossible to determine its original form. The orientation of the steles is unclear, and are currently covered by grass.

**Stela-6**

Stela-6 is found in an agricultural area. It dimensions are 36 cm in height and 75 cm in width. It can be identified by irregular edges and a surface that varies in thickness. It is broken and foundin a fallen state .The orientation is to southwest and furthermore, the conservation status of this stela is not good currently.

*Figure 72: Buried stela by Adam Melese: 13/6/ 2024*

**Stela-7**

Stela-7 is found in the agricultural field. It measures 90 cm in height and 45 cm in width. Its structure reveals a narrowing at the top and widening at the base, as well as being broken on the side. This stela is found in a fallen and partially buried state, covered by grass and a small bush that has grown on the side. It is oriented towards the southeast.

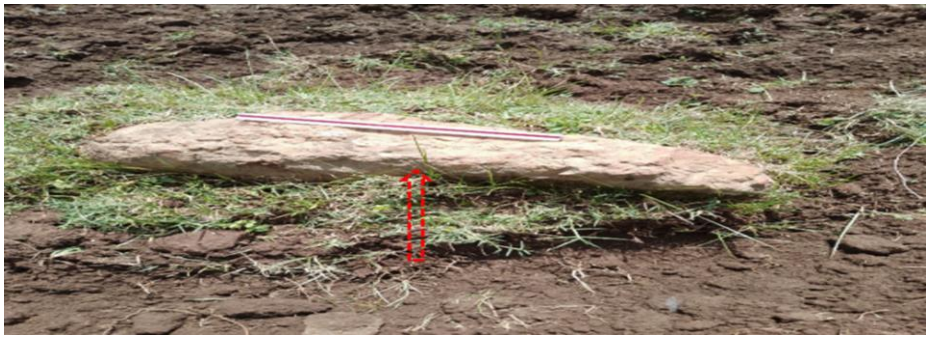


*Figure 73: Fallen Stela by Adam Melese: 13/6/ 2024*

**Stela -8**

Stela 8 is found in a buried condition. It is located in an agricultural field, where it measures 55 cm in height and 79 cm in width. Currently it is observed in a fallen state, with a broken side. It is characterized by an irregular shape .It is found in a poor state of conservation. Its orientation remains uncertain.

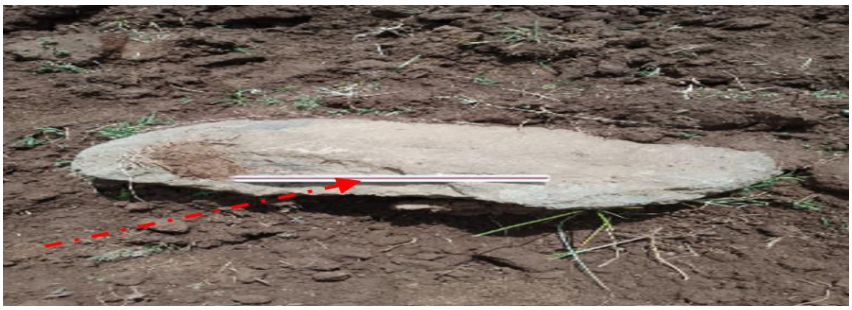


*Figure 74: Broken stela by Adam Melese: 13/6/ 2024*

**Stela -9**

*Figure 75: Broken and fallen Stela by Adam Melese: 13/6/2024*

Stela-9 is currently found in a state of poor conservation. It measures 60 cm in height, 50 cm in width, and 55 cm in thickness .It is characterized by an irregular shape. Currently, it is found in a fallen and broken state. It is located in an area that has been subject to agricultural activity, and its orientation is unknown.

**Stela-10**

*Figure 76: Irregular stela By Adam Melese: 13/6/ 2024*

Stela-10 is located in the cultivated field. It measures 50 cm in height and 70 cm in width, with varying in thickness. It is currently found in a buried state, showing an irregular shape at the edge, and this stela has an undecorated surface; it is found 50 cm away from stela 9. It is oriented to the south-west of stela 9.

**Stela-11**

Stela-11 is found in a cultivated field.It measures 45 cm in height, 70 cm in width, and it has a variable thickness. Its edge is characterized by an irregular shape, and it is vulnerable because it is susceptible to damage coming from humans. It is also susceptible to damage from sunlight and rain. no decorations have been observed. Its current context is in a poor state of conservation. It is oriented towards the southeast.

*Figure 77: Irregular shape Stela by Adam Melese: 13/6/ 2024*

**Stela 12**

Stela 12 is found in erected state. It measures 50 cm in height, 75 cm in width, and its thickness varies from its top to its bottom. The upper part of the stela seems to be semicircular in shape .Currently, it is situated at a distance of 3 m to the east of Stela 11 .It has been identified in the same area as the preceding stela, and it is oriented to the northeast.

*Figure 78: Drum shape stela by Adam Melese: 13/6/ 2024*

**Stela-13**

*Figure 79: Drum shape Stela by Adam Melese: 13/6/2024*

Stela-13 is located on the cultivation area. Based on its physical structure, it is similar to Stela 12. It measures 67 cm in height, 60 cm in width, and 95 cm in thickness. It is currently found in erected state. It is characterized by a semicircular shape at the upper part, it has erected without any decoration.It is situated at a distance of 2.5 m from Stelae 11. This stela is oriented to the northwest.

**Stela-14**

This stela is found in a state of a bad condition. It measures 35 cm in height and 50 cm in width .It is currently found on the surface, in a fallen and broken state .Its shape is characterized by a semicircular form, and has been identified as being in a state of poor conservation, particularly in comparison to other stelae. In addition, the orientation of this stela has been determined to be in the northwest direction.

*Figure 80: Broken and fallen Stela by Adam Melese: 13/6/2024*

**Stela-15**

Stela -15 is also found in on the cultivated area. It is found in a poor state of conservation. It measres 45 centimetres in height and a width of 55 centimetres. Based on its shape,this stela has been identified as a circular stela. It is currently situated in an erected state , without any decorations. It is oriented to the north-west.

*Figure 81: Circular shape stela by Adam Melese: 13/6/ 2024*

**Stela -16**

*Figure 82: Circular stela by Adam Melese: 13/6/ 2024*

Stela -16 is located in the cultivated area. It shares some similarities with Stela 14 in terms of its structural composition. It is found in a state of poor conservation. It measures below 50cm in height and 51cm in width, and it has variable thickness. It is currently found on the surface in a fallen state. It is oriented in a southeast direction.

**Stela-17**

Stela-17 is located in the cultivated area.Found in a similar position to the earlier-mentioned stela. It measures 60 centimetres in height and 85 centimetres in width. It has a narrower base and a widerat the top, and is without decoration. It is conical ine shape at the base. Its orientation is to the southeast.

*Figure 83: Drum shape stela by Adam Melese: 13/6/ 2024*

**Stela -18**

Stela -18 is located in cultivated area. The stelae has a cone-shaped form.It measures below 50 cm in height and 63 cm in width. It is currently found in a horizontally buried state with undecorated surface. Its orientation is to the southeast.

*Figure 84: Conical shape Stela by Adam Melese: 13/6/ 2024*

**Stela-19**

Stela -19 is located in a cultivated area. similar to that of the earlier mentioned stela .It is also found in poor condition. It measures 54 cm in height and 62 cm in width. It is characteruzed by circular shape at the base. This stela is currently found in a buried state .and there is another small buried stela next to it. The orientation of the stelae is to the north-west.

*Figure 85: circular shape stela by Adam Melese: 13/6/ 2024*

**Stela-20**

Stela-20 is found in a buried state on the cultivated surface. It is characterised by a circular shape. It measures 60 cm in height and 64 cm in width. It displays a variable thicknesses. This stela has an undressed surface structure and a smaller bush is growing on its sides. Its orientation is towards the northwest.

*Figure 86: Circular stela by Adam Melese: 13/6/2024*

**Stela -21**

Stela 21 is located in the cultivated surface. It's present condition is poor state of conservation.It measures 63 cm in height and 53 cm in width.It is currently found in a buried state .It exhibits a conical shape and undecorated surface. The orientation of the stela is uncertain.

*Figure 87: Conical stela by Adam Melese: 13/6/ 2024*

**Stela-22**

Stela-22 is situated to the west of the earlier stela. It is characterized by conical shape. It is erected with out decoration. It measures 64 cm in height and 70 cm in width. The stela is erected and unbroken state, displaying a variable of thicknesses. It is wider at the base and narrower at the top, oriented northwest.

*Figure 88: Conical shape Stela by Adam Melese: 13/6/2024*

**Stela 23**

Stela-23 is located at a distance of 50 metres from the previous-mentioned stela. It measures 75 centimetres in height 93 centimetres in width and 82 centimetres in thickness. It is currently found in an erected condition. the purpose of this stela is requires further study. It is notable for a hole at the tip. This stela has a narrower towards the top and wider at the base. It is orientated north-west direction.

*Figure 89: Conical shape stela by Adam Melese: 13/6/ 2024*

### 4.5 Summary of the rsult of Fato and Aguffi in terms of their shape

#### 4.5.1 Summary of the results of Fato Stelae

| Typology | Number of Stelae | Code | Height | Width |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Anthropomorphic | 9 | S3 | 80cm | 68cm |
| | | S9 | 98cm | 180cm |
| | | S10 | 56cm | 88cm |
| | | S11 | 83cm | 78cm |
| | | S32 | 90cm | 180cm |
| | | S42 | 78cm | 102cm |
| | | S56 | 50cm | 100cm |
| | | S57 | 45cm | 100cm |
| | | S61 | 55cm | 95cm |
| Irregular | 53 | S1 | 140cm | 80cm |
| | | S2 | 19cm | 41cm |
| | | S5 | 33cm | 150cm |
| | | S6 | 22cm | 63cm |
| | | S13 | 240cm | 70cm |
| | | S14 | 225cm | 120cm |
| | | S15 | 53cm | 81.5cm |
| | | S16 | 45cm | 73cm |
| | | S17 | 50cm | 150cm |
| | | S18 | 130cm | 86cm |
| | | S20 | 54cm | 50cm |
| | | S21 | 60cm | 70cm |
| | | S22 | Below 50cm | 90cm |
| | | S23 | Below 50cm | 85cm |
| | | S24 | 150cm | 85cm |
| | | S27 | 263cm | 72cm |
| | | S33 | 60cm | 180cm |
| | | S34 | 63cm | 196cm |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | S40 | 50cm | 100cm |
| | | S41 | 59cm | 160cm |
| | | S43 | 110cm | 97cm |
| | | S44 | 125cm | 68cm |
| | | S45 | Below 50cm | 52cm |
| | | S46 | 60cm | 47cm |
| | | S47 | 54cm | 74cm |
| | | S48 | 110cm | 190cm |
| | | S49 | 51cm | 190cm |
| | | S50 | 43cm | 50cm |
| | | S51 | 51cm | 75cm |
| | | S52 | 53cm | 175cm |
| | | S53 | 82cm | 90cm |
| | | S54cm | 57cm | 73cm |
| | | S55cm | 50cm | 135cm |
| | | S58 | 70cm | 240cm |
| | | S60 | 57cm | 210cm |
| | | S62 | 154cm | 60cm |
| | | S4 | 240cm | 133cm |
| **Decorated** | 3 | S12 | 230cm | 77cm |
| | | S35 | 135cm | 110cm |
| | | A | 56cm | 157cm |
| **Clustered A** | 3 | B | 43cm | 74cm |
| | | C | 50cm | 69cm |
| | | A | 70cm | 100cm |
| **Clustered B** | 3 | B | 62cm | 112cm |
| | | C | 62cm | 112cm |
| | | S8 | 31cm | 41cm |
| **Cylindrical** | 3 | S28 | 55cm | 47cm |
| | | S38 | 90cm | 40cm |

*Table 5; Summary of the results of Fato stelae*

### 4.5.2 Summary of the result of Aguffi Stelae

| Typology | Number of Stelae | Code | Height | Width |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Irregular | 9 | S1 | 60cm | 48cm |
| | | S2 | Below 50cm | 100cm |
| | | S4 | Below 50 cm | 80cm |
| | | S5 | Below 50 cm | 80cm |
| | | S6 | 36cm | 75cm |
| | | S7 | 45cm | 90cm |
| | | S8 | 55cm | 70cm |
| | | S10 | Below 50 cm | 70cm |
| | | S11 | 45cm | 70cm |
| Conical | 5 | S14 | Below 50 cm | 50cm |
| | | S18 | Belowc50ccm | 63cm |
| | | S21 | 63cm | 53cm |
| | | S22 | 64cm | 70cm |
| | | S23 | 70cm | 83cm |
| Circular | 3 | S9 | 60cm | 50cm |
| | | S15 | 45cm | 55cm |
| | | S19 | 54cm | 62cm |
| Drum shape | 6 | S12 | Below 50 cm | 75cm |
| | | S13 | Below 50cm | 60cm |
| | | S16 | Below 50cm | 51cm |
| | | S17 | 60cm | 85cm |
| | | S20 | 60cm | 64cm |
| | | S3 | 83cm | 62cm |

*Table 6; Summary of the result of Aguffi stelae*

### 4.6 Comparison of the study sites with Tiya stelae

A comparative analysis of the Tiya and Fato stelae using technological aspects reveals that the former stelae are more advanced than the latter. Its features are characterized by curved shapes, which are more intricate than those found on the Fato stelae, because the figures depicted on them are well-dressed and have highly detailed engravings. The engraved shows advanced craftsmanship evident in the Tiya stelae may suggest the continuous development and refinement of artistic traditions in the region.

In comparison, the stelae of Fato exhibit a lower quality of stone and craftsmanship, as well as a less advanced technological approach. This could suggest that the stelae were made by a particular group of people or that they were made by an ordinary group of people. These stelae are characterized by their undressed state and the possibility that they may have been left unfinished or represent an earlier stage of artistic development. In light of these findings, it can be hypothesized that the Fato stelae may be older than the Tiya stela site and other contemporary sites in the region. This would imply that the less sophisticated method of technology was used in its construction. Nevertheless, further archaeological research and analysis will be required to corroborate this hypothesis. The result of further research and analysis of the Fato stelae may provide valuable perspectives on the development and evolution of stelae in the Sodo region.

Tiya's Stelae might be rectangular, anthropomorphic, irregular, or non-anthropomorphic in shape. There is a strong morphological similarity between these at Fato and Tiya. In general, the majority of Fato stelae are found in an irregular form .They have an uneven stelae and sharp points on the top. According to Jossuame, these types of stelae can be found at Tiya's stelae site (Jossaume, 2012). However, the majority of Fato stelae have an uneven shape. Nonetheless, it requires further archaeological research at the site.

The association of the stelae with burials has been corroborated by archaeological evidence from excavations conducted at Tiya, Gatira Demma, and at Amorigé thus providing a substantial body of evidence to support this hypothesis (Anfray, 1982; Joussaume, 1995;2009). The identification of human burials next to the stelae during the excavations confirmed the stelae significance for local funerary practices. This hypothesis supported that the stelae were erected as grave markers creating similarities with those of Tiya and the contemporary stelae site of the Sodo district. However, further archaeological work is required to confirm this hypothesis.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents the conclusions from the analysis and interprets the results of the study. It refers to the analysis of the data, followed by a discussion of the research findings. The findings are in relation to the research questions that guided the study.

## 5.1 Discussion

The tradition of erecting stelae has a long history worldwide and is common in Ethiopia. In Ethiopian context the tradition of erecting stelae was dates back to in ancient times. Peoples were erected stelae in different regions throughout the country for various reasons, such as spiritual purposes, to denote the burial sites of kings, and to symbolize ideas or beliefs (Anfray, 1982). Among these, the Axum stelae, was erected in the early first millennium A.D, and Tiya stelae demonstrate Ethiopians' long experience in erecting steles (Grant, 2006). The discussion as a whole is still a tentative working hypothesis; further research should be done on other indigenous stelae structures, such as drum-shaped stelae and stelae with anthropomorphic silhouettes, which may have been addressed to other populations and regions. The Soddo, Meskan, and Silté stelae are dated to the 12th and 13th centuries AD. They likely represent the adoption by local groups of an ancient tradition of erecting stelae, which is believed to have originated further south in Borana region during the 1st millennium BC (Lynch & Robbins, 1978; Lynch & Donahue, 1980). This tradition appears to have spread through successive waves, reaching as far as north Manz and east to Somalia and Djibouti.

The stelae in the studied area are not very similar to those in central Ethiopia. Anthropomorphic, round and rectangular-shaped stelae were found from the regions of Gidim and Efrata (Tekle, 2000). Morphologically the rectangular and circular stelae seem to have similar in the study area but not with the others. Anthropomorphic stelae from similar periods have been found at Tuto Fela in Gedeo and Tiya in Soddo. These variances in morphology indicate that the two groups may not have originated from the same place (Bouville& Cros in Joussaume, 1995, 2007). This may indicates that different groups, potentially with distinct social structures, used comparable stone markers (stelae) to commemorate their spiritual or secular leaders and other notable individuals.

The comparison of the study area stelae with the southern Ethiopia variants provides noticeable difference. Their shapes and different symbolic engravings distinguish the southern variants. For instance, the stelae in the area of Sodo and Mehur- Akllil on the Gurage highland display major

difference compared with the study area. The decorated stelae of Sodo and Mehur-Akllil display different kinds of engravings such as human, enset and others (Worku, 2006) which are not found on the stelae of study area.

Furthermore, in contrast to the studied region, the stelae at Mehur-Akllil exhibit a variety of morphologies. There is not as much of a size difference between the two stelae areas. Worku Derara (2008) claims that the symbols found on the stelae of the Soddo were used to symbolize both the material world and the rules and structures of the ancient society. He also proposed that, in light of these finding, that ancient societies used a variety of symbols engraved for their social status, philosophies, economic conditions, and authority both within their own communities and among their ancestors. A symbol of artillery, most likely a sword, is one of the emblems etched on some of the stelae in the Soddo Gurage region. Additionally; he postulated that the symbol of the sword represents the fact that the individual interred beneath the stelae was a soldier or warrior. Furthermore, in the study site it might be observed, that the number of swords may signify the number of warriors.

### 5.2 Conclusion

One of the most notable stelae sites in the Sodo regions appears to be the Fato Stelae Site. Yet here 95 stelae were identified. Different types of stelae were identified during the course of the study. These comprise the anthropomorphic, irregular, rectangular, conical, circular, drum stelae that have been found at the site, in respectively. Nine anthropomorphic stelae are found in fato. They are found in semi-organized row. The longest anthropomorphic stele is measures 93cm in height, while the smallest one is measures 45cm. Fifty three of stelae were irregular shape. Among these, the longest stelae are measures 263cm in height, which is found in fallen state. While the smallest one is measures 19cm in height. While at the Site of Aguffi twenty three stelae were identified. Of these nine of them were irregular in shape. The longest stela is measures 63cm in height while the smallest stela is measures 36cm in height. They are found in semi organized row. Of this site five conical stelae were identified. The longest stela is measures 70cm in height and the smallest is measures 45cm.currently these stelae are found in poor state of conservation.

Six drum stelae were recorded at the Aguffi site. Of these the longest is measures 83cm in height and the smallest is below 50cm in height.

In comparison to those found in the Tiya, the stelae in Fato and Aguffi display a similar range of forms, sizes, and symbols, which may suggests the presence of an enduring artistic tradition across the region. However, further archaeological study may be required to fully elucidate the cultural and artistic traditions associated with these stelae. Conservation efforts have not yet been undertaken to protect them. They are unprotected and vulnerable to the risks of cultivation and removal by humans. These stelae, like those at Tiya, and other stelae sites of the region should be recognized and added to the country's list of significant heritage sites. Indeed, urgent conservation and archaeological research should be conducted to investigate and conserve them before they are fully destroyed and removed from their original sites.

The concerns related to the conservation of the stelae in question are discussed in the following sections, setting out the groundwork for the next part of recommendations that state the best course of action. The Stelae in Fato and Aguffi is in a varied state of conservation. Some of the stelae are well conserved, while the majorities are endangered by various destructive agents. based on this, the study area faces two major threats: natural and anthropogenic threats.

The primary natural hazards to the stelae at the site include; temperature, wind, rain, and sunshine variations that cause damage and distortion. As a result, the various images carved on the stelae are fading and disappearing. The erected stelae mounds that did not come out of the ground are covered with grass and bushes and are seen to be damaged. These agents played a destructive role in the collapse of the stelae and are inevitably threatening the site. However, natural threats are less destructive as compared to anthropogenic threats.

Anthropogenic threats result from human impacts on the stelae. The most significant human threats to the sites are the stelae being removed from their original sites for a variety of purposes, including as construction, residential use, and boundary marking. Another possible issue is the position of the stelae. They can be found in gardens and farmlands at the side of the road. Usually, these areas are utilized for farming or transit. Another danger to the site is animals, both domestic and wild animals. Cattle and mules are the primary domestic animals that graze there. They eventually utilized the stelae to scratch their bodies, which caused the stela to fall.

### 5.3 Recommendations

- It is recommended that a management plan should be developed for the two sites. This is primarily justified by the management plans, role in raising public awareness on local, regional,

and national levels. It is beneficial to identify the issues affecting the site and implement appropriate solutions to address them. This approach ensures the long-term sustainability of the site and it will contribute to raising the site's cultural and educational significance. Additionally, it could draw attention to the site's cultural and economic value and help local community partners collaborate to maximize these advantages while maintaining the archaeological resource's conservation. Ultimately, this could provide the development of an achievable program that would facilitate enhanced documentation and conservation of the sites. It is thus evident that greater attention is required from the regional and federal cultural offices to collaborate towards the stated objective in an effective and mutually beneficial manner.

- Conservation strategies should be devised and subsequently implemented to safeguard both Stelae sites.
- It is essential that the local population is made aware of the significance of the stelae and heritage in general and that they are encouraged to halt any further destruction.
- When it comes to the sites management, it is imperative that the local populace, the Central Government, Cultural Bureaus, and the authorities at the kebele, woreda, zonal, and regional levels work collaborating in a mutually beneficial manner.
- Furthermore, it is crucial to address and clarify the concept of ownership among the local population.
- The boundaries of the sites should be clearly defined and enclosed. With fencing that do not let in animals and people.
- As a case in point, the main stelae field could serve as the basis for an archaeological park .This can be achieved, through collaboration with both local communities and administrative bodies.
- The provision of basic infrastructure and essential services, including water, electricity, telephone, and road, is a requisite for the site.
- The local community should understand the value of the stelae sites to generate awareness and prevent the deliberate destruction of these sites.
- The community should agree on the boundaries of the stelae area and build a protective fence to protect the site from the activities of the locals and their animals.
- Finally, it would be beneficial to facilitate media coverage of the sites at regional and national levels. This would boost awareness, promote the sites, and attract more visitors and researchers to the area.

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## ANNEX -1

### 1. Interview with locals

1. Where are the stelae of Fato and Aguffi currently located?

2. What do you call the erected stones in your locality?

3. What sort of interaction does this stelae site have with the local community?

4. Do you think that this stones have some type of meaning?

6. Are you willing to involve in any conservation act if there is any?

7. What characteristics distinguish this stelae site from others stelae site in the region? If so, could you list them?

### 2. Interview with Woreda tourism expert and professional's

Interview with Woreda tourism expert and professional's

1. How many stelae are there in the Fato and Aguffi districts?

2. What are the purposes of the Stelae of Fato and Aguffi districts?

3. How old are the stelae of Fato and Aguffi districts?

4. When was the stele of Fato and Aguffi erected ?

5. Who built the stelae of Fato and Aguffi Districts?

6. What do the decorations imply?

7. What are the symbolic significances of the decorations?

8. What are the current conservation issues of the Fato and Aguffi stelae sites?

9. What measures may be taken to address the concerns with the Fato stelae and the Aguffi site?

10. How can we comprehend the archaeological and historical relevance of the stelae in the Fato and Aguffi districts?

### 3. Interview with woreda government officials

What role does local government play in promoting the area's archaeological and historical sites?

Is there a recent government action to support the Fato and Aguffi site conservation efforts?

## ANNEX - 2

### 4. Data collection form

**Immovable Cultural Heritage Inventory Sheet(form 02)**

Photograph of the site

1. Identification of the site
   - 1.1. Name of the site in Amharic_____local language_____
   - 1.2. Category

     I_____ II_____VII_____VIII_____
   - 1.3. Address

     Name of the site :_____Region____Woreda _____Kebele_____
   - 1.4. Function
     - 1.4.1. Previous_____
     - 1.4.2. Current_____
     - 1.4.3. Previous Inventory Number_____

1.4.4.Code Number_____

2. Ownership
   2.1. Name of the owner/institution/
- Government_____
- Public_____
- Religious_____
- Private_____
   2.2. Name of owner/institution/_____
   2.3. GPS location
   Northing _____Easting_____ Elevation_____
3. History of the site
   3.1. Name of the maker_____
   3.2. Date/period_____
   3.3. Method of determining
   a. Estimation___
   b. Absolute_____
   c. Relative_____

3.4. Condition of the site(in situ, disturbed)

_____

3.4. Measurements

Height_____width_____length _____Thickness_____

_Diameter _____shape_____Area_____

Number of rooms: _____number of doors:_____numbers of windows: _____

3.5. Materials on which the structure is made of

_____

_____

3.6. Description

_____

3.7. Distinguishing feature

-Age_____workmanship _____row material production _____

-Specify_____

3.8. Significance_____

_____

3.9. Current condition of the site_____

_____

3.10. Date of Inventory_____

3.11. Documented by_____

3.12. Sketches, plans ,maps_____

References

## ANNEX -3

## 5. Annex for Fato Stelae

| No | Code | Height (cm) | Width (cm) | Thickness(cm) | Present condition | shape | Feature | Photograph |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | S1 | 140cm | 80cm | various | Erected | Irregular | un decorated |  |
| 2 | S2 | 19cm | 41cm | 39cm | Erected | irregular | Undecorated |  |
| 3 | S3 | 80cm | 68cm | 1m | Erected and unbroken | Anthropomorphic | Undecorated |  |
| 4 | S4 | 240cm | 133cm | distal: 85cm | Erected | Irregular | Decorated |  |
| 5 | S5 | 33cm | 150cm | Various | Buried | Irregular | Undecorated |  |
| 6 | S6 | 22cm | 63cm; | 55cm | Broken& erected | Irregular | Undecorated |  |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | S7 | 50cm | 98cm | Various | Broken | Irregular | Undecorated |  |
| 8 | S8 | 31cm | 41cm | Various | broken | semicircular | Undecorated |  |
| 9 | S9 | 98cm | 180cm | | Unbroken and erected | Anthropomorphic | Undecorated |  |
| 10 | S10 | 56cm | 88cm | 125cm | Erected and Unbroken | Anthropomorphic | Undecorated |  |
| 11 | S11 | 83cm | 76cm | 78cm | Unbroken | Anthropomorphic | Undecorated |  |
| 12 | S12 | 230cm | 77cm | 80cm | Erected | Irregular | Decorated |  |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13 | S13 | 240cm(m) | 70cm | 60cm | Erected | Irregular | Undecorated |  |
| 14 | S14 | 225cm | 120cm | 180cm | Unbroke nand Erected | Irregular | Undecorated |  |
| 15 | S15 | 53cm | 81.5cm | Various | Erected | Irregular | Undecorated |  |
| 16 | S16 | 45 cm | 73cm | Various | Erected and broken | Irregular | Undecorated |  |
| 17 | S17 | 50cm | 150cm | buried | Buried | irregular | Undecorated |  |
| 18 | S18 | 130cm | 86cm | Various | Erected unbroken | irregular | Undecorated |  |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 19 | S19 | 67cm | 120cm | horizontaly buried | Buried | Rectangular | Undecorated |  |
| 20 | S20 | 54cm | 50cm | 85cm | broken | irregular | Undecorated |  |
| 21 | S21 | 60cm | 70cm | various | Broken | irregular | Undecorated |  |
| 22 | S22 | Below 50cm | 90cm | not defined | buried | irregular | undecorated |  |
| 23 | S23 | Below 50cm | 85cm | not defined | Buried and Broken | irregular | Undecorated |  |
| 24 | S24 | 150cm | 85cm | 167cm | Erected | irregular | Undecorated |  |
| | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 25 | S25 | 56cm | 157cm | various | broken | Irregular | Undecorated |  |
| 26 | S26 | 50cm | 69cm | various | Erected | Irregular | Undecorated |  |
| | S27 | 263cm | 72cm | various | Fallen and broken | Irregular | Undecorated |  |
| | S28 | 55cm | 47cm | 73cm | erected and Broken | semicircular | Undecorated |  |
| 29 | S29 | 70cm | 100cm | notdefind | erected and Broken | irregular | Undecorated |  |
| 30 | S30 | 67cm | 220cm | not defined | Horizontally buried | Undefined | Undecorated |  |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 31 | S31 | 90cm | 155cm | 155cm | erected and broken | irregular | undecorated |  |
| 32 | S32 | 90cm | 180cm | 195cm | Erected | Anthropomorphic | Undecorated |  |
| 33 | S33 | 60cm | 180cm | | horizontally buried | irregular | Undecorated |  |
| 34 | S34 | 63cm | 196cm | not defined | horizontally buried | irregular | undecorated |  |
| 35 | S35 | 135cm | 110cm | various | erected and Broken | irregular | Decorated |  |
| 36 &37 | S36& s37 | below 50cm | 63 | not defined | buried | irregular | undecorated |  |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 38 | S38 | 90cm | 40cm | various | Broken and fallen | Cylindrical | undecorated |  |
| 39 | S39 | 150cm | 73cm | 90cm | Broken | rectangular | undecorated |  |
| 40 | S40 | 50cm | 100 cm | 100m | Broken | irregular | undecorated |  |
| 41 | S41 | 59cm | 160cm | various | buried | Irregular | Undecorated |  |
| 42 | S42 | 78cm | 102cm | Various | Erected | anthropomorphic | Undecorated |  |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 43 | S43 | 110cm | 97cm | various | Erected | irregular | undecorated |  |
| 44 | S44 | 125cm | 68cm | Various | Erected | irregular | undecorated |  |
| 45 | S45 | Below 50cm. | 52cm | undifine | buried | Irregular | undecorated |  |
| 46 | S46 | 60cm | 47cm | 97cm | broken | irregular | Undecorated |  |
| 47 | S47 | 54cm | 74cm | | Broken | irregular | undecorated |  |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 48 | S48 | 110 cm | 110cm | 190cm | Erected | irregular | un decoration |  |
| 49 | S49 | 51cm | 190cm | various | buried | irregular | undecorated |  |
| 50 | S50 | 43cm, | 50cm | various | Broken | Irregular | Undecorated |  |
| 51 | S51 | 51cm | 75cm | various | Broken | irregular | Undecorated |  |
| 52 | S52 | 53cm | 175cm | various | horizontally buried | irregular | undecorated |  |
| 53 | S53 | 82cm | 90cm | 165cm | Erected | irregular | Undecorated |  |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 54 | S54 | 57cm | 73cm | 143cm | broken | Irregular | Undecorated |  |
| 55 | S55 | 50cm | 135cm | various | horizontally buried | irregular | Undecorated |  |
| 56 | S56 | 50cm | 100cm | Various | buried | anthropomorphic | Undecorated |  |
| 57 | S57 | 45cm | 100cm | 180cm | broken | anthropomorphic | Undecorated |  |
| 58 | S58 | 70cm | 240cm | various | horizontally buried | irregular | undecorated |  |
| 59 | S59 | 91cm | 135cm | various | Erected | rectangular | Undecorated |  |
| 60 | S60 | 57cm | 210cm | various | Erected | Irregular | Undecorated |  |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 61 | S61 | 55cm | 95cm | 189cm | Erected | anthropo morphic | Undecorated |  |
| 62 | S62 | 154 cm | 60cm | Various | Broken and fallen | irregular | Undecorated |  |

**ANNEX – 4**

## 6. Annex for Agufi site

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | S1 | 60cm | 48cm | Various | Erected | irregular | Un decorated |  |
| 2 | S2 | <50 cm | 1m | Various | Buried | Irregular | Un decorated |  |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | S3 | 83cm | 62cm | Various | fallen | rum shape | undecorated |  |
| 4 | S4 | <50cm | 80cm | Various | Fallen | Irregular | Un decorated |  |
| 5 | S5 | <50CM | 80CM | Various | Fallen | Irregular | Un decorated |  |
| 6 | S6 | 36CM | 75CM | | Broken | Irregular | Un decorated |  |
| 7 | S7 | 45 CM | 90cm | Various | Broken | Irregular | Un decorated |  |
| 8 | S8 | 55cm | 70cm | Various | Broken | Irregular | Un decorated |  |
| 9 | S9 | 60cm | 50cm | 63cm | Broken | Circular | Un decorated |  |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 | S10 | <50cm | 70cm | Various | Buried | Irregular | Un decorated |  |
| 11 | S11 | 45cm | 70cm | Various | Broken | irregular | un decorated |  |
| 12 | S12 | <50cm | 75cm | Various | erected | emicicula | Un decorated |  |
| 13 | S13 | <50cm | 60cm | Various | erected | emicircula | Un decorated |  |
| 14 | S14 | <50cm | 50cm | Various | Broken | Conical | Un decorated |  |
| 15 | S15 | 45cm | 55cm | - | erected | Circular | Un decorated |  |
| 16 | S16 | <50 | 51cm | - | - | emicircula | Un decorated |  |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17 | S17 | | | | Fallen | emicircula | Un decorated |  |
| 18 | S18 | <50 | 63cm | - | Buried | Conical | Un decorated |  |
| 19 | S19 | 54cm | 62cm | - | Buried | Circular | decorated |  |
| 20 | S20 | 60cm | 64cm | - | Buried | emi circul | Un decorated |  |
| 21 | S21 | 63cm | 53cm | - | | conical | Un decorated |  |
| 22 | S22 | 64cm | 70cm | - | Erected | conical | Un decorated |  |
| 23 | S23 | 70cm | 83cm | - | Erected | conical | Un decorated |  |