

History of Itisa Tekle Haimanot Monastery from Its Foundation Up To Present

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Abstract: *The aim of this research is dealing with the historical background of Itisa Tekle Haimanot monastery from its foundation up to present. Monastery is very great in size when we compare with church. The monastery order was first by the Egyptian Orthodox church. The establishment of these monasteries started at the end of the 5th century with the rival of the nine saints from Syria, Egypt, and Greco-Roman territory. The presence of Abune Tekle Haimanot monastery in the Aleltu Woreda plays a significant role for development of Christianity religion for the local people and people of Ethiopia in general. The income of the church comes not only from the contribution of the believers and agricultural product of its own land, but also when performing religious activities such as child baptizing, gift during celebration (holiday) and in the form of cereals from local people.*

Keywords: Monastery, Abune Tekle Haimanot, Orthodox, Aleltu, Itisa

1. Introduction

1.1 Historical Background of Aleltu Woreda

The name Aleltu derived from the tree name called Aleltu. This tree is drought resistance and densely found in the area. The people used this tree for brushing their teeth. From this plant the name Aleltu derived and later become the name of the area. Aleltu is one of the Woredas in Oromia region. It was part of the former Bereh Aleltu Woreda before it was separated from Bereh. Later became Aleltu woreda and it is one of the 14 Woredas of North-East Shewa zone of Oromia regional state. Its capital name is Miqawa 175 km from zonal capital Fitcha Selale and 55km from Addis Ababa. This woreda has urban and rural settlers (<http://en.Wikipedia.org/Aleltu>).

1.1.1 Geographical Location of Aleltu Woreda

The relative location of Aleltu Woreda is bordered in the North by East Shoa, in the West Bereh Mountain, in the North-West Jidda Woreda, in the South-West, East Shoa zone, in the north bordered by Kimbibit. The astronomical location of Aleltu Woreda lies at 9°11' 60" latitude and 39°10' 0" longitude (<http://en.Wikipedia.org/Aleltu>).

1.1.2 Climatic Condition of Aleltu Woreda

The Climate condition of Aleltu woreda consist of Dega is 60%, Woina Dega 20% and Kola 20% respectively. The climate of the area is characterized by two distinct seasonal weather patterns; the wet season extending from June to September contributing about 70% of the annual rainfall and the dry season which covers the period from October to May (www.afdb.org). The long term mean annual rain fall record at Addis Ababa observatory, which is about 1254mm. The special distribution of rain fall is predominantly affected by altitude. Generally the rain fall increased with elevation. The maximum and minimum average temperatures during 1974-2005 are 19.9°C and 7.4°C respectively. The average maximum and minimum temperature during 2005 has been recorded as, 20.5°C and 8.1°C respectively. There is a variation in mean maximum and minimum temperature across the year. The area experienced higher humidity level

during the month of July, August and September. The average relative humidity during the year is 62% (<http://en.Wikipedia.org/Aleltu>).

1.1.3 Topography of Aleltu Woreda

The topographic feature of Aleltu Woreda is valley, mountain and plain. The topography which is South East direction is plain and then the valley further narrows down hills and mountains falling down to Mughher River. The elevation of Aleltu valley before falling in to Mughher gorge is about 2500 m above sea level. Aleltu River is perennial throughout the flow during dry seasons, is scanty and joins Mughher River to the north of Debra town. Aleltu is found 2350m above sea level (<http://en.Wikipedia.org/Aleltu>).

1.1.4 Economy activities of Aleltu Woreda

The economic activities of Aleltu Woreda are agriculture and commerce. They grind black stone and producing cements and sands for construction. Agriculture is the basic economic for the people of Aleltu. The highland part of Aleltu woreda people were farmers. They have a farm and grazing lands. So, they produce cereal crops like legume plants such as Beans, Peas, Chickpea, and Lentils so on. Other cereals like Barley, Teff, Wheat, etc are cultivated in the area as well. The farmers have also rearing animals such as donkey, horse, mules and cattle, like cow, oxen, sheep and goat herding by farmers. The low lands are engaging commercial activities. The people engaged on commercial activities are low when we compare with agriculture ([Aleltu Woreda Agriculture office, 2001](#)).

1.1.5 Language and Religion in Aleltu Woreda

In this Woreda different nation and nationalities are living however, the area is largely inhabited by Oromo and Amhara. So, the area speak Afan oromo and Amhara language but the people of Oromo are covered large area so the majority of their language was Afan oromo.

Religion plays significant role and influence on human way of life. The people of Aleltu follow various religions some of them are traditional belief, Christian and Islam. Before introduction of Christianity in the area they inhabited the

area practice traditional religion by Oromo people of the area called Borenticha. They slaughtered sheep and cattle for this traditional religion. This Borenticha the sheep and cattle sacred under big tree called Oda after introduction of Christianity they belief Orthodox Tewahido religions (<http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/aleltu> and <http://st-Takla.org/>).

The majority of inhabitant now a day practiced Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity with 98.15% and 1.42% were follower of Muslim religion. Also this area is known as the birth place of Saint Abune Tekle Haimanot of Ethiopia. This Saint also plays great contribution for conversion and baptizes the traditional and other religion in North-East Shoa and other region.

1.2 The Historical Site of Aleltu Woreda

There are many historical sites found in Aleltu Woreda such as Tekle Haimanot monastery, Washa Michael church, Mariam Gedam monastery, and Adare Kidane Mehret monastery are priceless holy relic's historical and biblical artifacts. There are also 14th and 19th century's manuscripts and different types of gifts are found in the monastery. This monastery also serves in terms of culture and tourism. When we see about culture, different cloth types that used for religion celebration are found in monasteries of Itisa Tekle Haimanot and when we see the case of tourism there is different cave painting, the churches that build from one stone that made in the farm of cave are found. This helps many people to visit that area.

The main objective of the study is to assess the historical background of Itisa Tekle Haimanot monastery of Ethiopia. Specifically, it identifies the reliable information and sound evidence on historical development of Itisa Tekle Haimanot monastery; explore the awareness concerns and attitude of Aleltu Town administrator and the church servant on the custodian of historical background of Itisa Tekle Haimanot Monastery, examine the non religious action on contributions of Itisa Tekle Haimanot monastery to the local and community at large and identify the major challenges faced on earlier religious servants during the foundation of monastery.

2. Significance of the Study

Good historical documentation of religious materials in Ethiopian Orthodox Church is one of the most important means of transferring our culture and faith of the church to the future generation. Finding from heritage and each church history research can help church administrator for decision making, to understand the consequence of the destruction of building of church monasteries, for Christian worshipers and consequence of a living reality in the church and monasteries in its life of worships, preaching and discipline. This monastery was destructed by Yodit Gudut, Ahmed Gagn and king of Wolaita Motolomy and its consequence will be assessed. Research of this kind provides an essential knowledge base affecting the role of the church administration in the foundation of the church monastery. So far there has been an insufficient study conducted on historical background of the church and monasteries in our

country especially related to Itisa Tekle Haimanot Monastery in North Shoa Zone, Ethiopia.

3. Christianity in the World Perspective

The Christian religion is based on the life and teaching of Jesus Christ of Nathret. Christian originated in Jesus ministry. During his life time Jesus preach the Gospel meaning good news, that God coming to the earth to the special purpose. For the time Jesus teaching brought him a great popularity and spread throughout the world (**En. Wikipedia/wikichristianity**).

However, it does not mean that the ideas of monastic religion of Christianity did not practice before the coming of Jesus Christ to the earth. This was because Jesus himself never taught the founding of the new religion but only tried to cleanse Judaism of the rubbish which clustered its course of time. Jesus gave the ten commandments of Moses and restated them in the conception of the God as love. The Old Testament of bible is sacred to the Christian and Jesus. But the Christian have a New Testament with the teaching of Jesus. Therefore, the Jewish heritage of Christianity cannot be ignored (**Geofrey P., 1985**).

Geofrey Passinder, (1985) states that Christianity is monotheistic religion. This means that it's religion that believes there is only one God. The people who believed Christianity called Christians according to Berhanu Gobena in his book Amade Haimanot for the first time apostle was called Christians in the town of Anthokiya, a city that was established before the birth of Jesus about 300 B.C and served as a center of Christianity religion and the capital city of Syria for long period of time.

3.1 Introduction of Christianity in Africa

The history of Christianity in Africa begin in the middle of the first century in Egypt when mark the evangelist started the Orthodox Church of Alexandria in about the year 43 and by the end of the first century begun in the region around cartage. Important Africans who influenced their early development of Christianity in Africa includes Tertullian, clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, Athanasius and Augustine of hippo (**Berhanu G., 1997**).

Ethiopia is one of the early Africa countries that adopted Christianity in the world. Tracing the history of Christianity in Ethiopia suggested that the idea of Monotheism came to Saba from Judaism during the reign of Solomon. Belief in the God of Jews drew an Ethiopia to worship in Israel were Philip introduced him to Jesus as fulfillment of Jews prophecy or predict what will happen. Thus the earliest and the best known reference of Christianity was when evangelist Philip converted the Ethiopian traveler in the first century A.D. from the act of apostles (refer act of apostles 8: 26-40). All account do agree on the fact that the traveler (Eunuch Bacos) who was a member of the royal court who succeeded in the converting the queen Candace (Hendeke) was a queen of Ethiopia from which in turned church to built. Queen Candace or Heneke was baptized by Philips. The writer of church history Eusebius the Cesarean and Hernias as well as Saint John Chrysostom wrote that this

Eunuch came back to Christian and preached Christianity. So Christianity came into Ethiopia in 34 A.D. Nevertheless, there was no priesthood until the 4th century (**Christianity in Africa, from free Wikipedia. Org. Christianity**).

The sacrament of the church like the mystery of the Eucharist or Christian ceremony, commemorative, the last supper in which consecrated a bread and wine, is consumed and mystery of baptism were not performed. The sacrament were started to be performed by Saint Frumentius (Abba Salama) who grew up in Axumite place and was appointed as bishops of Ethiopia by the 17th patriarch of Alexandria, Saint Athanasius. Prior to the country believed in one God following the rule of Old Testament.

The Old Testament belief was introduced Christianity to the country after the visit of queen Sheba to Jerusalem. The peoples practiced their Jewish worship of God for one thousand years. Because after the Queen returned from her visit the Levites and the priest brought with them the book of the Old Testament and its religious practices to the country. It was because of the prevalence the Old Testament belief that the Ethiopia Eunuch went to Jerusalem for pilgrimage and to perform the religious rites instructed an old testament. On account of this Ethiopia has been known as the land of God in the books of Old Testament. The expression "Ethiopia stretches her hands to God" (psalm 66:31) indicates that Ethiopia has been worshipping God since then (**www. christianity. Ethiopia**).

3.2 Definition of Orthodox Tewahido Church

Orthodox is Greek word, which means straight or right. This term was used as part of the church who attended the council Nicaea (a city near the current Istanbul). The council was summoned or instructed to present because of Arius or false teaching on the nature of Christ. The scholars and bishops called the Saint Orthodox after defeating Arius in the argument in the council. Tewahido stands for the term incarnation or union, in other words which mean oneness and showing the son being perfect God perfect man, but as one entity which is basic Dogma or asset of principle of the church. Church refers as ecclesia in Greek. It means assembly of Christians. In addition, it uses a place design for worship and prays by Christian the administration of the church and for each individual Christians (**http://st.tekla.org/ethiopia/ethiopia monastery**).

4. Monastery

Monastery (plural, monasteries) in general included a place reserved for prayer, which may be chapel, church or temple and may also serve as an oratory. In English usage the term monastery is generally used to denote the building of community of monks and nuns. In modern usage "Covenants" tend to be applied only by institution of female monastic's (Nuns) particularly community of teaching or nursing religion sister. Monasteries the place where the Monks and Nuns lived (**From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia**).

Monastery is very great in size when we compare with church, which comprises small dwelling accommodating

only a hermit or in case of community anything from single building housing only one senior and two or three junior monks or nuns, to vast complex and estate housing tens or hundreds. The monastery order was first by the Egyptian Orthodox church. The foundation for the idea of monastic life was first laid by Abba Pauli at the end of the third century A.D. but actually the monastic order took its current shape as a result of the effort of Abba Antonius. With these church fathers as pioneers of monastic, the idea practice spread to the rest of Christian world (**http://st.tekla.org/ethiopia/ethiopia monastery**).

4.1 Establishment of Monastery in Ethiopia

Ethiopia is a land of God since the time of Old Testament, though the biblical faith and worship she followed, has produced innumerable Christian and Saints of the Testament. Biblical faith and worship in this country was able to bear so much fruit because the word of God, which was broadcasted on the heart of the people was a seed which fell on fertile ground. As much as Ethiopia is the home of numerous churches, it is also a country which has many monasteries. The establishment of these monasteries started at the end of the 5th century with the rival of the nine saints from Syria, Egypt, and Greco-Roman territory (**http://st.tekla.org/ethiopia/ethiopia monastery**).

These are the fathers who at present are referred to Ethiopia as nine Saints. These Saints came to Ethiopia fleeing from the dangerous disturbance caused by the Arian heresy and they chose Ethiopia because they heard it was free Christian country which strongly opposed the Arian Heresy. The arrival of these Saints to Ethiopia laid the foundation for the establishment of monasteries and gave to the spiritual life of the church to the present. This is because of the education value of monastery life to those worldly groups who in pursuit of worldly honor and wealth humiliate human being in exploitation, injustice and violence (**Taddese T., 1997**). So, the nine Saints preached Gospel in the north part of the country, established and promoted monastic life and translate many books in to Geez from different language. These were not translated during the apostolic activities of saint Frumentius (**http://st.tekla.org/ethiopia/ethiopia monastery**).

4.2 Establishment of Itisa Tekle Haimanot Monastery

Itisa Abune Tekle Haimanot monastery is an ancient monastery that has much important to the orthodox tewahido church. Before it became monastery there was 'Tabota Iyesus' which was founded by saint Abeydla in the reign of king Degnazion. Abeydla take many Priests, Deacons, Arch of convent (Tabot) of Iyesus with the material that is important for religious ceremony take from Axum and came to Shoa and settled Zorere or Itisa. This Saint selects the area for the following reason. The first one is the area is covered by green plants which attract him. The origin of the forest probably dominated by juniper and shrubs are found in the area. The second one is the area give comfort for him for praying because the trees serve him as a shadow. The third reason was the area is not easily affected by foreigners opposes because of this ancient monastery situated just below the highland plateau at the base of upper cliff and

found in small plateau. The largest Itisa Abune Tekle Haimanot monastery is situated at the base of cliff 300m below the highland plateau. Downhill from the church there is small stand of mature juniper trees, the only tree species remaining in canopy landscape (http://st.tekla.org/ethiopia/ethiopia_monastery).

Below the junipers ground the vegetation is very open with limited numbers of species. The monastery woodland now totally protected by the religious community is extremely keen to established large native timber trees. This area is also a part of Darwin initiative program biodiversity conservation of ancient church and monastery yard in Ethiopia. In general, Abeydla select the area for the above reason. The area is also known as the birth place of Abune Tekle Haimanot, the son Saga Ze Ab and Agzaharia was born at Zorere in Sillase district on the eastern edge of the Shoan plateau, at a place today known as Itisa. This monastery is found in the North East Shoa in Aleltu Woreda, 52 km far away from Addis Ababa to Karadega Sellasie and take the right position or turn right and use the pista road and found at 12 km. Abune Tekle Haimanot is descended from Christian immigrant, who had settled in the region over ten generation earlier from Abeydla to Saint Tekle Haimanot. Before Saint Tekle Haimanot born, the Tabota Iyesus, many priests, deacons were marked by king Motolomi of Wolaita. This king not only marked Tabota Iyesus, priests and deacons but also the soldiers kidnapped the mother of Saint Tekle Haimanot. Now a day Tabota Iyesus found in Damota and Egzaharia returned to her home with the help of Archangel Michael. After she returned to home Abune Tekle Haimanot born and preach the gospel of Orthodox Tewahido religion. After that this church became monastery around 14th century A.D in order to memorize Abune Tekle Haimanot (http://st.tekla.org/ethiopia/ethiopia_monastery).

5. Miracle of Abune Tekle Haimanot

Abune Tekle Haimanot appears to have received his early education from his father. A significant turning point in this religious career occurred when he decided to join the Island monastery recently established by Abba Iyesus Moa at Lake Hayq, where he was to remain for the next ten years. He then left for Tigray with the intention of making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Apparently he failed to do this but instead settled at the monastery Debre Damo, where he stayed for more than a decade gaining a deeper insight in to his history and ecclesiastical tradition of Ethiopia that insured his undisputable leadership of the church. He was returned briefly to Hayq with a number of followers, but was advised by Iyasus Moato go back to his native Shoa. Shoa was still predominantly pagan at this time and Tekle Haimanot begun to preach in his province with many disciplines joining him. He finally settled at Debre Asbo, where he founded monastery later to be known as Debre Libanos. His followers became so wide spread that most of Ethiopian monastic centers derive their origin from his spiritual leadership. It has a legend that Tekle Haimanot eventually withdrew from the monastery to a cave at the foot of Gorge of Asbo, where he prayed day and night by standing upright for seven years to prevent him succumbing to sleep and falling down, he had placed vertical wooden

spikes around him in his tiny cave. Not surprisingly, after seven years his leg withdrew and fell off (http://st.tekla.org/ethiopia/ethiopia_monastery).

Another legend was described how an angel appeared to Tekle Haimanot while he was living in the monastery of Debre Damo. The angel ordered him to visit all the monasteries in Tigray. Tekle Haimanot went to see Abbot Yohannis and told him of the order he had been given. Debre Damo is an exceedingly precipitous mountain from which it was only possible to descend with the use of rope (still today). Abbot Yohannis and his monks watched as the Tekle Haimanot begun his descent when the rope suddenly gave way under his weight to their amazement, six wing immediately sprouted from the saint, which enable him to fly away (http://st.tekla.org/ethiopia/ethiopia_monastery).

5.1 The Population of Itisa Tekle Haimanot Monastery and their way of Life

The population of the Itisa monastery includes monks and nuns, deacons and priests, guard student who attend the church education, and others. There are also a person who lived in monastery and fed by monasteries like the people who haven't a child and the people who don't have supporters. The number of population is decreasing as a result of shortage of income. Currently there are around 300 populations of whom 50 Nuns, 50 Monks, 100 students and 20 teachers and 80 elderly fathers are living in the monastery. The population performed many spiritual and non-spiritual activities; in the monastery praying is one of the most spiritual practices (Ewan H., 1999).

The time of praying is divided in to three groups: Kidan, Liturge or a set form of public worship and Serke. Kidan is performed around 5 AM - it is started by the ring of the bell. All people in the monastery pray together. The liturgy is not done daily. It is performed at the coast of the time between 5 to 7 AM. Liturgy is done weekly on Sunday and 3rd day every month to memorize the home of Abune Tekle Haimanot. Serke Tselot is daily activity and it is done at night at 5:30-7:30 PM. This praying involves all people in the monastery and others in the nearby believers (Bahiru Z.).

The Monastery celebrated three important with big and yell festival every year. These are December 24th – birth of Abune Tekle Haimanot, August 24th –death of Saint and May 24th excavated Saint bans from Debre Asbo to Debre Libanos, in previous time the time of Debrezeit mid fasting day of the great fasting day celebrated colorful during which there are singing cultural by the society and church students also singing religious song (Yaredawi Zema).

The students who attend traditional church education are parts of the monastery population. They learn church education to be Deacon, Priest, and Monk to serve the church service. In the early time they sit and learn day and night at the church yard under the shadow of trees or in the house of teacher due to the lack of comfortable shelter. But they continue their education by resisting these challenges. The students who learn this traditional or religious education came from different districts surrounding Aleltu Woreda, Tigray, other parts of Oromia, Amhara and other parts of the

county. The teachers came from Tigray, Gojjam and Gondar. There are also extra activities in the monastery such as preparing food, washing clothes, doing art works, cleaning the church and its compound, collecting fire wood and the like are performed by the students in the monastery. After completing the above activities they turn to their learning (**Itisa Mariam Gedam short history**).

The relationship between the residents of the monastery and the nearby Christian is not only bounded in the compound but also extended to the nearby churches and visited other religious places, the public and social issue. The monastery has the regular program to discuss different issues with other religious and non religious institution.

5.2 Source of income in the monastery

The source of income in the monastery is from the agricultural product of its own land and money earned from the believers. In the ancient time the monastery has land, which is owned by the church during the Dergue regime, the land of the church were taken. The other source of income for the monastery is money gained in different ways, for instance child baptizing, Markiase, offering during celebration, the local people bring cereals to the church and bring foods during Teskar and Fithat that priest rendered when a person died (the dead families pay money to the church in this way also). The commemorative praying is performed 3rd, 12th and 40th days of the dead person some wealth people continued this process for many years. Therefore, the clergy of Itisa monastery work many activities to get money (**Itisa Mariam Gedam short history**).

5.3 Church Equipment and Service

There are many different ancient and various church equipments found in Itisa Tekle Haimanot monastery. These are church equipments that are not found in other monasteries. The type of crosses, church traditional clothes and other important properties of the monastery are grouped into the ancient one but there is no exact time indicated part of them. Many of church equipments are offered from kings of believers. For instance, Cross and Tsilat was given by Balcha Aba Nefso and other cross from other persons or Mekuanint. The church equipment became damaged due to their long age and lack of proper protection. For example most of the ancient books such as the biggest book consists of the deeds of saints have no full pages (half part of it is damaged) because they are fired. Currently the remaining part of the book is kept in the monastery (**Itisa Mariam Gedam short history**).

5.4 The Service of Church Equipment

According to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church particularly in the Itisa Tekle Haimanot monastery several spiritual instruments are found. Some of these spiritual instruments are the following.

5.4.1 The Tabot (Replica of the Ark of Covenant)

Tabot is one of the Judaic elements retained by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. It is the most sacred object in

every Ethiopian Orthodox Church and is believed to be the prototype of the Ark of covenant, which Moses received from God of Mount Sinai; the Tabot is usually wrapped with linen cloth and housed in an after member. The member is found inside the sanctuary and only priest are allowed to touch it. The priests in a solemn process on carry the Tabot during the celebration of Timkat (Ethiopian epiphany) and annual commemoration of Saints (http://st.takla.org/ethiopia/ethiopia_monastery).

5.4.2 Liturgical Object

Liturgical objects are church heritages mainly used for the celebration of the Holy Communion during the mass and to perform other sacrament rites. Some of those objects found In Itisa Abune Tekle Haimanot Monastery.

5.4.3 Censer (Meatent)

It looks like a dish hanged to three chains, terminating to one handle whose top is a cross. Many ornamental bells are attached to the chain the censer gives a sound vein swayed or move gently to cause someone to change their opinion with the help of the land only priest handle causes in all occasions. Beside the mass and sacramental prayers, it is carried in other church processions such as epiphany and funeral ceremonies (http://st.takla.org/ethiopia/ethiopia_monastery).

5.4.4 Mesob Work and Tsh'ahel

It is a golden basket, which is used to contain the bread of the Holy Communion when transporting from Bethlehem (when the bread is baked) to the church carried by the deacons. Tsh'ahel is metallic tray like vessel used to contain the bread for consecration during the communion service. It is made from metals and looks like a tray (http://st.takla.org/ethiopia/ethiopia_monastery).

5.4.5 Tsewa

It is metallic made from precious metals and used to hold when to be consecrated during the service of the holy communion.

5.4.6 Erfe Meskel and Meqrez

It is a spoon, which has a cross at the end of its handled and used to administer the blood of Jesus Christ during commotion (noisy confusion or disturbance) service. Meqrez is a candle stick made frm metals. It has seven arms; the center being little longer lamps is put on each of the arms and the light is produced with the help of oil and threatred (http://01-st-teklehaimanot_monastery_of_Debrelibanos.02html).

5.4.7 Megonatsefia and Bells

It is linen and cotton decorated cloth used to cover the sacred containers of church as the Tsahel and member. Church bells are two types. These are the small bell called Kachil and a bigger one called Merewa. The small one is mainly used during the service of the holy communion when mass is conducted and in some church ceremonies such as epiphany. The Merewa is usually suspended from a tower or a big tree within the church compound. It is used at different times indicating various circumstances and conveying a special message. The big bell is rang at the beginning of mass and during the administration of the holy communion,

for summoning the faithful to religious services, to give all alarm during processions, at the death of the faithful, for the honor of guest authorities at their arrival to the church and so on (http://01-st-teklehaimanot_monastery_of_Debrelibanos.02html).

5.4.8 Crosses

The cross is one of the most important heritage of the Ethiopia Orthodox Church that symbolizes the redemption through the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ. It is used for ornamental, procession and blessing purposes. The symbol of the cross has long history in Ethiopia, where it is first appeared on the coins of king Ezana in the 4th century A.D. crosses are made from various materials including wood, brass, and silver, gold and so on.

There are a number of various crosses in Itisa Abune Tekle Haimanot monastery. Among them the following are the processional crosses. These are big crosses with wooden handles- they are mainly used and carried at various great church festival processions, hand crosses- these are small crosses usually held by priest and kissed by the faithful ([Wikipedia, free encyclopedia](#)).

5.4.9 Umbrella

It is used in the church not only as a shade against the sun or rain but mainly also as a mark of distinction. Umbrella carried on both open air and inside the church. Umbrella fringed (decorative of threads on clothing etc.) and decorative with given crosses, stars and figure of saints. They are mainly used in many occasions such as epiphany, funeral services and at church wedding. Umbrellas are made internally in different colors and size in order to use them for various occasions.

5.4.10 Church Musical Instrument

These are instruments used at various occasions of church hymns and spiritual dances performed by Deberas (chanters) a choir through a special tone accompanied by three traditional instruments conducted the Ethiopian Orthodox Church music. These are Mequamia (the staff), Tsenatsil (the cistrum) and Kebero (drum). Mequamia is a wooden staff which has a cross piece of it usually made from metals or Ivory. Beside the spiritual dances, it is used to learn the occasion of long praying mainly during the mass. Tsenatsil is a rattle with five metal discs arranged in two traverse wires, which is made from metals and usually a wooden handle. Kebero is cylindrical in shape and its one end is usually larger than the other regulating different tones. It is made from animal skin and wood.

5.4.11 The Holy Books

In the Itisa Abune Tekle Haimanot monastery a very large number of various spiritual books and collections of manuscripts are found, almost all of them are written in Geez and Amharic. It has spiritual content among the various holy books are the holy bible synes (life of saint) praying books and doctrinal books of wisdom. Many of these manuscripts and books are products of earliest times and with various decorations both on their covers and inside the page.

5.4.12 Religious Ceremonies

In Ethiopia Orthodox Church there are a number of festivals throughout the year. Being the known religious center the ceremonies of the spiritual holiday are a very colorful in Itisa Tekle Haimanot monastery. Church ceremonies are a major feature of people life and have a considerable economic and socio-cultural importance for the society in Itisa area. Among those ceremonies are: December 24th (the birth of Abune Tekle Haimanot) July 24th (the death of Abune Tekle Haimanot because of commemoration of him) and November 29th birth of Jesus Christ and festival of Erget celebration day.

6. Church education, administration, income and property of Itisa Abune Tekle Haimanot

6.1 Church Education

Ethiopian church and monasteries are important educational institutions and have a greater importance in the production of elite societies in Ethiopia. By using its own alphabetical system the church served as a center of intelligence and make tolerant generation for today's survival of the country. Therefore, before the introduction of modern education in early 20th century, the educational system is confined into the monastery.

The advent of the establishment of church education or its traditional education introduced in Itisa was begun from the time of foundation and continued still now with a large portion of children and its followers. The aim of establishment of traditional education was to teach children and other church personalities with the theological dogma of Christianity religion and traditional culture of the country ([Hagere igziyabiher world press.Com/ Ethiopia orthodox civilization](#)).

Ethiopia Orthodox Church contributed civilization with in the field of art, architecture, music, education, poetry, literature, law, theology, philosophy and medicine. The church educational school in Itisa Abune Tekle Haimanot monastery primarily established in order to satisfy the need of the church Priesthood, Deacons, Debrtras, Monks and other church functionaries. Itisa Abune Tekle Haimanot monastery followed teaching and learning methods of Ethiopian Orthodox Church as it is a part of it. The major subjects that are given in this monastery included Nibab Bet (House of reading), Zema Bet, Qine Bet (Poetry), Kidasse Bet (Liturgy), Triguame Bet (Exegesis old and new testament), Diagua (Song books), Aquaquam (Hymnody) are the most dominant. This is done in order to transfer the teaching of Ethiopia Orthodox Church to new generation. The education system is implemented and guided by the decisions of the national church assembly.

According to informants, there was no fixed age limit for the admission of students. The number of the year needed for the completion is determined by different factors such as health, interest, scarcity of facilities for the students and others affect the number of students in the traditional church education. In the Nibab Bet, Fidal or Alphabet, Apostle of Saint John and psalms David are main contents of the learning. In this level students taught the Geez Fidal

(alphabet) with all their character. Moreover, they are not promoted to the next stage until they identified the characters in any sequence. After they mastered the alphabet, they were allowed to take up the course of reading texts. Here the fact of apostle, the message of St. John and psalm are the most important text widely used by the students. In addition, the students also learn Ye Qal Timhirt (Literary meaning, learning by heart) that usually conducted in the evening includes Wudase Mariam and Anketse Birhan (literary prayers of Mary and others).

As one of my best informant, Memhir Tige Mezemre told me that students performed to have completed the primary school when they successfully mastered all characters of Geez Fidal and reading skill. After they completed the primary level, students are allowed to choose fields which they like to master. Most of the time many students in Itisa Tekle Haimanot monastery attended the school of Kidase to be either priest or deacon. Few brilliant students choose the school of Zema, Qinie, Akuakuam and Diagua. In Kidase Bet student learn Gebre Diqua and Gebre Qesena (literary meaning the function of deacon and function of priest). Here the students are learn the hymns that they are expected to use in the liturgy of the church. Most of the time students in Kidassie Bet wanted ordination after having spent only short time in this school and they want become Somegna (those who serve the church weakly, literally meaning).

The school of Music, Degua, Zema Bet, Aquaquam was the main fields of study in the monastery of Itisa Abune Tekle Haimanot. The Metsehaf Bet is also another school of taught this school deals with details inter position and commentary on the holy scriptures such as new and old testament, Metshafe Likawunt (book of church scholars) and Metshafe Menekosat (monastic literature). The students were learning about tradition, history and theology of Ethiopia Orthodox Church. According to my informant, in Itisa Abune Tekle Haimanot monastery, students are trained in Kine Bet. Because Kine Bet teaching-learning process allowed the students to evaluate everything that learn and criticize freely in an intellectual manner. One writer described as Kine Bet School like this produce very competent students (**Sergew H.,1972**).

Qene Bet is the only schools that have creative capacity of the students is highly challenged the instructors of the Qene teachers, Geez vocabulary, grammar and syntax. In this level following the example of teacher, the students are supposed to compose their own Qene. A man who composed Qene should strictly observed linguistic rules, being careful in his selection of word and express himself accurately. Students compose their own Qene to magnify and elaborate an idea of Samena Wark (Wax and Gold) Qene system. The tradition of education of Itisa Abune Tekle Haimanot monastery had contributed a lot for the society in the area.

The student who attends the traditional education of the church was to prepare priest, deacons and other church functionaries to serve in the church, to preach gospel in order to make the people to keep the law of God. This monastery plays a vital role to the general development of our country and particularly for Itisa communities and still doing so. This monastery serves as the symbol of unity,

spiritual activities at present and for the future (**Ye Itisa Abune Tekle Haimanot Ye Qal Kidan Tsiwa Mahber, 1999**)

6.2 Administration in Itisa Tekle Haimanot Monastery

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church had its own constitution based on the principle of self government in which the hierarchy and laity share and cooperate. So, the Ethiopia Orthodox Church has been always self governing and it is free from the government administrative machinery. According to 1999, the authority of hierarchy is range from the Holy Synod at the top of the church down to the dioceses or a district for which a bishop is responsible and a Tebiya Betekristian (Parish or district with its own church and clergy) at the bottom.

The Holy Synod of Ethiopia Orthodox Church is the highest administrative office of church that look an act that break a religious or moral law or seen its diverse activities and arrives at relevant decisions on matters of policy affecting the church. The decisions made and the directives issued by the Holy Synod are expected to be implemented. It made rule and regulation, law and other for the administration system in every level of the church administration. The members of Holy Synod include the patriarch, the arch bishop's and bishops. The patriarch occupied the highest position in the administration of Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Generally, the Holy Synod control and manage the activities of the monasteries and the church (**Yebetekristian Metedaderia Denb (Kale Awadi), 1991**).

This administration has its own purpose such as principle delegation, labor division and work convergence. In order to implement these activities, the administrative system is used the major principle of administration, planning, organizing, leading and evaluate activities. Church has its own division called Gadama, Deber and Geter according to their respective rank. All these three groups of church at Atbiya level have their own distinctive feature of administration (**Lipsky G.,1962**).

Lipsky described this fact in his account as follows: Monastery and Church maintained independent treasure control their own land and chose their own land officials. No matter how small, the local church is, it must have at least two priests and three deacons. In addition, there are many lay officials who perform important functions in the local church and also engaged informing and other occupation (**Yebetekristian Metedaderia Denb (Kale Awadi), 1991**).

Itisa Abune Tekle Haimanot monastery was established around 13th century and it has subjected to the rules and regulations of the Ethiopian orthodox church. It worked its job according to the church administrative order of 1999. Qal Awadi (Parish church constitution) prepared by the Ethiopian orthodox church. According to Qal Awadi (Parish church constitution), the most important personality to carry out the main task of any church that established in the Atbiya level (parish church) has the following officials of department: Astedadari (Literally meaning Administrator, Head or Manager of the church); Eqa Bet Tebaqi (Literally meaning Leader or officers of church properties), Tsehafi

(literally meaning Secretary office), Ye Sibket Wongel Kefel (literally, meaning Preaching department), Ye Hisab Kefel (literally meaning auditor department), Ye Kuteter Kefel (office of controlling), Ye Ikidna Lemat Kefel (Office of planning and development), Ye Kahinat Agelgilot Kefel (Department of Clergy men), Ye Hig Na Sinesirat kefel (Department of rule and regulation), Bego Adragot Kefel (Office of volunteer service), Ye Menfesawi Timihirt Kefel (Holy education department office), Yehintsa Sera Edsat Kefel (Church building and reconstruction department, Ye Genzeb Bet kefel (store of money officer), Yesenbet Temhirt kefel (Sunday School Department). However, it is possible to each two or three work together by seeing its similar job (**Yebetekristian Metedaderia Denb (Kale Awadi), 1991**).

Astedadari or Likamenber is a title given to a person who administered the church. This administrator of the church was elected according to its knowledge of church education, good deed and administrative ability elected for administrator of monastery of Itisa Abune Tekle Haimanot. The Eqa Bet Tebaki (leader of church properties) is also other official in the administration hierarchy of Itisa Aune Tekle Haimanot monastery is responsible mainly for keeping the properties in Eqa Bet of the monastery. This branch administration received the outgoing material for maintenance by receipt check and checks their performance. He was mainly responsible to protect the ancient writing on vellum, clothes, painting crosses made from Gold; Silver and Bronze protect them from fluid and fire damage and other manmade and natural disaster. This preserve historical heritage of Abune Tekle Haimanot monastery keeps its materials in their original forms as much as possible and manages them accordingly.

Tsehafi is also an official appointed to serve as secretary of the monastery. He was appointed from the educated communities of the church. This branch keeps all the financial written materials and properties of the church were documented by him. Currently, the person who appointed and act as Tsehafi is Qes Qalu, Ye Kahinat Agelgelot Kefelis also one branch of included the service given by priest, deacon, monks and others (**Yebetekristian Metedaderia Denb (Kale Awadi), 1991**). The department of Bego Adragot Kefel organized to perform the work of voluntary services in the communities and in the monastery. This branch is responsible to support those orphans, old person and other those who live without support by organizing in Edir, Senbetie and other institution inside and outside the monastery. Generally, the administration of Itisa Abune Tekle Haimanot monastery works in a well manner nowadays

6.3 Income of the Monastery

Since its establishment period of Monastery had received lands almost get income from the land and its followers. The land was administered by the monastery during the ancient time. The church becomes one of the major land holders and the same is true in this monastery. Around 20th century, empress Zewditu and Ras Teferi give a land for this monastery about 4 hectares. However, after the Dergue came to power in 1975 the land of the monastery confiscated

or taken away by him. Itisa Abune Tekle Haimanot monastery major land owned was lost easily victimize of the 1975 land reform proclamation. As a result, the church was unable to support its communities. So, the source of income for the Itisa Tekle Haimanot monastery that get donation from faithful individuals and from the state. This income obtained in kind and money from the believers.

6.4 Properties of the Monastery

Itisa Abune Tekle Haimanot monastery has great deal valuable properties that have both in ancient and modern time. The Ika Bet registered almost all properties of both the modern and ancient properties 18 these Newayate Kidusan (church objects) and vellum books are the most valuable church properties and became under the protection of Eka Bet Tebaki. However ancient monastery objects were distracted during Yodit Gudat and during the war of Ahmed Grahagn. But many materials were left from that accident by people hide in caves. According to informant deacon Dimberu Haile mariam, the ancient manuscripts found in monastery in the form of papers or books were Metsaf Kidus (Bible), Metsaf Qidassie (book of liturgy), Gospel of St. John, Tamre Mariam (book of miracle of saint Mary), Tamere Iyesus (the book of miracle of Jesus), Hadis kidane Be Geez Ena Ba amarigna (new testament in Geez and Amharic), Metsafe Senk Sar (dealing with the christology), Metsafe Gebre Himamat (book of passion of christ), Raey Mariam (the book of revelation of St. Mary), Metsafe Diuga (dealing with church song) etc.

In addition to manuscript of objects, the monastery has large number of different types of materials such as Ye Kahenat Ena Ye Diaconat Albasat (different clothes for priests and deacons), Ye Kahinat Ena Ye Diaconat Aklil (priest and deacon crown that made from gold, silver, cobalts), Ye Tabot Makberia Aklil (special crown to glorify Ark), dawell (bell made from silver), Yetalayayu Ye Eje Meskeloch (different kinds of hand crosses), Atronse (plat form), Maqraz (Candle burner), Megoatsefia (special vestment used for covering the Ark), Maqomiya (Prayer stick), Kebero (Drum), and so on are found in this monastery. This monastery has historical and cultural heritage that cannot be found in the others.

7. Conclusion

The presence of Abune Tekle Haimanot monastery in the Aleltu Woreda plays a significant role for development of Christianity religion for the local people and people of Ethiopia in general. One of the major role of this monastery was to make the generation literate as much as possible by teaching the alphabets prepared by it. The income generating methods of church comes not only from the contribution of the believers and agricultural product of its own land, but also it earns money when performing religious activities such as child baptizing, gift during celebration (holiday) and in the form of cereals from local people. Generally, since Itisa Abune Tekle Haimanot monastery has different historical manuscripts, great deal of historical materials and attractive place; it plays a paramount role in the development of our country Ethiopia by producing income through tourism.

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