

Challenges and Opportunities for Safeguarding Traditional Church Schools as Cultural Heritage Center: The Case of Three Selected Schools, South Gondar Zone, Ethiopia

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Abstract

This study was designed to assess Challenges and Opportunities for Safeguarding of Traditional church schools of South Gondar Zone. To achieve the objectives of this research, Qualitative research approach and a cross-sectional research design was employed. The principal sources of data for this research were both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from purposively selected interviewees and discussants through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion, and by the researchers' field observation whereas published and unpublished documents related with the study were secondary sources. The findings of this study revealed that expansion of Modern Education, low salary for Teachers, high unemployment rate for those specialized in church education, shortage of financial support for Church schools, lack of basic needs for students and teachers, absence of documentation, Shortage of learning Text books, lack of attention, and Poor Promotion of Traditional Schools of Ethiopian Orthodox Church are challenges to safeguard it. The finding of this study also asserted that the establishment of Mahebere Qidusan, the existence of voluntary organization such as Tabor society to support traditional church schools, diocese strong commitment to support traditional church schools both in finance and in kind, the existence of churches decorated with pre- Gondarine and Gondarine paintings, and rich in priceless log aged treasures, and its geographical accessibility are opportunities to safeguard traditional church schools.

Keywords: Challenges; Opportunities; Cultural heritages; Traditional schools; Safeguarding

Introduction

Ethiopia is a great country with its fabulous 3000 years history, an astonishingly rich linguistic and cultural diversity with more than 80 living languages and 200 dialects, spoken by as many ethno-linguistic communities [1]. According to Saint, as cited by Yigzaw and Boudreau [2], Ethiopia is the only sub-Saharan country possessing an ancient written culture with its own alphabet. The country possesses a 1,700-year old traditional knowledge creation system that is embedded in their elite education linked to the Orthodox Church. The traditional school of Ethiopian Orthodox Church is one of these spiritual and cultural heritages from which the Ethiopian Orthodox Christians personality, celebrity, and identity are developed. For millennium, we were dependent on such schools not only for our spiritual life but also for our secular life [3]. There are thousands of Church schools in Ethiopia, which have been working for over one thousand years and providing a variety of education that ranges from low to high level of complexity [2]. Furthermore, the traditional schools of Ethiopian Orthodox Church are full of spiritual and cultural heritages with tremendous spiritual songs, better known as 'Saint Yared's songs' and has been used as center of learning knowledge, skills, arts, and ancient history for centuries [4].

On the other hand, despite the traditional church schools have such plenty of tourism resources in Ethiopia in general and in and around Debre Tabor town, Lay Gayint and Estie districts of south Gondar Zone in particular, their futurity is in question and their contributions for tourism sector are very low. Because according to Addis Ababa Millennium Secretariat, most of the festivities and traditional practices [including traditional church schools] are held at the household level and are not widely made open to tourism market. According to UNESCO [5], intangible heritages do not also live in archives or museums, libraries or monuments; rather, it lives only in the minds and bodies of human

beings. Consequently, the old scholars with deep knowledge of the traditional schools of the Church are passing away without delivering their knowledge to the coming generation [4]. Nevertheless, to counter this potential challenges, in the case of Ethiopia, strategies have not been developed. In fact, some researches have specifically done researches on traditional church schools. For instance, Mezmur [4] has done the research entitled "Traditional Education of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Its Potential for Tourism Development (1975-present)" and Aselefech, has also conducted research on "the Role of Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the Development of Adult Education.

Even though, researches had been done in limited geographical areas as aforementioned, none of those studies discussed about the challenges and opportunities for safeguarding these intangible cultural heritages. Hence, the researchers have selected Debre Tabor Town, Lay Gayinet and Estie Districts as study area because these areas are the only areas to certify church students in Tekelia Aquaquam, Zemarie Mewasit and Qomie Degewa respectively. Therefore, undertaking this study was rational with the aim of finding challenges and opportunities of safeguarding traditional church schools of Tekelia Aquaquam, Zuramba Abune Aregawi Zemarie Mewasit and Qoma Fasiledes Qomie Degewa as cultural heritages centers.

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Methodology

Description of the study area

The capital city of south Gondar Zone, Debre Tabor is situated in the highland plateau of North West Ethiopia at about 55 km north east of Lake Tana, 95 km from the town of Bahir Dar and 660 km from Addis Ababa. The historic town has latitude and longitude of 11051'N and 3801'E and an elevation of 2,200 meters above sea level. It is serving as the seat of Yeju dynasty during zemene Mesafint/era of lords (1769-1855), a capital of Ethiopian empire during the reign of Emperor Tewodros (1855-1868) and as a second capital during the reign of Emperor Yohannes IV (1872-1889) and continued as a seat of Ras Gugsu Wole, governor of the area in the early 20th century [6].

Topography of the town is 66% mountainous, 20% Plain and 14% rocky. It has dega and woina dega climate, an average temperature of 15oc and average rain of 1553.7 ml [7]. Debre Tabor is the home town of Debre Tabor Eyesus Church which is one of the sites of this study. Debre Tabor town and its surroundings have 8,976 households with a total population of 62,829, of whom 30, 422 are male and 32,407 female [7].

The second area of study is Lay Gayint district which is located at 729 Km from Addis Ababa and 75 km from Debre Tabor town. Its geographical area covers 154856 km2 [8]. It hosts the 6th century monastery, Zuramba Abune Aregawi, which is situated at 31 km from district town and 56 km from Debre Tabor town.

The third area of study, Este district is situated at about 653 Km from Addis Abeba and 54 km from Debre Tabor town. It was bordered on the south by the Abay River which separated it from the Misraq Gojjam Zone, on the west by Dera, on the northwest by Fogera, on the north by Farta, on the northeast by Lay Gayint, and on the east by Simada. Este was divided for Mirab Este and Misraq Este woredas. This district hosts one of the study sites, Qoma Fasiledes, which is located at 65 km from the district town. Based on figures published by the Central Statistical Agency in 2005, Este district has an estimated total population of 403,956, of whom 199,325 are men and 204,631 are women; 16,014 or 3.96% of its population are urban dwellers, which is less than the Zone average of 8.3%. With an estimated area of 2,368.13 square kilometers, Este has an estimated population density of 170.6 people per square kilometer, which is greater than the Zone average of 169.21. The economic sources of the district's societies are mainly agriculture, trade and mining (Figure 1).

Research design

The research strategy chosen for this study was Descriptive design. This design has helped the researchers to assess challenges and opportunities of safeguarding the selected traditional church schools found in Debre Tabor town, Lay Gayinet and Este districts of South

Gondar zone with narration of facts and characteristics concerning individual, group or situation. Regarding the approach, quantitative approach was employed. The qualitative data were collected by in-depth interviews, participant observation, focus group discussion and document review.

Target population of the study: The subjects of this study were churches' scholars, the selected traditional Orthodox Church schools' students and culture and tourism office experts of South Gondar Zone, Debre Tabor Town, Lay Gayint and Estie District.

Sampling techniques and sample size determination: Both purposive and snow ball sampling were used to select samples from the target subjects for the interview and focus group discussion based on their knowledge and nearness to the research problem understudy.

To collect data trough in-depth interviews, a total of 47 individuals were interviewed. Of those who were interviewed, 2 (1 head of the office and 1 heritage conservation expert) from South Gondar Zone Culture and Tourism department, 6 (head of the office and heritage conservation expert) from Debre Tabor Town, Lay Gayint and Estie District Culture and Tourism office, 3 teachers of traditional schools (1 each school) and 3 Administrators/stewards of Zuramba Abune Aregawi, Debre Tabor Eyesus and Qoma Fasiledes Church, 18 scholars who are well experienced in Tekelia Aquaquam, Zemarie Mewasit and Degewa and 15 senior students (5 of each traditional schools) were selected.

To select informants for three focus group discussions (1 each selected schools with 6 members each), the researchers have purposively selected: 9 church scholars (3 in each church), 15 senior traditional school students (5 each school), 6 district Bete Kihinet officials (1 head and 1 expert from each district) and 3 store keepers (1 each church) of the selected churches.

Data type and collection instruments

To achieve this research work, both primary and secondary data were employed as the main sources of information. The main sources of primary data were in depth interview, focus group discussion and field observation whereas the principal sources of secondary data were both published and unpublished documents.

Methods of data analysis and presentation

Qualitative data collected by in-depth interview and focus group discussions were coded into a set of categories developed from identified commonalities. In other words, repeated themes were recorded together and categories of themes were identified, so it was condensed thematically and analyzed with document reviews.

Results and Discussion

Challenges that hinder the safeguarding of traditional church schools as cultural heritages centers

The focus group discussion and interview done with traditional school students, scholars and higher officials of the Orthodox Church as well as document analysis reveal that there are several reasons why traditional school students and scholars are decreasing in such alarming rate. The major identified reasons include expansion of modern education, low salary for teachers, high unemployment rate for those specialized in church education, scanty of financial support for Church schools, lack of basic needs, lack of attention, absence of documentation and Poor Promotion of Traditional Schools of Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

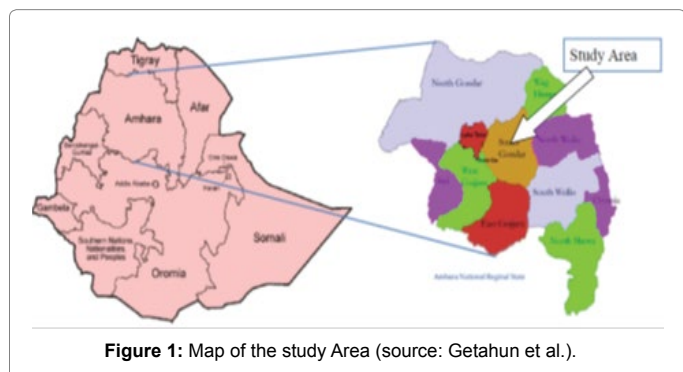


Figure 1: Map of the study Area (source: Getahun et al.).

Expansion of modern education

There are several factors that contribute to the extinction of indigenous people's intangible heritage and indigenous knowledge. Truscott [9], argued that local communities themselves often do not see the importance of preserving their oral traditions, legends, and their languages. They consider their own cultural heritage as backward and as a hindrance to their ability to access "modern society" and economic wealth [10]. Africa in general and Ethiopia in particular today inject Eurocentric and western philosophy of education in their school system rather than Africanized and Afro centric indigenous Knowledge and education philosophy that make African self-reliant. Interest in modern education in Ethiopia goes back to the nineteenth century. The missionaries, who saw education as an effective means of proselytization, were active in establishing a number of schools and sending the more promising students abroad. Impressed by European technological power and more particularly the military manifestation of that power, Emperor Tewodros II had started a school at Gafat to train young Ethiopians in the technique of arms manufacture [11]. He was the first king with the concept of modernizing the country using the light of Europe long before Menlik II. Thus, he reached at a conclusion of catching up with the economic and social advancement of Western Europe by sidelining traditional schools and promoting western education. Thus, for the promotion of science, technology, and enlightened values, the distinctive features of modernity were valued than the indigenous knowledge. This policy of westernizing Ethiopian society undermines the role of indigenous education to the society [12]. As a result, according to Wion as cited in Ferede and Haile [12], most Ethiopian students began to consider the home grown knowledge system and the local culture as 'backward' or 'non-civilized' and have been using these two words to designate their own society. Because of the aforementioned factors, the perpetuation of the traditional education of Ethiopia is challenged. The same is true for the selected traditional church schools.

The greatest teachers of traditional church schools are old and passing away while the young of Ethiopia are more and more attracted by modern life [13]. As modernity is growing in Ethiopia, what would be the future of teaching traditional education? This is a big loss for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in particular and for the country in general [4]. Expansion of modern education is not only resulted decreasing of students at higher traditional education levels but also at lower or junior schools which feed accreditation schools (Melake Tabor Haile Eyesus, interviewed on February 14/2017). A teacher at Qoma (Meleake salam kumilachew, interviewed on June 1/2017) asserted that, the student who has better in Qomia Degewa education/profession is now at modern education in Estie town. Because of this he is becoming reluctant to this education. Even we proposed him as vice teacher of this church school but he is not voluntary. This shows that how modern education challenges traditional church schools. A church intellectual (Yenta kefelie, interviewed on March 25/2017) at Debere Tabor also stated that, most students took their seniors who migrated to other places or abroad and live in a better life. They think that this is because of their modern education they acquired before, not because of the traditional education. They also think that traditional church education alone cannot create better opportunity unless it is supported by modern education, even to employ as guard. Because of this most students leave this traditional school and join to modern education to be as seniors. Most discussants have also agreed that, currently most parents need to teach their children in modern education because they hope this education will provide advanced opportunity better than traditional

church education. The sum of these factors results decreasing of numbers of students in traditional church schools.

Low salary for teachers

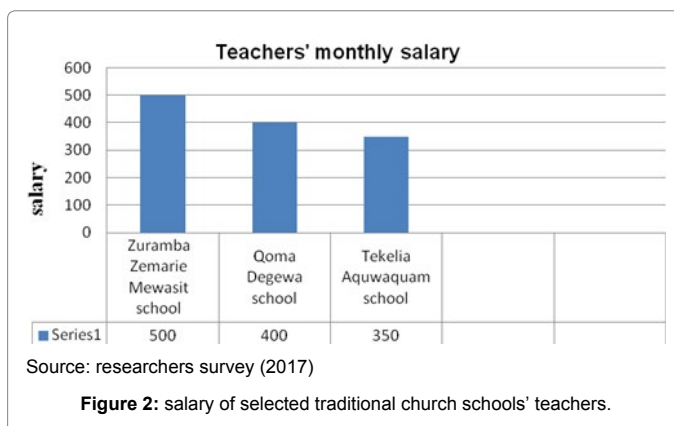
Due to the country's economic level it is clear that, Ethiopian students hope learning to over through their poverty and then help their poor parents. But, unemployment makes the graduates hopeless and initiates them to migrate, seeking a promising work in other countries which leads to brain drain [14]. According to Chaillot [13], Ethiopian traditional schooling System is undermined by the death of well-versed teachers and the fact that the youth in Ethiopia are shying away from attending church schools for their rewards are becoming less attractive. Even though students perceive that they may get job in Ethiopian Orthodox Church after finishing their education, they thought that the amount of payment they got compared with other kind of job (other than church) is much worse. They are saying that the payment of church does not support the current living condition. The maximum payment for priests and clergymen in Addis Ababa is 1200 ETB (one thousand two hundred ETB). This payment is possible only when employed by Addis Ababa churches. In regional churches, the payment is very low. So, students think that they can support their lives if they look for other job opportunity that could bring them more monthly salary [4].

Most interviewees agreed that teaching in traditional church schools is considered the lowest level of profession. Thus, no one is responsible to pay high salary as teachers in modern secular schools. This low salary disgruntles most of Ethiopian Orthodox Church schools' teachers that results lack of respect towards their profession, high migration for better life, and low commitment to stay in this profession. As a result it causes shortage of teachers.

As it is shown in Figure 2 above, monthly salary of Zuramba Zemarie Mewasit, Qoma Degewa and Tekelia Aquaquam church schools' teachers are 500.00, 400.00 and 350.00 EB respectively which are lower than the minimum salary (650.00) of Ethiopian civil servant. This adversely affects the interest of teachers to teach in their profession.

The other interviewees also asserted that, Because of their low salary, most teachers engaged in alternative livelihood activities such as agriculture and church administration. Because of this they do not properly teach their students. That is why currently there are a few numbers of students in these church schools.

A teacher at Tekelia Church School further revealed that, the salary given to teachers and priests is not enough to support their life so they migrate to other areas which have better situation and atmospheres



by leaving students who are attending their courses. He also stated that even he himself, if he was young, he would leave this school to find other opportunities because he have been shouted day and night to teach but his life is similar which is a bad model for his students. Because of this and other factors, the number of students who attend this education is decreasing in alarming rate. Previously in this school more than 25 students have been graduated annually but currently not more than 10 even Sometimes they totally disappear.

Shortage of job opportunity for those specialized in church education

The other reason for traditional school students to stop their education is unemployment. Most Students at traditional church schools revealed that they are watching their seniors who finished traditional education properly wandering here and there without any job. Unlike the previous time, it is very hard to get job in the church with faire payment. There is very small number of vacancy in countryside churches. Even if they try to get job, the competition is very high and the church pays not more than 200 ETB which doesn't cover monthly expenditure [4]. The teacher at Tekelia Aquaquam traditional church school (Yenta Mersha, interviewed August 10/2017) revealed that, there are a number of reasons which are responsible to decrease number of students in alarming rate. One of the reasons is shortage of job opportunity for those graduating in specific field of study. The teacher said that his son was graduated in Tekelia Aquaquam profession, but still he did not get job in his field of study. This is a bad experience for those junior students who are attending in this field of study.

Shortage of financial support for church schools

The history of Education development in Ethiopia still not been studied meticulously. Because of lack of fund and support from donor organization to investigate the nature, Philosophy and contribution of traditional education in producing people who can justify state authority, translation, read and write in Geez and Arabic. Even the government never recognizes and supports this decisive role in addressing education for all and literacy campaign. In fact, some NGOs such as Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Diasporas in Chicago have allocated about 70 thousand birr to assist a teacher and 30 students at Zuraba [15]. However, according to most students and teachers, such support is not strong enough to sustain the livelihoods of student and teachers because of this still many students withdraw from their education.

Lack of basic needs

Students of the traditional schools used to travel far from their villages, usually to other regions [16]. It is a fact that the life of students of the traditional teaching is hard and demanding for contemporary boys [13]. Church education needs maximum possible attention. It is almost impossible to finish any type of specialization in a limited time without giving maximum attention and without being patient about time. If a student's attention is diverted to what he eats, dresses and where to sleep, how could he give maximum attention for his education [4].

Most students of Tekelia Aquaquam and Qoma Degewa Traditional schools agreed that, to fulfill these basic needs, students beg from villages that find around the school. But due to social, economical and political changes through time, the perception of the society towards traditional students who beg for their basic needs has long turned down. So, traditional students aspire to have some kind of blue collar job. However, besides its difficulty such types of jobs, the amount of

payment is much less which may not cover their daily expenditure.

Teachers of the selected schools also stated that, besides shortage of food, in each school there is no light. Students eat their dinner outside their hut. Because even though both of them are dark, outside the hut is somewhat better than inside it. Sometimes students collect fire wood from the nearby forest and use it for dinner light. All of them also agree that there is no water near to the church school. To fetch water, they travel more than four kilometers per day to search springs. But they do not get clean and sufficient water. All these factors make the students' life difficult in church schools and disgruntle them.

Absence of documentation

Inventory, Identification and Documentation of living heritages is one of the major principles for safeguarding Intangible cultural heritages because it can raise awareness about intangible cultural heritage and its importance for individual and collective identities [5]. It is also valuable reference for educators, researchers and others who have an interest in the community's history. Hence, absence of recording and documentation is a major challenge because of the tacit nature of indigenous knowledge (it is typically exchanged through personal communication from master to apprentice and from parent to child) [2]. Education in Africa including Ethiopia (which is part of indigenous knowledge) has traditionally been transmitted orally from one generation to the next. Moreover, such transmission has mainly been family based or occurs in small ethnic groups. This renders its preservation difficult. It is therefore difficult to obtain that knowledge and incorporate it in the educational curriculum for the purpose of formal transmission from one generation to the next [17,18].

The great scholars are less and less numerous: when they pass away their knowledge, which is known orally and is not written down, passes with them [13]. The manner in which indigenous knowledge is developed and the role of knowledge generation in traditional Church Schools is not well understood or documented [2]. According to Yenta Mersha (interviewed August 10/2017), as a result of stakeholders negligence, some specializations such as Tekelia Aquaquam, does not have text books with appropriate symbols. It has been transferred from teacher to students orally. This hinders to transfer it by keeping its originality [19-22].

Scanty of attention

Another challenge is that, owing to its local or environmentally specific nature, indigenous knowledge has traditionally not been viewed as "capital" in a business sense. It has tended to be exclusive at times, susceptible to suspicion, and sometimes to abuse [23,24]. It is understandable that knowledge generated by research institutes and universities is considered a resource just like any other resource that can be used for development. It is well organised, preserved in libraries and information units, and disseminated for wider access to the user community. This is not the case with indigenous Knowledge [17].

Most informants and interviewees stated that, Traditional church schools are some of the most marginalized knowledge heritage assets in the country. Its negligence can be seen as it is not well-identified, financed, documented and promoted as heritage sites by most governmental and nongovernmental institutions except some associations such as Mahebere-Kidusan and Tabor society [25,26]. Even most secular education institutions considered traditional church schools as only the assets of Ethiopian Orthodox Church. They do not consider as a cultural heritage center for Ethiopian society. As a result governmental educational institutions have not been supporting

this heritage center. Even synod's support for these traditional church schools is too limited [27,28].

Poor promotion of traditional schools of Ethiopian orthodox church

According to Elleni Tedla [18] as cited in Sisay, there is no serious efforts to study promote and incorporate indigenous education to modern education in Ethiopia and Africa in general. That is why the issues of identity, cultural civilization and cultural continuity highly deteriorated and replaced by new Euro-centric or colonizer identity and cultural practice. This is because the attention of international organizations, donors and scholars has been devoted to Africa's modern education with a very limited consideration and integration on traditional education to modern one [29].

Most of the religious tourism sites in Ethiopia belong to Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church (EOTC) with its traditional schools are the main attractions for domestic tourists. They are ancient and source for studying Ethiopian civilization, history and literature. However, only famous religious sites have been well promoted and mostly visited. Hence, Churches and monasteries have been seasonally visited mainly by Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church followers [19]. This is mainly because traditional church schools [which are parts of cultural heritages] are not well promoted. As a result most Ethiopians do not have information about the status of the traditional schools. They are only aware of the availability of the schools, but they don't know what kind of education is offered in each church and monastery, its process, the duration of the specialization, and specially the current statuses of the traditional education [4]. As the consequences of poor promotion, Ethiopian orthodox religion laities and other religion followers considered traditional church schools are only cultural center of Ethiopian orthodox church (Meleake selam kumilachew, Interviewed on January 15/2017)

Opportunities for the safeguarding of traditional church schools

Establishment of Mahebere -kidusan and Sunday schools: In 1992 college and university students established a recognized association called Mahebere Kidusan by the patriarchate under Sunday school department. Their main focus is on evangelism among college and university students, and also with the laity [20]. The association also helps monasteries and traditional church schools in kind and money. They construct traditional church school, toilet and libraries. Financially they support traditional church schools students and teachers. The association prepares evangelical material with books, magazines, and audio-video cassettes (preaching, documentaries, liturgical and other hymns). In order to preserve and transmit tradition and culture for the coming generations, the association helps monasteries and traditional schools. The members collect money for them, but rather than giving it directly to them, they distribute food, clothes and medicines, spiritual and liturgical books, liturgical vestments and habits and sell them at low prices, or even give them free to clergy living in the countryside, and to monasteries. The association organizes training in different skills such as carpentry, farming, weaving, etc, so that, through little projects, monasteries and traditional students may become financially independent [20]. Though the amount varies from time to time, Mahebere- Kidusan also allocates 180-200 Ethiopian birr per student quarterly.

The emerging of NGOs which are supporting church schools: A teacher at Zuraba Zemarie Mewasit church school asserted that, currently different NGOs such as Tabor society (German NGO) and Ethio-

pian Orthodox Christian Diasporas in Chicago are emerging. All these are golden opportunities specifically for our school and in general for other Ethiopian orthodox church schools. For example, Tabor society, which was established by Professor Fridrek Hayer, was built dormitory with teaching hall (in 1972) and has been paying 5000.00 Ethiopian Birr per three months for supporting students and a teacher (Figure 3).

Similarly, according to Selamsew [15], Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Diasporas in Chicago have allocated about 70 thousand birr to assist a teacher and 30 students at Zur Aba.

Diocese commitment: Most discussants and interviewees repeatedly asserted that, Even though, giving due attention for traditional church schools is expected from Diocese, because of unknown factors, they had neglected these schools for a long time. However, now a day they tried to give due attention. For example, they facilitate and follow teaching and learning systems and built dormitories at selected church schools (Figure 4).

As shown in the above figure, south Gondar Diocese in collaboration with Mahebere- Kidusan put stepping stone in 2007 E.C to construct dormitory and teaching hall for Qoma Fasiledes Degewa Accreditation School. Accordingly, now the building is accomplished and furnished with chair, table and shelf, and started to give service, which can accommodate 24 students. This is great opportunity for the accreditation school to have future hope.

Existence of old aged churches with priceless heritages: Besides their long history as an accreditation schools in Zemarie- Mewasit, Qomie



Source: researchers' survey.

Figure 3: Teaching hall and students' dormitory built by Germany NGO in 1972.



Figure 4: stepping stone for constructing students' dormitory and teaching Hall at Qoma Fasiledes church school.

Degewa and Tekelia Aquaquam, the existence of churches with priceless heritages is an opportunity for such traditional church schools. As researchers observation, the home church of Qomie Degewa school, Qoma saint Fasiledes church, is enclosed with walls and it has two story treasury house made out of lime mortar which resembles Fasiledes castle of Gondar. Qoma saint Fasiledes church is also rich in interesting antiquities and ancient historical evidences such as more than 80 manuscripts, gold crosses, Drum made of Gold, Negarit (dish shaped drum) and Crown, Spare and gun which accounts to be the Possessions of king Fasiledes. Such antiquities are an evidence of the presence of close contact of the king with Qoma saint Fasiledes church (Yeshi, interviewed on March 20/2017) (Figure 5).

Even though it needs empirical investigation by professionals, as shown in Figure 6 below, the wall of Qoma Fasiledes church is decorated by first Gondarine painting styles. According to Maria-Jose [21], the first Gondarine painting style, which was fully developed 1665 and continued into the early 18th century, is characterized by there is no indication of a light source, or of shadow, and of three- dimensional spatial relationships. Scenes are portrayed against a delicately shaded background. The faces are long and narrow, the line of the pointed nose continues uninterrupted to form the eyebrows; all the figures have large black eyes with a very expressive gaze.

Besides more than 1600 years history, Zuraba Monastery, the home monastery of Zemarie- Mewasit School, is also rich in priceless heritages. According to Yenta Fenta (interviewed on March 20/2017), some of those heritages are Abune Aregawi's hand cross, gold painted staff (Mequamia) and chair, Saint Yared's hand cross, staff(Mequamia) and sistrum, Atse Tewodros' hand washing pot(sen), queen zewuditu's and Etegie Menen's gold umbrella, silver cross (Afro



Figure 7: Wall paintings of Zuraba Monastery (source: researchers' survey (2017)).



Source: (Debra Tabor Town Culture and Tourism Office, 2014).

Figure 8: Debra Tabor Eyesus Church and Ras Gufsa Walle's Tomb from left to right respectively.



Figure 5: Qoma Fasiledes church.



Figure 6: Wall paintings of Qoma Fasiledes Church (source: researchers' survey (2017)).

aygeba), and a book of the glory of martyrs, which cannot be moved by a single person.

As the researchers' observation, the monastery's wall is also decorated by paintings. According to Yenta Fenta (interviewed on March 20/2017), the paintings are painted by Hizekial and Albanios during the reign of Emperor Bekafa, who ruled from 1721 to 1730 (Figure 7).

According to the informant (Melake Tabor Haile Eyesus, interviewed on march 16/2018), Debre Tabor Eyesus church, the home church of Tekelia Aquaquam traditional school, was established around 1333 E.C by Atsie Sayefe Ared. As researchers' observation and according to Alubel and Yirdaw [22], besides the church, there is the burial place of Gugesa the Great, constructed during the time of Ras Gugesa Wole as a memorial. Its architectural structure is similar with Gondar castle of Fasiledes which extremely attested that the influence of Gondarine period. According to the church administrator (Melake Tabor Haile Eyesus, interviewed on march 16/2018) and Alubel and Yirdaw [22], the church has also priceless treasures such as golden crosses, golden sistrum, golden prayer stick, golden drum, silver painted drum, silver painted cross, Atse Menilik II crown, and bed (Figure 8).

The existence of the aforementioned home churches of traditional church schools of Zemarie- Mewasit, Qomie Degewa and Tekelia Aquaquam with priceless heritages is an opportunity for such traditional church schools to attract tourists and concerned stakeholders such as NGOS.

In this regard, a teacher at Qoma Fasiledes states that, Qoma Fasiledes church is rich in different heritages that make the church to be pride all over the country and to have power to attract different visitors especially during the annual festival on December 11. For example in 2009 E.C annual celebration, different guests including the archbishop of south Gondar Diocese, bishop Endrias with some others, came from Addis Ababa. On the way they brought gifts specifically dressings for the teacher and Administrator, and text books for students and the church. They also discussed and identified different problems of the church school. Accordingly, of the identified problems, absence of vice teacher is the priority one and they assigned vice teacher for the school. They also took assignments to support and promote the church school. All these motivate the teacher, students and, laities to conserve this church school. The same is true for other church schools.

Accessibility: Most interviewees stated that, Most of the time, students waist a number of days to reach church education schools. Therefore, Aloofness of traditional church schools is one of the challenges that previous students suffer to get best teacher. However, these church schools are: Tekelia Aquaquam church school in Debre Tabor town about 5 kms; Zuraba church school about 10 kms from Debre Tabor-Gaint Asphalted road, which is linked with rough road and Qoma Fasiledes Degewa school 54 kms from district town. So accessibility of such church school is an opportunity because students can easily reach to the school and can purchase important things from the nearby markets and they can be visited by concerned stakeholders easily.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

Ethiopia has been endowed with rich secular, spiritual and cultural heritage which are the expressions of our identity. The traditional school of Ethiopian Orthodox Church is one of these spiritual and cultural heritages from which Ethiopian Orthodox Christians personality, celebrity, and identity are developed. Of those major traditional schools of Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Zuraba Abune Aregawi, Qoma Fasiledes and Tekelia Aquaquam schools are the only accreditation schools in Zemarie Mewasit, Qomie Degewa and Tekelia Aquaquam respectively.

However, because of the impediments such as expansion of modern education, low salary for Teachers, high unemployment rate for those specialized in church education, shortage of financial support for Church schools, lack of basic needs for students and teachers, absence of documentation, Shortage of learning Text books, lack of attention, and Poor Promotion of the Traditional Schools, scholar of these schools and the numbers of students enrolled in the selected traditional church schools are decreasing in an alarming rate.

The findings of this study also revealed that, Establishment of Mahebere Qidusan, the existence of voluntary organization such as Tabor society to support traditional church schools, diocese strong commitment to support traditional church schools both in finance and in kind, the existence of churches decorated with firs Gondarine paintings styles, and rich in priceless log aged treasures, and its geographical accessibility are opportunities to safeguard the three selected traditional church schools.

Even though, such limited favorable conditions have been existed, unless the concerned stakeholders work cooperatively to tackle aforementioned challenges, such fields of study may become to extinct as of abushakr, yekidasie tirguame, mestihafe likawnt, haymanote abew, mestihafe menekosat and Some of Yared's sacred songs like, yetegulet digua, yeankober wereb, yewashera qine and ye achabr wereb which are almost extinct.

Recommendation

- One of the main challenges for the declining of number of students in the accreditation school is decreasing of number of students at lower or junior schools which feed accreditation schools. So to safeguard and sustain the traditional church education system, all concerned bodies such as diocese, bête kehinet, synod, culture and tourism offices and ministry, and modern education institutions at different levels must work cooperatively.
- To minimize problems related with unfair salary and lack of basic education facilities, the synod and other concerned bodies must establish central financial system which is responsible to allocate budget for traditional church schools based the number of enrolled students, and number, experience and level of teachers regardless of place of work.
- Currently there are associations such as Mahbere-Kidusan and Tabor society which strongly supporting traditional church schools in finance, in education facilities, in building dormitories and toilets, and recording of the educations but it is not enough other responsible associations and institutions must be encouraged to support church schools and to work together with Church.
- It would be very good if curriculum is geared up that realize the sequence of the courses in order to shorten the duration that a student stays in a school.
- All Traditional church schools must have vice teachers, who can support the main teacher, with fair salary.
- The outstanding church school teachers are old and passing away while the young Ethiopians are more and more attracted by modern life. When they pass away, their knowledge, which is known orally, and is not recorded with today's technology, passes with them. So we recommend that all traditional schools specialization should be recorded with Audio-visual and digital recording method.
- Societies, government and tourists (both domestic and international) do not understand the values of traditional church schools because it is not well promoted. So we recommend that Medias and concerned stakeholders must incorporate awareness creation programs and methods for traditional church schools with both electronic and printed Medias. Culture and tourism bureaus, travel agents and tour operations must also incorporate in travel packages or circuits.
- Distribution of teaching aids in traditional schools is very un-proportional. So we recommend that technologies used to assist the learning and teaching process should be launched in some selected traditional schools of specialization. For instance, if students are provided with audio recordings, they can listen when the teacher is not around and shorten the duration that he would spend to master. It also assists the scholars not to recite day to day for each and every individual.
- By considering traditional church schools as cultural heritage centers, government shall give due attention as modern secular education.
- Synod and Diocese together with churches must build libraries equipped with text books of the given fields of study, chairs, and tables and light system.

- Synod and other concerned body of must identify vacant jobs and assign the graduates according to their field of specialization in a fair salary.
- To make the church schools and students financially independent, churches or monasteries where those schools find, shall establish small projects such horticulture, weaving and carpentry.

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