
Acholake Eyessus

Acholake Eyessus church lies on a hilltop in the shadow of the Simien Mountains. Its small woodland is relatively species rich but has no ground vegetation or tree regeneration. The floristic composition is more typical of the lowlands. There appears to be no restriction on grazing by livestock.



Name: **Acholake Eyessus**

Status: church
Site Code: GD01
Floristic Region: GD
Region: 3 (North Gondar)
Altitude: 1600 m
Latitude: 13° 26' N
Longitude: 38° 06' E

Woodland/forest:

Status: relict

Size: 1 ha

Dominant species:

canopy: *Brucea antidysenterica*,
Euphorbia tirucalli, *Terminalia*
schimperi

shrub/ground: *Dichrostachys cinerea*,
Dovyalis abyssinica, *Maytenus obscura*

No of woody species: 39

No of species with less than 5 individuals: 2

Threats: grazing, no regeneration

Photograph: The woodland and church are located on the top of a small situated below the rocky summit on the left-hand side of the photograph.

On the top of a small hill situated on one of the ridges heading to the Simien Mountains is located the Acholake Eyessus church woodland. The church was established on the crest of the hill and is surrounded by the woodland. The slopes are highly variable but they are very steep to the West of the church. In places the canopy is exceedingly open, especially along its margins, and the ground vegetation as well as the shrub layer is generally totally absent.

Due to the low altitude (1600 m) of this site, much of the flora of this relatively species rich woodland is typical of lowland vegetation types (e.g. *Terminalia schimperi*). The site and the area as a whole are dry. A similar site, but with a slightly different ecology and species composition, was also investigated in the region (see Beri Mariyam site account).

The surrounding countryside consists in a mixture of agriculture, on better and flatter grounds, and secondary scrub. Few medium-sized trees remain here and there and the exotic tree resource is extremely limited. Eucalypts have only been planted near the main road some 10 km away. Population pressure is moderate as much of the countryside can not sustain agriculture.

History

No information available about the age of this church, but it has been established for quite some time (ca 100+ years). It is one of the few churches noticeable in the countryside. No evidence that the site is much used for burials.

Although there is no evidence of significant tree cutting over the past few decades, some large trees would probably have been cut down in the past.



This woodland has essentially no ground vegetation and no natural regeneration.

Conservation status

Considering its small size and absence of regeneration this woodland is relatively species rich. It is one of the few remaining woodland patches on these slopes leading to the Simien Mountains.



Epiphytic Loranthaceae are noticeable parasites on a variety of tree species.

Threats

The woodland is freely used by livestock and these grazers must play an important role in the absence of tree regeneration as well as ground vegetation observed.

Management

Access of livestock to the woodland is an issue that needs to be addressed at by the community. Grazing restrictions are necessary if any natural regeneration is going to take place.

Tree planting is another option, especially in order to fill gaps in the canopy or even expand the woodland.