
Beri Mariyam

A substantial plateau in a landscape containing some degraded woodland harbours Beri Mariyam forest. This lowland site has some natural regeneration and its undergrowth is nearly devoid of all plants. The woodland is relatively species poor and suffers from grazing by livestock.



Name: **Beri Mariyam**

Status: church

Site Code: GD02

Floristic Region: GD

Region: 3 (North Gondar)

Altitude: 1510 m

Latitude: 13° 25' N

Longitude: 38° 01' E

Woodland/forest:

Status: church

Size: 2 ha

Dominant species:

canopy: *Combretum molle*, *Teclea nobilis*, *Vangueria apiculata*

shrub: *Calpurnia aurens*

No of woody species: 23

No of species with less than 5 individuals: 1

Threats: grazing and lack of regeneration in places

Photograph: Beri Mariyam is situated on a area of flat ground on a main ridge leading to the Simien Mountains. To the right of the church woodland there is a large area of logged open woodland.

Beri Mariyam is situated on a large flat plateau along a mountain ridge. The woodland's outer boundaries have no obvious natural or man made features. Neither is the church located at a special place (e.g. top of hill, near a well, etc...). This lowland site is found in a highly dissected and rugged countryside to the East of the Simien Mountains.

The woodland has a number of uncommon features, including much advance regeneration in places and a large amount of coarse woody debris (only the priest is allowed to gather dead wood). In the past there has been tree cutting and few large stems exit. There are no large openings in the canopy but there is some evidence of gap dynamics. Canopy trees are mostly deciduous whereas the shrub layer is evergreen. The ground flora is typically absent and the amount of litter was highly variable.

Native trees are common but scattered in the surrounding countryside, but there is no natural woodland in the close vicinity of Beri Mariyam. However, a highly disturbed open woodland extends downhill from the protected site.

History

No site history is available although it appears that the establishment of the church date back hundred years or more. This is the southernest church built with stone encountered during the survey.



Typical stone-built church in the middle of the forest.

Threats

Much of the woodland appears to have a problem with grazing from domestic livestock, there are no physical boundaries to prevent them from entering. Some areas have little natural tree regeneration the grove. Overall the levels of threat are currently relatively low.

Conservation status

This site is relatively species poor and has limited plant biodiversity value. However, as it is well protected, has some natural regeneration and much coarse woody debris, and is one of the rare natural stands in the landscape, it has some ecological importance.



Most of the forest has no ground vegetation. There is a large ant nest (centre left).

Management

At present this site requires no specific form of management. Areas with lack of natural regeneration may need to be protected from grazing in the future. The woodland being species poor may benefit from the planting of local tree species currently absent from the site. Extending protection to parts of the hill scrub may be advantageous to expand the protected area.