
Gununo Kidus Georgis

Gununo Kidus Georgis is a recently established church and planted with eucalypts and cypress. Since then there has been a steady amount of natural regeneration by native tree species. The number of woody plant species found at this site is well above the national average. A new native woodland is slowly becoming established.



Name: **Gununo Kidus Georgis**

Status: church

Site Code: SD03

Floristic Region: SD

Region: 5 (Walaita Dawuro)

Altitude: ca 1900 m

Latitude: 06° 53' N

Longitude: 37° 41' E

Woodland/forest:

Status: new (graveyard plantation)

Size: 2 ha

Dominant species:

canopy: *Eucalyptus* spp., *Cupressus lusitanica*

shrub/ground: *Acanthus eminii*, *Sida cuneifolia*

No of woody species: 51

No of species with less than 5 individuals: 5

Threats: none

Photograph: The church woodland lies next to a very large and busy market place. The wooden fence has just been recently erected.

Gununo Kidus Georgis is situated in a region where deforestation has removed almost all natural woody vegetation (for an exception see site account for Anchucho Medihanealem). Gununo Kidus Georgis church was established on open ground just over 40 years ago and now has many tall mature trees, especially eucalypts. On three sides of the church, but for the South, there is a ring 30 to 50 m wide with much undergrowth. The species composition and structure of this natural regenerated shrub layer varies markedly and the reasons for this are unclear.

The region used to be mainly open, following extensive deforestation, and over the past few decades a large afforestation programme using almost solely eucalypts was carried out. Today the region has trees throughout and it is often difficult to have a vista to appreciate the scale of the region.

Gununo Kidus Georgis is one of several churches (see site account of Bolola Baleweld for a similar example) have been established on previously open ground. All appear to have profuse natural regeneration of native species.

History

This church was established in the late 1950s on what was grassland. It is positioned right next to a large market place attended by thousands of people on a weekly basis. A wooden fence has recently been built to protect the churchyard from the market crows. Many of those attending use the back of the woodland as a latrine. Because of the high population pressure and the small church area bodies are buried at a separate location.

Conservation status

Although at first sight devoid of conservation value, the natural regeneration of many native species indicate that this site if left untouched will eventually become a woodland with similar species composition to what would have been present here before the region was deforested.



Gununo Kidus Georgis Church with the eucalypt woodland in the background. Although the canopy is dominated by this extremely tall exotic species the undergrowth, including natural regeneration of tree species, is solely constituted of native species.



Typically dense grown vegetation under an open canopy of exotics. To the left the distinct prickly plant *Acanthus eminii*.

Threats

Being in a very populated part of the countryside this church woodland is always at risk of human pressure, but currently it has little to fear from. The area is widely used as a latrine and the eastern edge is regularly trampled.

Management

Because the graveyard is at a separate location little woodland expansion is possible. The outer parts of the woodland could be given some protection by building some sort of a fence. In due course the mature exotics could be harvested or left standing to die. The latter solution is probably more in line with the philosophy of the church.

It would be essential to plant native woody species of local provenance which are not readily dispersed by birds. Species solely or mainly dispersed by wind or mammals should be identified and given priority in re-forestation.