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# Chanco Igziabher

Chanco Igziabher was established some three decades ago on what was a traditional religious site. Most native trees have been removed from the top of the hill, but much woodland remains on the slopes. The undergrowth is scarce and regeneration is absent. Several patches of eucalypts exist and this species is favoured because of its economic value.



Name: **Chanco Igziabher**

Status: church

Site Code: SU04

Floristic Region: SU

Region: 4 (Fiche Sellale)

Altitude: 2640 m

Latitude: 09° 18' N

Longitude: 38° 45' E

Woodland/forest:

Status: relict

Size: 1 ha

Dominant species:

canopy: *Olea europaea* ssp *cuspidata*

shrub/ground: *Leucas martinicensis*,

*Maytenus arbutifolia*

No of woody species: 33

No of species with less than 5 individuals: 3

Threats: grazing, lack of regeneration, graves

Photograph: The church is at the top of the hill which is surrounded by the natural woodland. In front of it there is a belt of eucalypts. The town is to the right of the photograph.

Chanco is located on a plateau to the North of Addis Ababa at the edge of a large treeless plain. The church is found on the top of a small hill to the West of the town at an altitude of 2600 m asl. The land controlled by the church is clearly divided into a number of zones with different uses. They are:

- 'inner' churchyard (churches and housing)
- 'outer' churchyard
- wooded graveyard
- natural woodland
- eucalypt plantations
- grassland
- habitations

The woodland canopy is mostly composed of *Olea europaea* ssp *cuspidata* and the shrub layer is absent. Much of the hill to the northern side is bare of native trees and consists in a mixture of grassland and eucalypt plantations. These generate money for the church especially as they are trying to complete the building of the new church. They have secured 17,000 Birr in the sale of Eucalyptus trees twice in 12 years. The woodland resources, but eucalypts in particular, are perceived more as a source of revenue than as a place of religious significance.

The surrounding vegetation is dominated by grasslands and eucalypts. Only a few native trees remain at a traditional site on the summit of an adjacent hill.

**History**

The church was established in 1970 on the site of a traditional Oromifa sacred ground. It has been reported that at the time the landlord allocated the traditional religious sacred woodland to a priest so that an Orthodox Church could be established on the top of the hill. A new church is currently been built.

The hill was formerly fully covered by natural forest dominated by *Olea europaea* ssp *cuspidata* and some *Acacia* sp., but since the establishment

of the church most of the native vegetation of the hill's summit has been cut down. The nearby hill of Buba, harbouring a traditional sacred site, has fared even worst with hardly trees surviving.

**Conservation status**

For this region this woodland represents one of the last remaining tracks of native vegetation. A hammerkop nest was found in the woodland.



The woodland understory is nearly totally denuded of shrubby vegetation. Note the corrugated iron roof on the far grave.



The western type of grave are nearly solely found outside the woodland hence not presenting a threat to the tree's survival. However, as tree planting is not a local tradition there is no woodland expansion.

**Threats**

Heavy grazing by livestock is suppressing the natural regeneration of trees and prevents the establishment of a shrub layer. A shift in burial practices from traditional to western style, if carried out under the canopy of native trees, may result in crown dieback. The replacement of native species by income generating eucalypts could become a major problem.

**Management**

Access to livestock should be prevented and the western style of graves should only be established outside the woodland. The promotion of tree planting, as practised in much of the country, should be favoured in order to expand the woodland area.