
Tetema Kidist Silasse

The Tetema Kidist Silasse is part of a network of native woodlands situated along a steep escarpment. It is an important source of water for domestic and agricultural usage. The woodland is relatively species rich and highly variable in both stature and species composition, this probably reflecting variation in topography and soil moisture.



Name: **Tetema Kidist Silasse**

Status: church

Site Code: TU03

Floristic Region: TU

Region: 1 (eastern Tigray)

Altitude: 2480 m

Latitude: 14° 05' N

Longitude: 39° 34' E

Woodland/forest:

Status: relict

Size: 2 ha

Dominant species:

canopy: *Allophylus abyssinicus*, *Bersama abyssinica*, *Ekebergia capensis*, *Ficus sur*, *Pavetta abyssinica*

shrub/ground: *Desmodium repandum*, *Impatiens hochstetteri*, *Pavetta abyssinica*

No of woody species: 40

No of species with less than 5 individuals: 2

Threats: path erosion

Photograph: Tetema Kidist Silasse (centre) is one of several woodlands found along this escarpment near the town of Sinkata (foreground). The trees on flatter grounds are chiefly eucalypts.

A small, but steep, escarpment on the highland Trigayan plateau has a number of natural woodlands. Tetema Kidist Silasse woodland, like the others, is located in a small valley where there is a permanent water source. The small church is situated at the base of the slope on flatter ground.

The water is collected by locals living on the plateau above and an extensive area of agricultural land at the base of the escarpment is irrigated by a extensive network of water channels. The area is heavily populated with the town of Sinkata situated a few km to the South.

The structure and species composition of the woodland varies greatly according to topography and soil moisture. In the centre and lower part of the valley the trees are tall (to 15 m) and *Ficus sur* is conspicuous. Towards the edges of the woodland the stand becomes a scrub. Similarly the ground vegetation varies with monotypic stands of *Impatiens hochstetteri* covering much of the moisture ground. Elsewhere the ground flora is scarce. Some parts of the stand harbour large quantities of vines.

The native woodland resource is limited to the escarpment and eucalypts are restricted both in numbers and distribution (mainly base of the escarpment). The plain below and the plateau above the escarpment are nearly devoid of trees and shrubby vegetation is limited.

History

The age of Tetema Kidist Silasse church is unknown but the site has clearly been used for more than a century. It appears to be regularly visited by pilgrims.

Conservation status

This site, considering its small size, is relatively species rich and has a few large native trees left. In

recent decades the woodland appears to have expanded southwards along the escarpment. The woodland is an important source of water for domestic use of people living on the plateau above and is essential for the irrigation of the fields below the main road.



There is a good mixture of large trees, shrubby ground flora and open spaces in this woodland, although natural regeneration is rare. The trees at the top of the escarpment are eucalypts.



The dark brown patch outside the woodland (left of centre) is one of the areas where water surfaces.

Threats

Although not affected by grazing this woodland, at present, appears to suffer from limited negative impacts.

There is major footpath used by the plateau inhabitants to go and fetch water. It does suffer from erosion.

As timber resources, eucalypts in particular, in the region are limited and there is a high population pressure, logging threat could become an issue for such a site adjoining a main road.

Invasive species (*Tagetes minuta* and *Opuntia* sp.) are present but do not currently appear to be a problem.

Management

Currently Tetema Kidist Silasse woodland requires no immediate management. The eucalypts planted on moist grounds at the base of the woodland should be removed and the area planted with native trees, more moisture loving species in particular. Instead, eucalypts should be planted on drier grounds away from the woodland to provide timber that is in short supply locally.