
Rama Kidanemihret

Although this large tall-canopied monastery forest suffers from mature juniper dieback, much natural regeneration of canopy species is observable in many areas. This forest is species poor. Some tree cutting is taking place but levels of harvesting appear to be sustainable and its isolation provides a degree of protection from outside human pressure.



Name: **Rama Kidanemihret**

Status: monastery

Site Code: WU01

Floristic Region: WU

Region: 3 (North Wello)

Altitude: 2140 m

Latitude: 12° 15' N

Longitude: 39° 44' E

Woodland/forest:

Status: relict

Size: > 10 ha

Dominant species:

canopy: *Podocarpus falcatus*, *Juniperus procera*

shrub/ground: *Carissa edulis*, *Clusia abyssinica*, *Myrsine africana*, *Nuxia congesta*

No of woody species: 21

No of species with less than 5 individuals: 1

Threats: drought

Photograph: View of the forest, church, agricultural and scrub (typical of the surrounding mountain slopes) from the 'holy water'.

The forest of Rama Kidanemihret Monastery covers the whole of an upper river catchment right below the summit of a long North-South mountain range. This amphitheatre faces East and overlooks the vast Rift Valley. All the steep slopes are covered with the forest that gradually vanishes on the ridges. The tall trees are in the moister valleys and are dominated by *Podocarpus falcatus* and *Juniperus procera*, the former species being less widely distributed. The tree size structure is pretty mixed, yet tree regeneration can be scarce in places. This is probably caused, in part, by a quite dense ground vegetation. The species richness of this large forest is poor and much lower than that of the small Rama Ras Alula Teklehaymanot woodland situated about 10 km away on the other side of the ridge.

There is a small natural water source in the upper part of the forest, however this region is pretty dry and the monastery has had difficulties obtaining water in recent years and has now built a large storage tank.

At the base of the forest there is a gently sloping area where agriculture is carried out. Around the monastery there are large tracks of scrub and in places some steep slopes are cultivated. The nearby land is lightly populated.

History

This monastery was established during the Talak period. Although situated in a large amphitheatre it has not developed into a large monastic community. Over the past few years the monastery has initiated the construction of a large church made out of concrete. Much of the necessary construction materials have been brought on mule across the mountain from the nearest road three hours walk away.

Conservation status

This is a substantial area of natural forest that is quite variable in species composition. In places natural regeneration of canopy trees is readily observable. Of note, is the regeneration of *Juniperus procera* under canopy, this process has not been observed elsewhere.



Little or no grazing results in a dense ground vegetation. The forest has a varied size structure although natural regeneration is often scarce.

This large *Juniperus procera* was saved from the axe man when blood started pouring out of the cut.

Threats

Timber requirements of the monastery are somewhat limited especially as the new church is being built out of stone and concrete. The surface area of forest appears to be large enough to support the current logging regime. The recent dry years have taken their toll on some of the mature *Juniperus procera*, however crown dieback is patchy.

planting of fast growing exotics may be desirable, but this would need to be carried out in adequate locations. The enhancement of *Juniperus procera* natural regeneration in surrounding scrub may also be an option to increase timber resources of desirable species.

Management

Planting of *Cupressus lusitanica* is not advisable above the forest because when the trees mature they will start spreading downhill. Further