
Rama Ras Alula Teklehayimanot

Near the top of the mountain range the only remaining native woodland is located around the Rama Ras Alula Teklehayimanot church on the slopes of a small rounded hill. This site suffers from some overgrazing and is invaded by cacti. Thanks to the planting of native trees on new graves the woodland is slowly expanding.



Name: **Rama Ras Alula Teklehayimanot**

Status: church

Site Code: WU03

Floristic Region: WU

Region: 3 (North Wello)

Altitude: 2050 m

Latitude: 12° 13' N

Longitude: 39° 43' E

Woodland/forest:

Status: relict

Size: 1 ha

Dominant species:

canopy: *Juniperus procera*, *Olea europaea* ssp *cuspidata*, *Pittosporum viridiflorum*

shrub/ground: *Carissa edulis*, *Euclea schimperiana*, *Rhus vulgare*

No of woody species: 37

No of species with less than 5 individuals: 2

Threats: invasive species, grazing

Photograph: Rama Ras Alula Teklehayimanot church woodland is situated on a small round hill. No native woodland or forest remains in the vicinity, although much secondary scrub is found on steeper slopes.

Situated on a small hill close to the crest of a North-South mountain ridge Rama Ras Alula Teklehayimanot is the last remaining woodland on this side of the range. This circular hill has a church on its crest and woodland all around. Both the structure and species composition varies as one goes around the hill. All the trees are rather small both in terms of height (< 10 m) and diameter (< 40 cm DBH). The shrub layer is commonly absent and the ground vegetation generally poor.

On the uphill side of the hill an areas of land has been preserved for the graveyard and part of it has already been used. It is customary to plant trees on graves, generally *Euphorbia tiraculli*, and as a result of this the woodland has already expanded by over 200m² over the past one to two decades. Although this new stand is pretty monotypic regeneration of other native species may eventually take place.

The surrounding countryside is either heavily cultivated, extensive pasture or abandoned agricultural land. The latter slowly reverts to scrub. On steeper slopes where trees were removed long ago, secondary shrubby vegetation prevails. Eucalypts do occur but do not dominate the landscape, thus they provide some timber to the local population.

History

This church was certainly established before the widespread removal of all trees in the surrounding countryside, but no precise date is available. The church caters for the local farming community.

Conservation status

Simply by its presence in this wholly deforested region this woodland is of importance. Considering its size and isolation it harbours a relatively high number of species.



A small amount of woodland expansion has occurred in recent times. Most new graves are planted with at least one tree, usually *Euphorbia tiraculli* but also *E. candelabrum* (centre). On the left photograph there is a traditional grave (left) next to a western type of grave. Note that eucalypts are also planted around the graves.

Opuntia ficus-indica is spreading into the more open parts of the woodland and is regularly controlled by the church community

Threats

The exotic *Opuntia ficus-indica* is spreading slowly to form a dense undergrowth in the more open parts of the woodland. Grazing by livestock occurs but its significance is unknown.

Management

The community does not like the presence of *Opuntia ficus-indica* in the churchyard, although find it an important resource on their farms, and has tried to remove it with little success. They would benefit from expert advice and support to successfully succeed in this task. If resources were available they would like to finish a fence around the woodland to prevent livestock from entering.