Veneration and elation as proceeds of pilgrimage: A practice in exemplar orthodox churches of Addis Ababa

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Abstract: Orthodox Churches in Addis Ababa have long history, which have been established for providing spiritual and secular services. Pertaining to religion, churches have provided spiritual services in the form of teaching in religious schools, video-visional preaching, publications, printed leaflets, and pilgrimages. People have traveled from place to place within or out of their country for spiritual conception which is expressed as pilgrimage. Orthodox churches in Addis Ababa, therefore encouraged pilgrimage in the sense of seeing different shrines of Christianity as a good way of devotion and penance for spiritual life, for economic and ideological benefits. This study is attempted to express the main concepts how and when the pilgrimage was started in the case of these four churches of Addis Ababa, to argue on the notable sites for religious tour and the manner how these places have been visited by the pilgrims, and to show significances of such religious journeys. For intelligible qualitative analysis method, the researcher collected the data from available archival materials, books, articles, and informants who are active participants of the pilgrimage.

Subjects: Contemporary History 1945-; Political History; Environmental History; African History; Church History; Religious History

Keywords: Church; religion; covenant; pilgrimage

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Intellectuals have made valuable enquiries on pilgrimage discourses of religion. Their works, however, failed to see details about practice of this aspect in Ethiopia. This gap is a motivation to do this research focusing on selected Orthodox Christianity Churches of Addis Ababa. The essay examines the development, processes, and significance of pilgrimage in these Churches of Addis Ababa. It will hopefully make a significant contribution to knowledge of Religious pilgrimage practices in Addis Ababa in particular and Ethiopia in general. It will also serve as a reference for those who intend to engage in further study of this religious theme. The enquiry is conducted through systematic collection of archival and other data from the National Archive and Library Agency and Institute of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa. Devising questions on every concept of the research and collecting oral information from erudite persons through interview is another vital component of the study method. These collected data will be carefully checked and analyzed.
1. Introduction: Historical background of the churches

The historical foundations of the early Orthodox churches in Addis Ababa date back to the reign of emperor Menelik II and Haile Selassie I (Debra Sahil Kidus Mika‘el Church, 1991, pp. 9–14; St. Mary Church, 1995, pp. 10–16; Worku, 1992, p. 18; Ya MenberaTsabawotKidistSilassie Cathedral Beta MezekirHintsoMirekatLiJuEtim, 1999, pp. 5–13). Yeka Mika‘el Church, the earliest of all, holds a 1660-year-old tabot replica of the Ark of the Covenant. For the sake of justification of the church’s historical development, scholars discussed the arrival of the tabot of St. Mika‘el in the Shewa (or Shoa) region by analyzing the sources such as the Gadla Abraha Wo’atsibaha and historical documents related to Yeka Mika‘el Church, including Yatarik Mastawosha. According to the sources, the age of the tabot of Yeka Mika‘el seems to have been concurrent with the official establishment of Ethiopian Orthodox Church. It was during the period of Axumit kings, Abraha and Atsibaha that the tabot was brought from Axum to Shewa in about 320 CE by the ruler of southern Ethiopia—Atsibaha. The published journal of the Yeka Mika‘el Church expresses that the Covenant was brought and put in the rock hewn cave in a mountainous district of A’erer of Shewa located at 3 km from Addis Ababa. As the cave began to degenerate, emperor Menelik built a structure or “Meqagno” from the wood near the cave and transferred the tabot to the new place in 1878. A few years later, considering its distance from Addis Ababa and convolution for worship, Menelik built a wooden church and brought the tabot to the new building in the present location of Yeka Mika‘el in 17 February 1897. In 1919, After Minelik II, Empress Zewditu rebuilt this church in its present architectural design. During the monarchial period, the emperor ranked the churches of Addis Ababa. YekaMika‘el was placed in the first-order class Churches of Addis Ababa on 12 January 1938 (Debra Sahil Kidus Mika‘el Church, 1991, pp. 9–14).

The Menbere Patriarch Kidist Kidusan Mariam Church (a.k.a. the Entoto Maryam Church) was established in 1922 just on the north side of Addis Ababa. There seems to have been no church of St. Mary in the city before the establishment of this Church. When the population of the Christian community increased, many Christians began to travel to the venerated St. Mary Church of Menagesha to the west of the city and on the 21st of each month. The churches of Sts. Meqaris and Entonis, which were established by the Holy Abuna (or Bishop) Matewos of Egypt in the compound of the Teqlay Bete kihe net, also served as holy places for Ethiopian Christians. These sites have proven important for remembering Egyptians’ contributions. It is important to remember that the renowned Egyptian Holiness Abuna Qerlos brought St. Mary’s tabot from Jerusalem in about 1918. The covenant was preserved in St. Markos Church until the building of the church was completed by the order of Abuna Qirlos. The first foundation was laid in 21 January 1922, and the building was completed in 1928. The architectural design that came into function was from the Egyptian priest, Buhatros Dawd. The church was the first designed with a modern structural form (St. Mary Church, 1995, pp. 10–16).

Emperor Menelik II established in Addis Ababa the Holy Trinity Cathedral Church (Mekane Selassie). The foundation for the construction of this Church was started two years after Menelik’s ascendency to the throne. Under the patronage of the emperor, construction began in April 1891, and with amazing speed the construction was completed in May of the same year. With great celebration, the tabot entered on May 15. The first name of the church was Debre Tsige Selassie. Two years later, the emperor brought from Addis Alem and its own Maryam Church an additional tabot inscribed with the name Mekane Selassie; it was originally brought from the Wollo province. Church documents do not explain how it was transferred to the Finote Silassie district of Addis Alem, west of Addis Ababa, in the Menagesha awraja, after being buried for many years to protect it from destruction during the war of Ahmad Gragn of 1529–43. The Holy Trinity Cathedral Church itself was repeatedly rebuilt according to foreign architectural designs. The present emblazoned building was built between 1932 and 1939 during the rise of Emperor Haile Selassie I. Within the church, there are religious and traditional artifacts that serve tourist attractions (Holy Trinity Cathedral Church, 2007, pp. 5–13, 2008 G.C).
During the onset of Ethiopia’s struggle with Italy in 1895–96, emperor Menelik vowed to God before he marched to the war front against Italy that upon his victory he would build an additional house of worship within the compound of the existing Kidane Mihret Church. During the period of the emperor’s great palace construction program, the Kidane Mihret Church was reconstructed in a new architectural style by Indian engineers. The former chapel was renamed as Elfign Gabre’el. It was by decision of the king that in 1907 the new building was again restructured, and the tabot - Gabre’el was relocated to the newly refigured church in 1917, when it was renamed Gibi Gabre’il (Worku, 1992).

This paper discusses the development, processes, and significance of pilgrimage in the Menbere Patriarch St. Mary, the Holy Trinity Cathedral, Menbere Mengist St. Gebre’el, and Yaka Mika’el churches of Addis Ababa. It focuses on the points how and when the pilgrimage was started in the case of these four Churches. It also describes the manner in which pilgrims have visited these Churches.

2. The Ethiopian pilgrimage practice and its development

The practice of making journeys for secular and spiritual purposes has an ancient history in Ethiopia. Scholars define pilgrimage as “religious journey,” (Lynne, 2002, pp. 26–41; Melaku, 1980, pp. 10–28 E.C; Tadesse, 2005, pp. 1–4 E.C) and Christians have venerated holy places for the “accomplishment of vows, ease of imposed penance,” as well as visiting locations associated with “saints and precious relics” (Aymro & Joachim, 1970; Clifton, n.d., p. 74; Melaku, 1980, pp. 10–28; Tadesse, 2005, pp. 1–4). The focus of this section of the paper describes the development of pilgrimage in four prominent churches of Addis Ababa: St. Mary, Holy Trinity Cathedral, Gibi Gabre’el, and Yeka Mika’el.

Written and oral sources indicate that though there are several differences in the way pilgrimage activities are practiced, these four Orthodox churches experienced a more or less similar process of development through pilgrimage. At the church of St. Mary, there are two types of pilgrimage: (1) the church’s Sunday school journey and (2) pilgrimage by dedicated Christians of the church community. The journey by the Sunday school has a long history. Before 1994, under the name of Menfesawi Mahber and later under the rubric of Sunday school, Christians were organized under authorization of the church to receive spiritual educations. The chairman and secretary of Felege Hiwyot Kidist Maryam Sunday school arranged for school members and sometimes of few non-member Christians to make short distance pilgrimages for two objectives. One objective of the journey is educational, which was started in 1989 and began to play a pivotal role for strengthening of religious journeys. This educational trip has been done after students complete their yearly religious courses at about the end of June every year. About 300 to 500 students have participated. This tour is financed through student contributions of about 30 birr per individual annually. In the case, however, of some needy students the expenditure is covered by the students collectively. The pilgrimage takes place once per year and only includes churches and monasteries around Addis Ababa: Entoto Maryam, Gara Medahne-Alem, Dagmawi Goligota, Sara Mika’el, Kora Maryam, Etisa Takla-Haymanot. Besides education, the other objective of the journey of the Sunday school is to take part in spiritual celebrations at these holy places. Students also volunteer their labor to support the church generally and the religious observances at these ritual sites in particular.

The second category of religious journey sponsored by the St. Mary church is a tour open to the wider Christian community guided by a formally organized committee. This tradition of the church has a long history, too. For 50 years, religious fathers and elders established a religious-based association called Mahiber Gishen and made difficult journeys to Gishen Debre-Kerbe on foot. The pilgrimage was, however, later reformed in order to be conducted in a modern, less arduous manner. To lead the program, a five-member committee was organized from the community, the priests, the deacons, the evangelical department, and the Sunday school by the command of the Teqilay Bete kihnet office. The task of the committee is not only to manage the pilgrimage process but also to realize the evangelization mission proper to each pilgrimage site. The committee, however, became inefficient and was unable to achieve its responsibilities of pilgrimage.
In the Holy Trinity Cathedral Church, as in other churches in Addis Ababa, the journey to various religious places has a long history. Individuals have made spiritual journeys within the Ethiopia as well as to the Holy Land, Jerusalem since ancient and medieval times. In 1999, the church initiated the modernization of the pilgrimage committee and placed it under the supervision of church’s parish council. More organized and active work was not, however, undertaken by the committee until 2005. In 2005, Megabi Haddis Gebre Maryam was appointed as head of the church’s evangelical and mission department, and a new pilgrimage committee was organized under his office. The committee tried to strength the pilgrimage program; however, it remained in a crippled state until the end of 2009. Consequently, the authority of organizing and leading the program was officially transferred to the church’s Sunday school at the beginning of 2010. Because of a vigorous commitment to becoming more accountable for liturgical tasks, the school set up a five-member committee responsible to evangelical and mission department of the church. Through better coordination and advertising, the number of pilgrims who involved in the trip increased. The documentation and filing system for the overall activities concerning the pilgrimage in particular, as well as the school in general, have been crucial in supporting the committee’s activity.

The basic concerns in connection with religious journeys in Yeka Mika’el are not different from other churches as far as this paper is concerned. Ato (Mr.) Yirga informed me that because of their devotion, local Christians make regular journeys individually or in groups to different sacred places. In 2001, however, the Teqilay Bete kihnet office dispatched a general rule to all orthodox churches of Addis Ababa. The letter had a general rule instructing all churches to make pilgrimages in accordance with the universal canons of Ethiopian Orthodox Tawahedo Church. Recognizing this decree as a guideline, the Yeka Mika’el church started organized and well-guided journeys under the auspices of office of parish council. The council office designed the committee which organizes all the pilgrimage activities. The committee has a duty to perform the tasks from initial advertisement to the journey’s concluding events. At the end of the tour, the committee files a report with the church’s administrative office summarizing the pilgrimage and including comments and suggestions from the pilgrims about the strengths and weaknesses of the journey. (It has proven difficult, however, to obtain documents related to the committee’s activities and its formal communications with the church’s administration office.)

Despite the similarities among the history and organization of pilgrimage practices of the four churches, Gibi Gabre’el exhibits some remarkable differences. Documents and oral reports indicate that extraordinarily strong efforts have been made in planning its journeys. Like other churches mentioned above, Gibi Gabre’el sponsors both Sunday school student journeys and the pilgrimages open to the larger Christian community. Both types of journeys are soundly administered by the school, which has had a well-organized pilgrimage committee since 1999, directly responsible to administrative council of the Sunday school. Before the first organized journey to Gishen Maryam in 1999, there were pilgrimages to different sacred sites individually in every year. I think this church has an accredited practice of pilgrimage. Sources indicate that every activity is has a formal set of procedures that came into practice through discussion of the committee. In particular, the program is run according to approved annual and action plans. The annual plan, including the financial and material budgets, is based on income and expenditure balances. Holy sites to be visited in one year are planned based on their distance and the amount of proposed money. Site visits are categorized as short, medium, and long-distance journeys and indexed to the four quarters of each year, whereas the action plan includes mission, goals, and objectives of the journeys which are supposed to be done in the year. The overall achievements and failures of the journey are also reported by the committee at the end of the journey. The Sunday school students’ journey is not different from other churches’ practice. The pilgrimage experiences of Gibi Gabre’el church over all, therefore, it seems are better organized than those of the other churches.

3. Formal procedures of the pilgrimage
Pilgrimage is not an arbitrary action. Rather it is an ongoing, diachronic process of time-place-based phenomena. In this respect, the church advocates canonical principles to guide the process of
pilgrimage. The initial course of action for the journey deals with the practical activity of preparation for the pilgrimage. Preparation must be made by the pilgrims, the church as organizer and guide for the program, and the holy places to be visited themselves (Melaku, 1980, pp. 10–28; Tadesse, 2005, pp. 1–31). According to Fitsum Tadesse, making an organized plan for the site visit is key to the pre-journey preparations of the church and the pilgrimage committee. He also added that identifying pilgrims’ personalities and orienting registrants for pilgrimage are also important elements of preparation (Tadesse, 2005, pp. 1–31). Preparation processes are more or less similar in the four churches. Members of the preparation committees of the four churches told me that they perform the tasks of arranging the bus, the reception places, preachers, mezemran (singers), coordinators, pamphlets about the distance of the journey, history of the sites, advertising for pilgrimage programs, and registering applicants.16

Pilgrimage is one way of disseminating the Gospel in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church; and according to the basic rules of the church, every spiritual activity including pilgrimage must be done in accordance with the theological dogmas of the church (Melaku, 1980, pp. 10–28; Tadesse, 2005, pp. 1–31). To begin the journey, the pilgrims must pray under the guidance of religious fathers and priests for God to grant peace and a journey free of hazards. This step is uniform among the four churches.17 Orthodox Christians have believed that through “[Praying], Fasting and Beseeching God, righteous people received what they needed and wished” (Ezra. 8:21, Ne. 9:1–3, Est. 4:16–17, Acts. 10:30, 14:23) (Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church, 2004, pp. 72–73, 1996 E.C).

Upon concluding the opening prayer, the journey begins. From the beginning of the movement toward the sacred places, the pilgrims chant spiritual songs, discuss problems of the church such as the destruction of relics, historical objects, and manuscripts, the proper kind preaching, and other aspects of spiritual practice. These discussions are engaged by the pilgrims of the four churches when they are on the way to the holy places. From the St. Maryam church, however, Kassahun confirmed for me that sometimes pamphlets bearing the geographical location and distance of orthodox church shrines are prepared and dispatched to the pilgrims.18 Furthermore, others interviewed report similar practices during long journeys taking more than one day, especially concerning churches located along the path of pilgrimage that are good places to rest or spend the night.19

In the Orthodox Tawahedo Church, religious journeys basically aim at two objectives: spiritual benefit and education about the historical and cultural heritage of the country. Therefore, when visiting pilgrimage sites, the Christian community attends the liturgical rituals of these holy places. Similarly, the pilgrims pray “[to] God for forgiveness” of their sins. Pilgrims believe that these Christian shrines are places where God will “often grant [His goodwill] in the form of Graces, Miracles and worldly blessing.” Thus, some pilgrims give money and religious gifts for fulfillment of their vow.20

Pilgrimages also include baptisms for children who are believed to be blessed by God because of a vow made by participating women.21 A member of Yeka Mika’el–YirgaTibebu–informed me that there are pilgrims who receive Holy Communion during ecclesial rituals at these holy places. Pilgrims from Yeka Mika’el contributed money, slaughtered a sheep, and entertained a pilgrim who had taken Holy Communion.22 Those I interviewed made it clear that every pilgrim prepares his or her own provision. That is to say, pilgrims are self-sponsored. There are, however, some occasions where pilgrims feed in common during short and medium journeys.23 The Yeka Mika’el pilgrimage committee has an additional procedure for rest along the journey and at visited places. The committee carries tents in which pilgrims can camp at the church gate.24 In other churches, there is no similar practice.

At the end of these religious tours, the pilgrims’ final destination is the site where the journey started. At that church, pilgrims pray for God to provide peace and safety on the remainder of their trip back home.25 At the conclusion of the journey, the organizing committee files a report about the pilgrimage. The committee of St. Maryam church, however, is not well structured; and sometimes its report is presented either orally, while sometimes it files no report at all. Typically, some kind opportunity is provided for pilgrims to communicate to the committee what they felt and observed
during their journey. In the Holy Trinity and Yeka Mika’el churches, reports are offered to the church administration office irregularly. Unlike others, Gibi Gebre’el church enters substantial reports to the office of the Sunday school’s general council. Issues in the report include the overall circumstances and processes of the journey, the financial incomes and expenditures, and also the weak and strong sides of the program.

4. Sites for the pilgrimage undertakings

One of the commonly accepted beliefs in Ethiopia is that extraordinary and supernatural sites exist. Because of the miracles said to have occurred there, these places are centers of attraction for both spiritual and secular life (Aymro & Joachim, 1970; Melaku, 1980, pp. 10–28; Tadesse, 2005, pp. 1–31). The main objective of this section of the paper is to discuss a number of these, in particular those where Christians from the four churches under examination have made pilgrimages. What are these notable holy places? Are all of them regularly visited? What are the characteristic practices of the journeys? Discussion of these basic points will be based on accounts of the sites’ geographical, historical, and spiritual features.

As described above, important holy places are different with regard to the time of their foundation, their geographical location, their direction, and distance. Geographically, the important churches, monasteries, and historical places in the north of Ethiopia are: Aksum Tsiyon, Debre-Damo, Aba Pentelion, Gishen Debre-Kerb, Haig Iyesus, Lalibela, and the monasteries in Eastern Tigray. In the north-western parts of Ethiopia, churches and monasteries visited by Christians of the four churches include: Debra-Birhan Selassie (Gondar), Tana Monasteries, St. Georg (Bahirdar), Dima Giyorgis, Debre-Worq, Debre-Libanos, and Abuna Habta Maryam. In the Southern part of Ethiopia, important Orthodox Christian shrines include: Birbra Maryam and Mihur Iyyassus. In the East: Ziquala, Adadi-Maryam (a.k.a. Anfar Debre-Maryam), Sama Senbet, ShenkoraYohannis, Debre-Asebot, and Qulbi Gabre’el. In North Shewa: Debre-Birhan Selassie, Abuna Marqos, Tsadqane Maryam, and Mitaq Amanuel are prominent churches and monasteries (Aymro & Joachim, 1970; Ethiopian Orthodox Church, 1997, pp. 25–27; Melaku, 1980, pp. 10–28; Sene, 1989 E.C).

Christians who attend the four churches—St. Mary, Holy Trinity Cathedral, Gibi Gabre’el, and Yeka Mika’el—have made pilgrimages to these places. The information collected from interviews and archival materials shows the existence of similarities in the date of pilgrimages, except to places such as Qulbi Gabri’el, which have celebrations twice a year. This is because the canons of Ethiopian Orthodox Church decided that the celebrations of these churches and monasteries should be on specific dates and months each year. A member of St. Mary church confirmed for me that the church has planned the pilgrimage and identified the religious sites to be visited since the Qale-Awadi—a general guiding rule of the church—instructs the church administration to plan, organize, and guide activities that will strengthen and expand its religious teachings (Ethiopian Orthodox Church, 1998, pp. 1–35, 1990 E.C).

Sources dealing with pilgrimage activities in each church indicate that there are differences among their practices of visiting the holy sites. For example, the church of Yeka Mika’el has visited Debre - Birhan Silassie, Sara Amba Kidane-Mihret, Dessie Medahne-Alem, Mekele Kidus Mika’el, Wqro Kidus Qirqos, Abraha-Woatssibaha, Debre-Damo, Mahibere-Degol (Mahibere-Tsadqan), and the palace of Queen Sheba when they traveled to Axum Tsiyon. Shire Enda Selassie, Castl of Fasiladas, Gondar Debre-Birhan Selassie, Tana Monasatries, Kidus Giyorgis (Bahir Dar), Debre-Libanos are also visited when the pilgrims returned back from their journeys. In the remaining three churches, pilgrimage sites are categorized according to their distance—short, medium, and long—and pilgrimages are conducted according to the schedule of the pilgrimage committee. In St. Mary church, however, the religious tour is not programmed.

Organized journeys to the holy places are carried out comprising all sections of the Christian community regardless of age and sex. The number of pilgrims is different from one place to another due to financial and time constraints. When journeys take many days, the pilgrims could not get
permission from their employees to be away from work. Some pilgrims also could not cover the expense for such long trips. For example, the pilgrimage to Axum Tsiyon takes between 7 and 12 days, and therefore only a maximum of 60 pilgrims have made the journey. According to my sources, the main reason for the popularity and over stuffed transport to some holy places is the miraculous nature of the shrines. The journeys to Lalibela, Gishen Maryam, Qulbi Gebre’el, and Tsadqane Maryam are overcrowded. To Gishen Maryam about five busses, each of which can load 60 pilgrims, travel every year from each church. Sometimes the number increases to seven busses. The other reason for the increased number of pilgrims to certain places is related to celebration dates. If a ceremony is on Saturday and Sunday and if the distance to the holy place requires no more than two days, many pilgrims join the program.32

5. Socioeconomic and spiritual significances of the pilgrimage
Pilgrimage to various spiritual and historical sites has substantial spiritual, socioeconomic, and ideological significance to the Christians of the four churches, as well as to the country at large. As discussed above, the multidirectional importance of pilgrimage is negatively or positively influenced by circumstances prevailing in the church that organizes the journey as well as to the holy place which is identified as the point of ecclesiastical visit. These factors create disparity of involvement for Christians on the journey. The availability of infrastructures and the logistical demands related to these shrines has a negative impact on the journeys. The popularity of the holy place, the date of celebration, and the distance of the place also determine the number of pilgrims.33 Regardless of these, Christians from St. Mary church, Holy Trinity Cathedral, Menbere Mengist Kidus Gebre’el, and Yeka Mika’el churches have been actively involved in several journeys, though the number of pilgrims varies from one church to another. For instance, up to 700 Christians of St. Mary church visit Gishen on the celebration date of every year. The number of Christians in the four churches who visit Qulbi Gebri’el and Tsadkane Maryam ranges from 120 to 180 in every year. Pilgrimage to Axum Tsiyon and other remote places involves no more than 60 pilgrims per trip, a figure that is similar in each of the four churches.34 Considering these details, I think that pilgrimage has different impacts on the churches who organize the trips, on the historical places, on the local community, on the holy places, and on and the country as a whole.

Though, they are mainly aimed at evangelization, churches also work to generate income from this program. The information obtained from financial managers of the three churches and from other oral reports reveals that the pilgrimage committees have planned to collect 20 birr from individuals in each trip. For instance, in 2010 the Holy Trinity Cathedral Church earned a net profit of 1736, 943, and 234 birr from trips to Axum Tsiyon, Gishen Maryam, and Ziquala, respectively. From journeys to Debre-Libanos and Gishen Maryam, Yeka Mika’el church also collected a profit of 225 and 590 birr, respectively, in 2003. Though the net income might not be as proposed, the Qidus Gebre’el church pilgrimage committee planned to collect 16200 and 23630 birr from the pilgrims for the journeys of the 2007 and 2010 fiscal years, respectively. The committee calculated a profit would be earned from these amounts.35 But in St. Mary church, there is no clear information about such a plan to generate income in this way. The head of the church’s evangelical department, however, stated that some extra money would be saved for the next trip. The source, however, did not allow me to look at the documents, and he was unwilling to give clear information about this issue.36 In the Holy Trinity and Yeka Mika’el churches, the profit generated from these religious tour serves for its alms giving program to needy churches and monasteries either in the form of money or in kind, such as incense, candles, and other materials used for religious services.37 In Gibi Gebre’el church, this income is not used by the church but for the church’s Sunday school, which runs various programs based on the regulations of the church. According to sources, the church’s Sunday school has an official program of teaching the needy children of the nearby community. Income it seems, then, is invested for programs of this sort as well as to run the activities of the school. Above all, the pilgrimage committee is effective in practicing alms giving. Because of the ecumenical support channeled through the school, churches such as Senbete Mika’el (North Shewa), Woybela Maryam (west Harargie), and Tefki Golie St. Mary churches are sustained in their normal services by the financial and material support from pilgrims during their journeys.38
The economic importance of pilgrimage to the holy places themselves is also substantial. Most popular churches like Gishen Maryam, Lalibela, Qulbi Gebri’el, and Tsadqane Maryam receive money and material gifts from organized pilgrims. Pilgrimage also generates income and creates job opportunities for the local community because the community becomes involved in logistics, transportation, hospitality, and reception. The pilgrims pay some amount of money to visit cultural and historical sites, too. In this way, pilgrimage has become an important way of generating local and national incomes.40

Of course, in addition to financial and religious issues, pilgrimage brings together a mosaic of diverse social discourses. Pilgrimages comprise pilgrims from different economic status, age, culture, language, and personal attributes. During the journey, the different values generated by these differences peacefully interact, and the pilgrims develop a culture of understanding, unity, and interplay, all valuable assets to Christianity. In fact, the formation of this diverse and integrated culture could be considered a central goal of pilgrimage.41

6. Conclusion

Religious pilgrimage to different holy places either individually or in groups has a long history in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, organized and modern-style pilgrimage is a recent phenomenon. Organized pilgrimage in the four churches in Addis Ababa began in the last years of the 1980sand the early years of the 1990s. The journeys are classified as short, medium, and long-distance site tours. In order to ensure the peaceful and coordinated execution of the program, the guiding bodies and the pilgrims themselves obey principles of pilgrimage based on canons of Orthodox Church. The size of the Christian populations that visits these holy places varies from place to place, because of distance, date of celebration, and supposedly miraculous nature of the place visited. Pilgrimage has significant spiritual, socioeconomic, and cultural importance to the pilgrims, the churches, the monasteries, the communities, and the nation as a whole.

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Notes
1. Kidus Gabre’il Amda Haymanot Sunday School report Letters, date 17/07/94, September 1994, 03/06/95, 01/01/98, July 2001 E.C, Annual and Action plan for 2000, 2001, 2002 fiscal years. Minutes: Minute 1, No. 001/91 – 001/02, Minute 2, No. 002/02.
2. Informants: Kasahun Endale, Samuel Wonde, Dawit Belete, Yirga Tibebu, Interviewed on May 06, April 22, May 09 and 06/2002 E.C.
3. Kidus Gabre’il Amda Haymanot Sunday School report Letters, Date 26/03/96, 01/03/98, July 2001 E.C.
4. Informants: Kasahun Endale, Samuel Wonde, Dawit Belete, Yirga Tibebu, Interviewed on May 06, April 22, May 09 and 06/2002 E.C.
5. Kidus Gabre’il Amda Haymanot Sunday School report Letters, Date 17/07/94, September 1994, 03/06/95, 26/03/96, 01/03/98, July 2001 E.C.
6. Informants: Negash Tekla Tsadiq, Haddis Gebre Maryam, Interviewed on May 2 and April 23/2002 E.C.
7. Informants: Haddis Gebre Maryam, Samuel Wonde, Admasu Niguse, Interviewed on April 23, 22, 22/2002 E.C respectively.
8. Informants: Haddis Gebre Maryam, Samuel Wonde, Admasu Niguse, Interviewed on April 23, 22, 22/2002 E.C respectively.
9. Informants: Yirga Tibebu, and Tesfaye Berhie, Interviewed on May 06/2002 E.C.
10. Kidus Gabre’il Amda Haymanot Sunday School report Letters, date 17/07/94, September 1994, 03/06/95, 01/01/98, July 2001 E.C, Annual and Action plan for 2000, 2001, 2002 fiscal years. Minutes: Minute 1, No. 001/91 – 001/02, Minute 2, No. 002/02.
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