

# Tourism Potential and Its Development Challenges: In the Case of Womberma Woreda

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## Abstract

The study entitled to the tourism potential and its development challenges: in the case of Womberma Woreda. The main objective of this study is to assess the tourism potential and its development challenges in womberma woreda. This research have two specific objectives, the first specific objectives is to assess the potential of tourism development in the womberma woreda. Second, identify the challenges of tourism development in the study area. Descriptive research design was applied to this study with qualitative research approaches so as to describe the existing situations. To collected data through, in-depth interview, field observation, document analysis and other means of sources, which were helpful during the collection of the necessary information. The main findings of the study show that Womberma Woreda has great natural and cultural potential for tourism resources. The natural potentials include plants, caves, landscapes, forests and wildlife. There are also various cultural resources such as artifacts, churches, ruins of the ancient Shinasha tribe, sacred (holy) water, songs, various traditional festivals, ceremonies, etc. Although Woreda has these potential tourism resources and diverse values, they have not yet been developed and utilized, mainly due to various factors such as lack of infrastructure, lack of awareness of tourism potential, lack of promotion and marketing, lack of local government attention, limited budget, lack of skilled and professional manpower, lack of cooperation among stakeholders and lack of quality services and facilities in the destination. In order to solve these problems active involvement of tourism stakeholders play a vital role. Plans, policies, and strategies that are go in line with tourism development , strong promotional campaigns about tourism potential through marketing mix elements, creating new and strengthening the existing participatory discussion stages, work in collaboration, conducting researches, bringing attitudinal changes can have a significant role regarding with minimizing the challenges and for efficient use of the potentials of tourism resources.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Resources, Development, Challenges, Womberma Woreda, West Gojjam zone,

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The travel and tourism industry has been a key factor in job creation and a vibrant source of employment opportunities during the past ten years. The industry generated 1 in 4 of all net new jobs globally between 2014 and 2019 and provided 334 million employees, or 10.6% of all occupations, in 2019 (WTTC, 2021). Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries and quals or even surpasses that of oil exports, food products or automobiles (UNWTO, 2019).

The world largest industry, tourism, has played a significant role in economic development programs in underdeveloped nations for more than a year. Developing countries have been encouraged to promote tourism as an engine for macroeconomic growth because of the industry's ability to provide foreign exchange earnings, draw foreign investment, improve tax revenues, and create new jobs (Torres & Momsen, 2004).

Tourism has a lot of potential as a tool for development, including the opportunities it provides for women and young people, its significance for developing countries, rural areas, and indigenous communities, its ability to incentivize the conservation of natural resources and cultural assets, and its ability to promote interaction and understanding (UNWTO, 2018).

Tourism is increasingly becoming an integral part of the economic development of countries and indigenous peoples around the world by attracting people to visit, live, work and invests in their destinations. Furthermore, tourism plays an important role in improving economies, creating social inclusion, utilizing resources and protecting the environment, preserving heritage, cultural values, and diversity, and creating security, common empathy, and peace (UNWTO & UNDP, 2017).

According to UNWTO (2018), Development is a complicated topic with many different interpretations. It has been increasingly acknowledged as a multidimensional – rather than just economic – phenomenon since the late 1960s.

The proceeding development of tourism within the past century clearly shows the most prominent contribution of the sector in its economic, environmental, social, and cultural dimensions. Universally, as an export category, tourism positions fourth after fuels, chemicals, and automotive products. The contribution of tourism to economic activity around the world is estimated at 5%. Its contribution to employment tends to be relatively higher and is estimated within the arrangement of 6-7% of the, mostly, number of jobs around the

world (UNWTO, 2010).

Tourism development as stated needs to be embraced by policymakers by Brouder(2013) due to its ability to act as a catalyst for the development of local social capital. In addition to this, tourism development needs to go 'hand in glove' with the development of other economic sectors, so that some of the larger-scale infrastructural investments draw on a wide range of uses for their justification. (Brouder, 2013).

International tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) dropped by 85% in January-May 2021 compared to the same period of pre-pandemic year 2019, or 65% over 2020, due to the continuing high travel restrictions caused by the coronavirus pandemic. This follows an unprecedented drop of 73% in 2020, the worst year on record for international tourism (WTO, 2021).

As a development tool, tourism has a lot of potentials, including the opportunities it provides for women and youth, its importance for developing countries, rural areas, and indigenous communities, its ability to incentivize the conservation of natural resources and cultural assets, and its ability to foster interaction and understanding (UNWTO, 2018).

According to Sebile (2017), cited from Yabibal (2010), Ethiopia has enormous tourist attractions such as natural, cultural, and historical, and governments are being forced to take on a more entrepreneurial role in attracting not only tourists but also an investment to their region as tourism becomes more competitive. In Ethiopia, for example, when tourism evolved, the government developed infrastructure such as roads, new airport destinations, automobiles, and hotels (private and state), among other things.

The Amhara region is blessed with a rich natural environment and many cultural attractions. The region has more tourist attractions within its borders. According to Endalcachew et al. (2018), tradition and events are important parts of the culture in the Amhara Region, and the connection of tourism can lead to improved tourism development and destination promotion not only in the tourist market but also within the area of worldwide cultural identity. In any case, the remaining challenge is to define and implement a comprehensive tourism development policy successfully, which particularly connects the tourism benefits to the local community. Then, it is clear that for tourism to become an effective poverty alleviation tool, there should be a worldview shift within the policies, plans, and practices that are utilized to ensure the poor profit from the tourism development process (Jamieson et al., 2004).

The Amhara region has tremendous and untapped tourism potential having some World Heritage Sites. However, all these potentials are not developed due to different challenges including a lack of effective marketing strategies, lack of human resource and capacity, weak institutional and legislative frameworks, industry quality and standards issues, insufficient tourism and support infrastructure, and uncoordinated and fragmented tourism planning, and development both at the national and regional levels in (Enadalkachew et al, 2018). However, within the womberma Woreda, major tourist attraction resources and major challenges of tourism development have not been properly examined. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to identify the major tourism potential resources and challenges facing the tourism industry within the womberma Woreda, west Gojjam zone.

## 1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Ethiopia is a country with untapped tourism potential. The contribution of tourism to the overall development is, therefore, well recognized and is given significant attention in the Growth and Transformation Plan and it is one of the countries with great tourism potential, as it is located at the top of Africa. It has nine tangible world heritage sites, and four intangible heritage sites registered with UNESCO. Regarding tourism potential, the country can compete with other countries in the world, but from the perspective of using this potential for the benefit of the community and the country as a whole, it is not well developed. (MoCT, Federal democratic Republic of Ethiopia Sustainable tourism master plan 2015-2025, 2015) Tourism in Ethiopia is closely related to the travel of people, as Ethiopia is the birthplace of mankind. The development of tourism in Ethiopia has a strong connection to the surplus product or tourism potential, which is the primary factor that helped pave the way for ancient people to engage in tourism-like activities. (Ayalew, 2009).

Many research studies show that the tourism industry has great significance for the development of a country. In Ethiopia, Endalcachew.T et al. (2022) studied the potential, challenges, and economic contributions of tourism resources in the South Achefer district. The study shows that it has huge natural and cultural tourism resources with great potential to develop community-based ecotourism. Melaku (2019) studied the Opportunities and Challenges of Sustainable Pro-Poor Tourism Development in Awi Zone: A Case Study of Lake Zengena and Its Surrounding. The researcher tried to identify the challenges of local community participation toward sustainable tourism development. Meseret (2015) studied the Challenges and Opportunities of Community-based Tourism Development in the Awi Zone. Abuhay (2019) studied the Challenges and opportunities of the tourism industry in Amhara Regional State, focusing on world heritage sites, the researcher find out about the opportunism of the tourism sector and try to identify the challenges of the sector. in addition, in Community Participation in Tourism Development in Amhara Region: Evidence from Lalibela Town studied by Dagnachew

Girma (2013), the finding revealed that local community participation has a great role in community-based tourism development, and then the researcher recommended that, government organizations should provide pieces of training, advice, and loans so that local communities can participate in tourism development.

Even though all the above studies addressed more or less challenges and opportunities in tourism development related to community participation in tourism development and community-based tourism development, they do not show the potential of tourism development. In this study, the researcher is motivated to investigate the potential and prospects of tourism development in the study area. Additionally, additionally, in the case of Womberma Woreda, there is no research has been conducted.

Therefore, this research was conducted to assess the tourism potential and its development challenges in womberma woreda, West Gojjam Zone, Amhara region.

### 1.3. THE OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

#### 1.3.1. GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The general objective of the study is to assess the tourism potential and its development challenges in womberma woreda

#### 1.3.2. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE

1. Assess the potential of tourism development in the womberma woreda.
2. Identify the challenges of tourism development in the study area.

#### 1.4. Research Questions

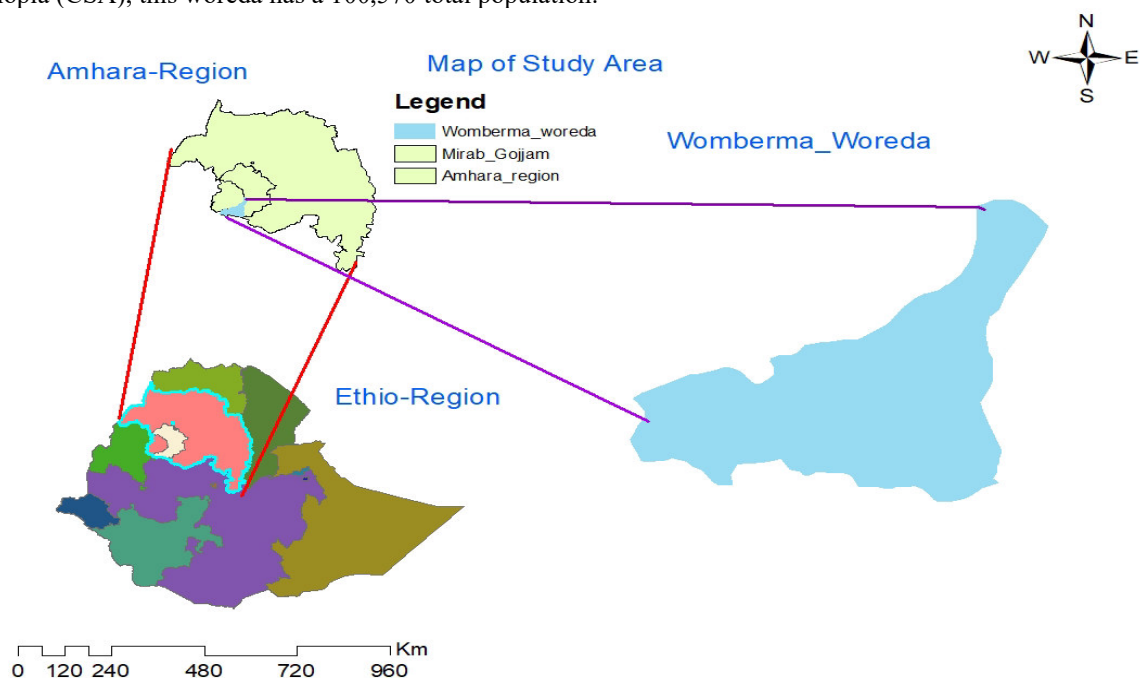
1. What are the potentials for tourism development in the womberma woreda?
2. What are the challenges of tourism development in the study area?

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the study area, research design, research approach, sampling technique, sample size, methods of data collection, data analysis and interpretation reliability and validity, and ethical considerations.

#### 3.1. STUDY AREA

Womberma is one of the woredas in the Amhara Region of Ethiopia. Its name comes from the historic district of Wemberma (also transliterated "Wombarma"), which lies north of the Abay River between its tributaries, the Zingini and Fatam. Part of West Gojjam Zone Wemberma is bordered on the south by the Abay River, which separates it from the Oromia Region and Benishangul-Gumuz Region, on the north by the Agew Awi Zone, and on the east by Bure, Gojjam. The administrative center of Wemberma is Shendi. Wemberma was part of the former Bure Wemberma woreda. Based on the 2007 national census conducted by the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia (CSA), this woreda has a 100,570 total population.



Map of womberma woreda

Source: Researcher own creation using ArcGIS (2023)

### **3.2. STUDY DESIGN**

The researcher used a descriptive research design to describe and interpret the potential and challenges of tourism development. The design is based on primary and secondary data that was collected in line with the objectives of the study. The reason behind the choice of the design is that descriptive design helps to describe or identify what is, and interpret the existing conditions, processes, documents, etc. This was done by using the design to describe and interpret the potential and challenges of tourism development. To ensure that the target population was selected purposively, the researcher used the inclusion and exclusion method of sample size determination.

### **3.3. RESEARCH APPROACH**

To collect, analyze and interpret the data obtained from the study area and to describe the objectives of the study, qualitative research methods will be used in this study. (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Qualitative research approaches share the common goal of gaining an understanding of a particular phenomenon from the perspective of those experiencing it. This involves determining which research approach can answer the researcher's specific questions (Creswell, 2012). So, the reason the researcher used a qualitative approach is that the nature of this research required more description and interpretation than generalization.

### **3.4. TARGET POPULATION**

The target population mainly focused on the following bodies: the culture and tourism office, Religious leaders, and the local community were the major targeted population of this study.

### **3.5. SOURCE OF DATA AND DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS**

The data collected was from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected using field observations and interviews, while secondary data was collected by document analysis (like by the review of journals, official records, government publications, reports, unpublished books, and internet searches).

### **3.6. RESEARCH SAMPLING TECHNIQUE AND SAMPLE SIZE**

The researcher used non-random sampling techniques. This means they chose people based on their belief that they would provide the best information for the study's objectives. In addition, the researcher decided on the sample size based on the level of data saturation, as long as the study's objectives are met.

### **3.7. METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS**

The study would be described, analyzed, and interpreted using qualitative methods. Essentially, the data collected from different sources are structured in a way that is easy to manage and understand thematically. The data is analyzed and interpreted to obtain recognized and detailed representations of the problems in the study area. Meanwhile, data are collected through qualitative variables subjected to phenomenon description, and in the case of qualitative data analysis, narrative, and text explanation will be used. This allows for qualitative data to be obtained through Semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis (reviews) analyzed in a narrative, textual explanation, and phenomenon description. Additionally, images were used to present the results of the study.

### **3.8. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF DATA**

To ensure the data is reliable, the researcher collected it from different interviewees and used different instruments to check its accuracy. Additionally, experts were consulted to make any necessary modifications. To make sure the data is as accurate as possible, the researcher used secondary sources to verify it.

### **3.9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

The researcher protects the confidentiality of communications with study participants. As Yeraswork (2019) has made clear, research needs to be regulated by ethical norms and values. Thus, when collecting data from study participants, the researcher is guided by binding ethical guidelines that the researcher informs the respondents about the purpose of the study and asks for their informed consent to participate in the study. The researcher would develop a relationship with respondents to encourage optimal responses during the time of data collection. In addition, participants are never required to give their names during the interview. The relationship between the researcher and respondents is based on mutual trust and they will not be abused. Any ethical concerns will be duly respected throughout the study process.

## **4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

This chapter discusses the data collected through interviews, field observation, and document analysis. The first part of the study focuses on the basic characteristics of the informants.

#### 4.1. Basic Characteristics Of Informants

Regarding this paper, the total number of key informants in this study is 14 from religious leaders and tourism experts.

Table 4.1. Basic information about the informants

No	Socio-Economic characteristics	Basic information	Number of participants	Percent (%)	Remark
1.	Gender of the informants	Male	8	57	
		Female	6	43	
		<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>	
2.	Age	Below 18 years	0	0	
		18-30 years	8	57	
		31-43 years	4	29	
		44-56 years	2	14	
		Above 56 years	0	0	
		<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>	
3	Education	Up to preparatory school	2	14	
		Diploma	4	29	
		Degree	7	50	
		Master (MA) & above	1	7	
		<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>	

Source: A filed survey (2023)

As shown in the above table, out of the total informants, 57 % (8) were males and 43% (6) were females. There was a slight difference in the number of male and female informants. This means most of the informants are males. The majority (57%) of the informant's ages ranged from 18 to 30 years old and 29% of the informant's ages ranged from 31 to 43 years old, 14 % of the respondent ranged from 44 up to 56 years old. No informants aged below 18 years old and above 56 years old. This means the informants were young and more expressive participants. All the questionnaire and interview informants are literate (100%). Out of the total informants, 50 % have a first degree, and 29 %, of informants, were diploma holders, in addition, 7% of informants were master holders, and 14% informants were Up to preparatory school levels because they are religious leaders. This means they know very well the potential tourism resources and its development challenges.

#### 4.2. TOURISM POTENTIAL IN WOMBERMA WOREDA

##### 4.2.1. NATURE-BASED TOURISM RESOURCES

According to scientists, nature is an important attraction component for the tourism sector and nature-based tourism (NBT) is perceived as one of the fastest-growing sectors within tourism worldwide. Natural resources are important elements of the tourism industry and key factors in the attractiveness of a travel destination. Valentine (1992) noted that nature-based tourism is characterized by close interactions between visitor experiences and natural resources, and therefore the production system directly or indirectly involves other users of natural resources, landowners, conservation organizations, etc. In addition, Moore and Dowling (2002 ) natural tourism areas, because tourism in natural environments takes into account the environment and protects the environment of the status of the natural environment, or for the reason that the tourist attraction/attitude is entirely based on the natural element of the place.

According to Mulugeta (2012), Ethiopia, an ancient civilization with a significant geographic location, has great-untapped potential for nature tourism that, with careful planning, can be developed so that the sector enhances and at the same time sustains the lives of local people and the country's economic output can and improve the attractions of the country. Womberma woreda has also nature-based tourism resources as shown in the below data presentations and analysis.

Almost all of the informants confirmed that there is a nature-based tourist attraction in womberma woerda. According to the researcher's observation, the key informants, and the secondary source, there are different tourism natural resources available in womberma woreda. These are the river landscape, different caves, waterfalls, and seasonal waterfalls. As the informants listed, from the natural tourism resources in womberma woreda.

One of the key informants who are a culture and tourism office expert epitomizes the majority's view:

*In womberma woreda, there are attractive landscapes and forests with many endemic and evergreen plants and animals found. There are also a waterfall and natural caves such as Yimolo cave, Ayinemisa cave, Timtimo cave, and waterfalls, which Ayinemisa waterfall, Tenazeh waterfall, and others are found (KI-1, Feb,*



20/2023 ), but the attractions have no little attention offered in developing the resources.

The researcher believed that Womberma woreda has many natural tourism potentials to attract tourists from different areas. Therefore, if they are well identified and promoted, it will be one of the major tourist destinations in the West Gojjam zone.

### **1. Ayinmisa Cave**

Ayinmisa Cave is one of the potential natural tourism resources of Womberma woreda. According to the Womberma woreda culture and tourism office, Ayinmisa Cave is located on a steep rock in conjunction with Ayinmisa Falls, and the cave is located approximately 21 km west of Shindi, at the western end of Yergan Kebele.

One of the key informant interviewees who is the local residence stated that:

*In this cave, it is not possible to enter easily through the cave road, as there are dangerous things such as snakes, but if anyone who enters the cave from outside cannot see anything; it is pitch black and invisible to human eyes. As the gloom gradually descended and the eyes became accustomed to the darkness and they can see the western edge of the cave (KI-12, Feb,15/2023).*

Similarly, as the researcher observed that there are bees in this cave, the residents are trying to get the high production of honey in this cave and use it for food. The reason is that the cave is located hanging on a steep rock, so no one can find any solution except to look at the location of the cave, thus the name of the cave is Ayinmisa

One of the key interviewee informants who is an expert on womberma woreda culture and tourism office added that:

*The cave was created by the land formation and the cave has a low sedimentary place where the water of the waterfall rests at a height of 5 meters and a narrow entrance with a length of 2-3 meters the entrance to the cave leads up to Binshangul Gumz region, Wombera district (KI-5, Feb 15/2023).*



Source: Photo by Researcher (2023)

### **2. Ayinmisa Waterfall**

Ayinmisa waterfall is one of the natural waterfalls located in the west Gojjam zone in Womberma woreda, Yirgen Kebele. It is 21 km away from Shindi town to the west direction. The waterfall drops from a steep slope into the deep rocky surface, releasing water and a rainbow. The fall is formed by the Bart Rivers, which originate from their flow at Koki Kebele. Ayinmisa waterfall is adjacent to Ayinmisa Cave.



Source: Photo by Researcher (2023)

### 3. Tenazeh Waterfall

Tenazeh Waterfall is a natural waterfall based on the Fitam River that flows from Sebadar kebele, Womberma woreda, and passes through Tililin City. Finally, the river flows and enters the Nile River in Womberma District. According to key interview informants who are community leaders stated that:

*Tenazeh waterfall is a very eye-catching marquee waterfall. Especially in the winter months in Ethiopians, the water level does not increase, its attractiveness and interest increase. Therefore, if the waterfall is properly maintained, it can be a tourist attraction for the woreda and the zone. (KI-13, Feb 2023)*



Source: Photo by Researcher (2023)

#### 4. Tintimo cave

Tintimo Cave is one of the tourist attractions, which is located in the Gomer Dond Kebele of the Womberema district, far 22 km from the southwest of Shindi town.

According to key informants who is the residents of the area, stated:

*Tintimo Cave was created by the natural land formation and the cave is surrounded by mountains. This cave is so dark that no one can enter it. However, if the cave is properly protected, it can be used as a tourist attraction. It is also home to various wild animals (KI-8, Feb 2023).*

Similarly, the researcher observed during field observation and confirmed that inside the cave is dark and unable to easily enter the cave due to its darkness.

#### 5. Degot Mariyam natural cave and Kato stone

Degot Mariyam Kato Stone is located approximately 28 km away from shindig town and is found in Gomer Dond Kebele with the special name of Deki Mabil Sub Kebele. This stone is carved out of the top of a high mountain in a magnificent shape.



Picture: Degot mariyam kato stone

Source: Photo by the researcher(2023)

Degot Mariyam natural cave is located in the place where the Degut Mariyam limestone is found, and it is a special place. This is where many plants and animals are found and there are many other wild animals available in the cave.

One key informant who is a culture and tourism office expert in the woreda added:

*These Caves have great tourism potential, as they offer visitors the chance to explore a unique and fascinating environment. Caves are often home to rare and endangered species, making them a great destination for nature lovers. They can also provide an educational experience, as visitors can learn about the geological history of the area and its inhabitants. He added, now nowadays, Caves are also popular among adventure seekers (KI-5, Feb 2023).*

#### 6. Erkicha forest (አርቂቻ ደን)

Erkicha Forest is an attractive nature-based tourism resource located in Gomer Dend kebele Deki Sub-Kebele in the district where Degot Maryam igneous rock and Degot Maryam natural cave are located. It is found in the southwestern part of the central town of womberma Woreda, known as the "shindi" in the region. This forest is far from the town, about 28 km away, and is a popular destination for tourists..

One key informant who is a culture and tourism office expert confirmed that:

*In this natural forest, different plant species are found like domestic species, big trees, and other different animal and bird species in Eriketcha natural forest. Currently, this forest declines the hectares because of different reasons. The reasons, like as deforestation plant, fire, house making, firewood, animal harvesting, and degradation of land (KI-14, Feb 2023).*

#### 4.2.2. CULTURE-BASED TOURISM RESOURCE

In addition to the above-noted potential natural tourism products, the study outcomes show that the Womberma woreda has prominent potential in culture-based tourism resources. The woreda has different abundant tangible and intangible cultural heritages that can be used as tourism products or resources



According to UNESCO (2003), culture falls into two main categories: tangible and intangible. Tangible cultural heritage refers to produced physical artifacts that are maintained and passed on from generation to generation in society. It includes artistic creations, built heritage such as buildings and monuments, and other physical or tangible products of human creativity that have cultural significance in society. Intangible cultural heritage refers to the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills, and associated tools, objects, artifacts, and cultural spaces that communities, groups and in some cases individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. Examples of intangible heritage are oral traditions, performing arts, local knowledge, and traditional skills

According to the informants, Womberma Woreda has a variety of cultural resources, including religious ones. Most of these resources are religious in nature, but there are also other historic and festival cultural tourism resources available. All of the key informants confirmed that Womberma Woreda has religious tourism resources. Some of the religious tourism resources that the informants listed are the Holly water of Church St. Georgis, the availability of traditional artifacts and artistic activities, all of which are popular with tourists. There are a number of traditional artifacts and artistic activities that are celebrated throughout the kebeles in Womberma Woreda, including Giorgis Church's yearly celebrations, St.Gebrial Church's yearly celebration on December 19, and other churches' celebrations held throughout the year. The religious celebration has the potential to generate a lot of tourism activity, especially domestic tourism. Other celebrations and events that are celebrated in the woreda include the Timket religious festival, Meskel festival, and Engicha Pluck festival. All of the key informants confirmed that there is currently no museum available for tourists to explore, which is a significant limitation for tourism development in the area.

### **1. Fangray plant Stone**

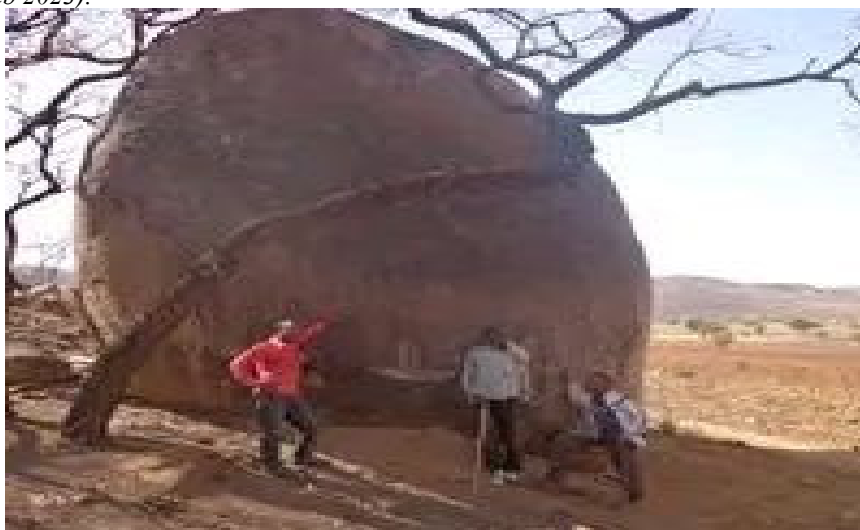
Fangray plant stone is located in the Amhara National Region, in the West Gojam Zone, in the Womberma Woreda, in the Gomer Dond Kebele, and in the Deki Sub-Kebele. From the capital of Woreda, 24 km away, it can be reached by gravel road transport. From Shindi, which is the nearest town, it can be reached by travelling through the wogedad (a traditional route), and then reaching the Gomer Dond Kebele. From there, it is 6-7 km walking distance to the Fangray plant stone site.

One of the key informants who are culture and tourism office stated:

*The height of the Fangray plant stone is 8 meters and the circumference is 25 meters. During the border conflict at the time, the leader of the tribe called Fangrai threw this stone with his hand to mark the border between the Gomer Dond kebele and the Kenteben kebele (KI-7, Feb 2023).*

Other key informants who are the residents of the area added that:

*Fangray threw this stone and planted it to expand the possession of Gomer Dond kebele, which was owned by his tribe. Therefore, they say that Fangray took the stone from Gomer Dond's possession and threw it into Kentefin possession, and the stone was named after the leader of this tribe. He added that Fangray was Banay brother and that he was a man with special natural strength and gifts (KI-11.Feb 2023).*



Picture: Fangray Plant Stone

Source: womberma woreda culture and tourism office (2023)

### **2. Banay Cemetery**

Banay Cemetery is located in Womberma woreda, about 25 kilometers south of Shindi town, the capital of the woreda. It is on the border of Koli Mabil Kebele and Gomer Dond Kebele.

As one of the key informants are resident of the area stated:

*Banay was a special man who was a powerful leader in the shinasha tribe. He added that the length of the banay is estimated to be 20-30 m. and this is a special place where the head of the local Banay is buried or his remains are located here (KI-10, Feb 2023).*

Another key informant who is a culture and tourism office expert added:

*Banay, as a local legend was a strong and taller man, his length estimated from 20-30 meters, and his body is buried in this area, but any archaeology researchers can not volunteer to study and uncover the facts of his height (KI-6, Feb 2023).*

Other key informants who are also residences of the area added that:

*Aba Birru( who is the elder person living in the area) knew his lineage, he was from Adel Madhani Alem Kebele in Bure District, West Gojam Zone in the Amhara region, and that his father was called Guracha and his mother was called Gemona. The key informants added that as a local legend, his diet consists of seven loaves of bread and one small bottle (one gembo) at a time for dinner or lunch (KI-13, Feb 2023).*

### 3. The Ruins of Shinasha

The ruins of the fort of the leaders of the Shinasha clan are still visible today, 25km south of Shindi town in Gomer Dond Kebele. This ruined fort was originally used as a military camp by the Shinasha clan, who ruled this area in the past.

Key informants who are culture and tourism office experts confirmed that:

*This fort was built by Shinsha tribes and leaders and the fort is made of stone kab. it uses as a military camp. this site also should be studied by archeologists and investigate uncovering artifacts and materials which were used as weapons during that time (KI-11, Feb 2023).*

### 4. Engicha Pluck Festival

This festival is also one of the intangible cultural tourism resources of Womberma woreda and it needs good promotion to develop more in Woreda.

One key informant who is a culture and tourism office expert confirmed that:

*Our country Ethiopia is countries that have its calendar. It is not only a calendar, but it also owns various cultural events that are held due to the coming of the New Year. Every time winter passes and a new era and year changes, different cultural events are held in different ethnic groups to mark the arrival and beginning of the New Year (KI-8, Feb 2023).*

Another key informant who is a residence in the area added that:

*Engicha pluck festival starts in August, the last month of the old year. From the beginning of the new year to September, the Buhe, Hoyahoe, Ababaayesh or Ashenda, Solel, Shadey, and Engicha plug festivals, which are attended by young girls and boys accompanied by Adey Ababa and green grass, are mentioned among the traditional ceremonies (KI-13, Feb 2023).*

Another key informant who is a culture and tourism office expert added:

*Engicha is a type of grass. Engicha Nekele festival is a traditional work that is done when the year changes. On New Year's Eve, girls go down the river and cut Engicha In the evening of that day, they wrap up the engicha. In the morning, the girls gather from where they are and go around to each house. They tie the chopped wrap-up engicha to the pole of the house to announce the New Year. Songs and dances accompany this traditional event (KI-7, Feb 2023).*

This girl's game, which is classified as an intangible heritage, is fading away, but now festivals like Ashendana and shadey are being celebrated in public in the form of street fairs.

Some of the verses that are sung that day

*የቅዱስ ዮሀንስ ያልዘፈነች ቆንጆ  
ቆጣ ጉቀራላች እንደ ሰፈር ኅጅ  
እቴ አደይ አጠገ ነሽ  
ዉገ ነሽ ዉገ ነሽ*

The girls sing this song while plucking their Engicha. When they hear this song, the local teenagers come to the girls.

Then the song changes.

*እንግጫችን ደነፋ  
ጋሻዉን ደፋ  
እንግጫዬ ነሽ ወይ  
እሰይ እሰይ  
የቅዱስ ዮሀንስ የመስቀል የመስቀል  
የላክልኝ ድረ ሰላላ መላላ  
መልስሀ ዉሰደዉ ጉዳይም አይሞላ*

When he hears this song, he is attracted to the girl he loves.

### 5. Religious Practices

According to the key informants and the researcher, most of the residents in womberma woreda are orthodox Tewahido Christians. In this case, the majority of religious celebrations in the area are related to orthodox festivals and events, such as the epiphany celebration, which is celebrated on January 11. The Christmas celebration on December 29, the Meskel festivals (the finding of the true cross) celebration on September 17, and other yearly basis religious festivals celebrated in womberma woreda, such as the St.Gebreial celebration, which is celebrated on December 19. All days and months are in the Ethiopian calendar system. Muslim religious followers, such as Eid ul Fitr and Eid al Adha, celebrate some other religious celebrations. These religious holidays have great potential for tourism development, especially for domestic tourism-related activities.

### 4.3. MAJOR CHALLENGES OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN WOMBERMA WOREDA

The data obtained from key informant interviews and secondary sources have verified the following problems which exist in a variety of degrees in all the study areas and which serve as a severe bottleneck for tourism development initiatives. These problems include a lack of infrastructure (such as hotels, tourist sites, and transportation), and a lack of available tourism jobs. These problems make it difficult for tourism businesses to get started, and discourage tourists from visiting the areas. The tourism sector in the study areas is underdeveloped due to problems at both the local and national levels. Local problems include a lack of infrastructure and a lack of available tourism-related services. National problems include war. The lack of infrastructure makes it difficult for tourists to find places to stay and visit tourist sites.

The key informants in the study all confirmed that there are a lot of problems facing tourism development in the area. These include undeveloped tourist attractions, a lack of infrastructure, a lack of standard hotel service, financial problems, and awareness problems.

**Undeveloped Tourist Attraction:** Many tourist attractions in the Amhara region, including the study areas, are not well developed yet. Proper development usually involves taking into account factors that make sites more amenable to foreign visitors, such as educational and explanatory signposts and walking paths, as well as aesthetic considerations, such as the absence of proper placement of museum exhibits and historic artifacts. less involvement and participation of local communities: The findings have revealed that local communities in the study areas have very limited participation and involvement in the tourism industry. The major reasons which are responsible for this are lack of knowledge and awareness on how to use tourism resources, absence of technical and financial support from the concerned bodies, absence of creating a conducive atmosphere for local communities to be part of decision-making, poor policy drafting, and other tourism-related activities.

**Lack of infrastructure:** Tourism development depends on a variety of sectors, including attractions, accommodation, and transportation. Key informants told the researcher that there are infrastructure problems to develop the rich tourism resources in Wereda. For example, many domestic tourists want to visit the attraction, but there are not enough accommodations or transportation to get to the resources. Additionally, there is a transportation problem from the central town of Wereda to the tourist sites. In general, the resources are not easily accessible by tourists using transportation facilities. The key informants assured me there are no banks in or around tourist resource areas, and the community leaders from the womberma Woreda told me there is no electricity or internet coverage in that area. Another problem in Woreda is the lack of standardized tourism service providers like hotels, resorts, cafeterias, and restaurants. The researcher observed this and the tourism officers confirmed it.

**Budget/ financial constraints:** The key informants confirmed that there are financial limitations to developing rich tourism resources in womberma Woreda. To develop and introduce tourism resources to local and domestic tourists, financial resources are important. As the key informant stated that in Wereda there is a high financial problem to develop tourist facilities and conserve the resources properly. As the Wereda culture and tourism expert informed, the allocation of an insignificant budget is one of the crucial challenges in the process of developing tourism resources in womberma Woreda. From this information, it is possible to say that the experience of the organization in allocating budget for the tourism industry is very low and it worsens the inability to develop tourism resources in womberma Woreda.

**Absence of standard hotel services:** The key informants and the researchers agreed that there is a standardized hotel in Womberma Woreda.

**Lack of Awareness:** The key informants confirmed that there are awareness problems in developing the rich cultural and natural tourism resources in womberma Woreda. Lack of training for rural communities about tourism benefits is one of the main causes for the lack of awareness. Limited awareness from the local community can be another challenge to developing tourism potential resources in womberma Woreda. It needs to create awareness related to tourism's various benefits to the local community and involve them in the planning and development process. In addition to awareness problems, most of the informants confirmed that, there is also

a language problem that faces tourism development in womberma Woreda.

#### **Human Resources Problem:**

As one of the key informants is the culture and tourism office experts, there is a low interest in the workers due to insignificant attention given to the sector. The quality, skills, and knowledge of the tourism workforce are also below standards in some areas. Innovation is lacking, resulting in companies finding it difficult to catch up with other best practices. The tourism industry currently carries a poor reputation in the general economic and social context. The development of a human resource development program for the tourism sector including policies to improve employment opportunities, conditions of employment, and training is required to bring about a workforce that is consistent with the demand in the sector. Similarly, one of the key informant interviewees added,

*The culture and tourism sector has many challenges due to the limited number of workers with the right skills. Most of the workers are taken from other sectors and assigned to the culture and tourism sector without having any experience in that area. This means that the workers in the sector are not based on their experience and their skills but they are assigned only for political motives. (KI-9, Feb 2023 ).*

The above assumption showed that inexperienced human resources are one of the major problems of the sector promoting and developing tourism resources in Woreda. The result is that tourism employees tend to have limited professional qualifications and opportunities for job training and could generally be improved, particularly for women employees who have long been in the lower skill level of the industry, which requires attention. The competitiveness and productivity of the industry depend on the skill levels, professionalism, commitment, passion, loyalty, and soft skills of the workers, thus training and skills development remain a priority within the sector.

#### **Lack of Promotions and Marketing**

Tourism development in the study area is hindered by a lack of promotion and marketing. Currently, Womberma woreda does not stand out amongst the well-known tourist destinations of the country, despite its rich historical, cultural, and natural tourism resources. Only a small proportion of the population has heard of Womberma tourism resources, so these products and services must be carefully promoted for target markets to select the place as one of the tourist destinations. As some key informants stated, the West Gojjam Zone and Womberma Woreda Culture and Tourism Offices are working hard to promote cultural and natural tourism resources in many outlets each year. However, promotional methods are not wide enough to promote tourism resources. This maintains interest and awareness of the destination and increases the likelihood of visitation. Therefore, the researcher suggested that they upgrade to modern promotion and distribution, including the expanded use of information technologies.

### **5. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

This study found that Womberma Woreda has many tourism resources, including cultural and natural tourism resources. The natural tourism resources include Ayinmisa Cave, Ayinmisa Waterfall, Tenazeh Waterfall, Timtimo Cave, Degot Mariyam natural cave, and Kato Stone. The cultural tourism resources are Fangray plant Stone, Banay Cemetery, the Ruins of Shinasha, Engicha Pluck festival, Religious Practices, and any other traditional wearing style, dance, eskista, fukera, and also other religious activities. However, all these resources are not well promoted and given greater attention to developing them. The major challenges to developing these resources are lack of infrastructure, lack of skilled man-power, lack of awareness, lack of promotion and marketing, and limited budget.

### **6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1. CONCLUSION**

In this study, the researcher tried to assess tourism resources in Womberma woreda and their developmental challenges based on the objectives of the study by using the qualitative method. In womberma woreda, there are many cultural and natural tourism resources. They can be great additions to promote and develop the tourism industry of the country. However, these resources are not promoted and developed effectively to serve the function of image building and enhance the benefit it could generate for the local communities. In this part, the key findings of natural and cultural tourism potentials in Wombermal Woreda and the challenges to developing the potential have been reviewed. The results of the analysis described that Womberma Woreda has huge tourism resources and it is one of the potential sites to develop tourism projects successfully. These tourism resources are consisting of both natural and cultural tourism resources. As mentioned above, the major tourism resources of Womberma Woreda, of them are natural tourism resources while the rest are cultural. The natural tourism potentials are included attractive landscapes, rivers, endemic plants that are used as a curative medicine for human and animal diseases, different caves used as a military camp and to protect heritages from enemies during the war, and sometimes as a shelter for different animals, an attractive waterfall on and another attractive



natural forest. While the cultural tourism potentials are traditional music, handicrafts, Fangray plant Stone, Banay Cemetery, The Ruins of Shinasha, Engicha Pluck festival, Religious Practices, and any other traditional wearing style, dance, eskista, fukera, and also other religious activities and also eskista, chefera, cultural and traditional festivals including spiritual songs and different handicrafts that used for church and local communities are included. Even though these all-significant tourism potentials in Womberma woreda are not given greater attention by the government for tourism development due to this, the local communities and any other concerned bodies are not benefited from their tourism resources. This is due to low awareness and performance of promotional and marketing activities, which results in the implementation of tourism development, which still stays infant. In addition, the collected data showed that several challenges for tourism promotion and development hinder the performance of creating awareness to derive the expected benefit from the destination. Even though Womberma woreda is enriched with potential tourism resources, the Woreda is not capitalized by exploiting the tourism potential due to different challenges/problems like the inadequate promoting process, inadequate infrastructure, low awareness of the communities and not benefiting them from the tourism industry, limited coordination with the stakeholders, poor potential resources administration, budget limitation, the nature of tourism by itself an attitudinal problem, skill and knowledge gap, and turnover of the expertise are the main challenges to promote and develop the destinations.

## 6.2. Recommendation

Based on the major findings of the study and the conclusion drawn concerning potential tourism resources and its challenges to promote and develop in Womberma Woreda, the following recommendations are suggested.

- ✚ Governments and the business sector should offer high-quality lodging, identify and execute various tourism facilities and services, and improve transportation and road access to attractions.
- ✚ The woreda's tourism resources need better marketing and promotion. The Womberma woreda culture and tourism office has to identify the overall tourism market strategies and promotion activities that will be used in print, electronic, and broadcast media.
- ✚ The limitations of the woreda tourism office should be enhanced, and professionalism should be adopted and upheld. The office should build an organizational structure for tourism at the zone and regional levels.
- ✚ To make this woreda one of the top tourist destinations, all involved parties must cooperate to capitalize on the woreda's tourism resources; create and promote awareness among local and other tourism stakeholders; and improve lodgings and infrastructure at tourist locations.
- ✚ The government should allocate adequate funds to the tourism sector to maximize its potential. Generally speaking, support initiatives from all stakeholders, starting with the government, should be taken to mitigate the aforementioned challenges to strengthen tourism development, increase the inflow of tourists within the woreda, and especially in a drive to enhance local community benefits and manage the tourism resources in question properly.

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