



WOLKITE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCE  
DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE AND ECOTOURISM MANAGEMENT

**ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL RESOURCES FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN  
LALIBELA TOWN AND SURROUNDINGS, NORTHERN ETHIOPIA**



SENIOR RESEARCH

SUBMITTED TO DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE AND ECOTOURISM MANAGEMENT,  
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## **DECLARATION**

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Ayele Setie, entitled: “Assessment of Potential Resources for Tourism Development in Lalibela Town and Surroundings” submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements bachelor’s degree in wildlife and Ecotourism Management.

It is original research work done by the individuals mentioned on the previous pages and has not been presented for a degree in any other University, and that all sources of material used for the research have been duly acknowledged.

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Advisor \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBRIVATIONS**

ACTO.....Amhara Culture and Tourism Office

ANRS.....Amhara National Regional State

CSA..... Center of Statistical Agency

EWCA.....Ethiopia Wildlife Conservation Authority

GDP .....Growth Domestic Production

GNP.....Growth Net Production

UNESCO.....United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

MO CT.....Ministry of Culture and Tourism

UNWTAD.....United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

UNWTO.....United Nations World Tourism Organization

WTO.....World Tourism Organization

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## ABSTRACT

*This study was conducted to assess the potential resources for tourism development in Lalibela Town and surroundings, found in North Wollo Zone, Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia. With the aim of assessing the natural, cultural and historical potential of the area along with the major challenges facing to the tourism development sector. A total of sixty respondents found in and adjacent to the attraction were selected purposively for the survey. Besides, questionnaire, focus group discussion, key informant interview and field observation was used to strengthen the data acquired through the survey. Enormous tangible and intangible tourism potential resources were exhibited in the study area. Among them 11<sup>th</sup> Rock Hewn Churches of Lalibela, Yimrehane Kiristos some of historical potentials recorded from the study area. While Abune Yoseph Community based conservation area is one the best natural attraction sites; Ashendye, Meskel and Epiphany festivity are among the cultural tourism potentials recorded in the study area. Lack of infrastructure, Lack of local communities' participation in tourism resources management, lack of promotion, Poor Religious festivals management, lack of effective tourism planning and shortage of educated man power were identified as a major challenge for tourism development in the study area. Hence, the findings of the study revealed that there is huge potential of tourism resource exhibited in the study area which can be one of the best tourism destinations in Ethiopia. However, now a day, those tourism potential resources are facing aggravating challenges. Therefore, the sector stakeholders should give clear priority for those irreversible treasures of the country and conserve them in the way that can be seen by the next generation.*

**Key words;** Resource, Tourism development, Potential attractions

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Background of the Study

Ethiopia is a gifted with a variety of landscape-scenery, rich fauna and flora, diverse heritage (or culture), historical and archeological sites that characterized the country's unique feature or values (Sintayehu, 2015). It is also a home of more than 80 ethnic groups having diverse linguistic and life-styles, cultures and attractions ranging from urban civilization to remote rural existence. It is a land of natural and historical resources for the tourism development and it is also home to culture and friendly peoples. It is a charming and energetic country with lots to offer visitor including the Ancient Ethiopian historical monument, cultural, caves and falls (Mohammed, 2006).

Tourism is important to the Ethiopia because of the amount of income it brings into countries and it promotes interconnectedness throughout the world. It provides peoples visiting the country or their choice with the service while they are in exchange for the visitors boosting the country economy. It creates jobs opportunities to the local community of the country that are being visited on sited. Tourists tend to have deposable that they spend in the country they are visiting. They also on the whole have more leisure time with which they use on numerous and shorter vacation throughout the year (Grepkens and Connell, 2006)

Most of tourism development programmers in developing countries have been carried out without sufficient and careful giving attention on the resources. In this regards resources has negative and positive impacts on the tourism development. The positive impact is when there are sufficient resources there is probability of tourism development. On the other hand creating imbalanced development, loss of historical, natural and cultural resources leads to loss of profits that generated from tourism. This leads to the degradation of countries development of tourism (Larange, 2006).

Lalibela is one of North Wollo Administrative Zone, which lies on 701kms North of Addis Ababa. According to local historians Lalibela was founded in 13<sup>th</sup> century. It is one of the fast growing Towns in Northern of Ethiopia and it is becoming an ideal place for visiting, investing and studying. In this Town, there are different tourism resources that are categorized under

natural, cultural and historical resources. Natural tourism resources like Abune Yoseph Mountains and beautiful landscape or mosaic ecosystem. The historical resources like the 11<sup>th</sup> rock hewn churches of Lalibela, Asheten Maryam church, Nakuto La'ab church, Yimrehane Kiristos church, Abune Yoseph church, Geneta Maryam church; cultural attraction like religious festivals like Gena, Timket, Meskel, dancing and dressing style, traditional food, wedding ceremonies and charismas are some of attractions, which required for the development of tourism in the Town (Culture and Tourism office of Lalibela town, 2010).

## **1.2. Statement of the problem**

Lalibela is one of the tourist sites which contribute for the development of tourism activities. It is a home of different natural, cultural and historical tourism resources, but those attractions are not well promoted and assessed. Major problems were existed for tourism development such as loss of natural, cultural and historical resources due to lack of well management plan, well promoted tourism development, shortage of educated man power and lack of government activities in managing tourism resources. Moreover, lack of infrastructure and lack of participation of the local communities in the management of tourism resources. Generally, potentials tourism resources and challenges are not specifically identified and promotional activities and measures are not taken. Due to this problem, the research topic has been given clear priority.

## **1.3. Significance of the study**

This research will contribute much for local communities, government organizations, Non-governmental organizations, private sectors, policy makers and implementers to understand gaps and to take actions to improve the situation. The study will be expected to help for the concerned stakeholders, especially to Lalibela town administration, Amhara Region culture and tourism office and Lasta culture and tourism office and Meket Woreda administration to understand issues which related to major problems in the development of tourism industry. Finally, the research will serve as a source or a reference for conducting further research in the study area.

## **1.4. Objectives**

### **1.4.1. General objective**

The overall objective of the study was to assess potential resources for tourism development in Lalibela Town and surroundings.

### **1.4.2. Specific objectives**

- ❖ To assess potential tourism resources in Lalibela town and surroundings
- ❖ To identify major challenges for tourism development in the study area

## **1.5. Research questions**

1. What types of tourism resources exist in Lalibela town and surroundings?
2. What are the major problems for tourism development in the study area?

## **1.6. Scope of the study**

The research was conducted in Lalibela town and surroundings. The study was focus on assessing of potential resources for tourism development in the study area. The study was conducted from October to June.

## **1.7. Limitations of the Study**

In this study the researcher was faced different challenges. It includes lack of enough sources of information; budget constraint and full materials, some respondents was not concentrate attention for the answer was the main limitation during the study. Besides, Due to time constraint the study were limited to Lalibela Town which is considered as representative. It is one of the major tourist attraction centers. In addition, the study was limited to assessment of potential resources for the development of tourism industry.

## **1.8. Organization of the Study**

The study covers five chapters with their sub-topics and provides detailed information accordingly. The study is organized as follows: Chapter one deals with the introduction part which includes background of the study, statements of the problem, objectives, significance, scope and limitation and organization of the study. Chapter two provides detailed insight into the review of related literatures collected by the researcher for a clear understanding of the title. Chapter three explains about the methodology, research design, determination of sample size, sampling techniques, subject of the study, research instruments, data gathering procedures and data processing methods used in the researcher's study. Chapter four deals with the results and discussion of the study area. The collected data or findings were analyzed and interpreted. Chapter five deals with the conclusion of the study and proposed recommendations of the study.

## **2. LITRATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Historical Development of Tourism**

Tourism is one of the most dynamic economic sectors in many developing countries. According to (World Tourism organization, 2007) tourist movements towards developing and least developed countries are growing faster than in the developed world. Many poor countries have assets of value to the tourism industry. In 2006, international tourism arrivals in developing countries grew to over 39 percent of the world total, and international tourism to 30 percent. Besides tourism is the principal export sector in one third of the developing countries. Out of the top 20 long haul destinations 14 are developing countries.

According to World Bank (2006), in 41 of the 50 poorest countries of the world, tourism contributes more than 5 percent to GDP or more than 10 percent to exports – or both. The direct receipts from tourists to the Ethiopian economy in 2005 are estimated at US \$ 130 million making tourism one of the top exports (World Bank, 2006). Whether defined technically or conceptually, socially or industrially, it is well known that tourism as social phenomenon has assumed its present shape or structure after following different paths. Although tourism has been experienced as of 1970's, this makes the industry a phenomenon of post-world war II. Tourism had been around for longtime as has been pointed out in (Kyunfimi, 2002).

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Nowadays, tourism is increasingly becoming an important economic sector in many developing countries (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2013).

The industry is one of the major sources of foreign exchange earnings and the most viable and sustainable economic development option. It comprises 11 percent of the world GNP if related activities are included, (UNWTO, 2010). African tourism set boost economic growth create new job and new out of placed their regional for new tourism development, Sub-Saharan tourism industries are set up of strong more economic growth for the continental and directly employee 6.7 million of people by (UNWTO, 2012).

## **2.2. Potential Tourism Resources of Ethiopia**

Ethiopia is endowed with unique heritages and attractive natural, historical and cultural resources. The cathedrals, caves, rift valleys, castles are some of the resources. Plant and animal species such as: - endemic mammals, endemic bird species in addition to these, there are impressive features such as high mountains, rivers and lakes are some of natural resources. Jimma Abba Jifar, Axum obelisk, rock hewn churches of Lalibela and Yimrehane Kiristos monastery are historical resources. The favorable diversity of climate is the other factors what makes Ethiopia to attract tourists. Having Addis Ababa as venue of seat for African organization unity and united nation economic, commission for Africa is also another feature of attraction for Ethiopia (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2010).

The concept of tourism is a new phenomenon to and it is difficult to explain its significance achievement since the approach of tourism is not widely disseminated in Ethiopia. The government of Ethiopia also has recognized development and promotion of tourism and provided consultancy services for a number of potential developers of tourism sites. Although, developers and policy makers do not properly take the idea of tourism, some investors started to involve in development of tourism in different regions of Ethiopia. Bishangari Eco-Lodge located at Eastern of Langan Lake in Oromia Region and Village Ethiopia located at Afar Region (Bilen) is examples of these private tourism developments in Ethiopia (Theodros, 2002).

In past few years, Amhara culture and tourism aims to create an alternative income generating means such as tourism to reduce the pressure on the natural resources of land through conducting a pre-feasibility study of proposed areas on the potentials of tourism (Stradsdas, 2002).

According to (Ayalew, 2003)in past period, merchants played a considerable role for the introduction of religions to Ethiopia, which contributed a lot for evolution of tourism. The author proved that the Portuguese's missionaries and other European came to Ethiopia as easier visitors when they made explorations to the sources of Blue Nile, (Amhara culture and tourism office, 2006) affirmed that Ethiopia has an enormous potential as a tourism destination with rich collection of historic and natural sites that distinguishes it from most of its neighbors.

(Mulugeta, 2012)assured this fact that United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognizes world heritage sites in Ethiopia like (Axum’s obelisks, the rock hewn church of Lalibela, the Castel of Gondar’s, the Valley of Hadar where the skeleton of Lucy was discovered, Tiya standing stones and the Semen Mountains). According to Mulugeta, participatory tourism is the future of Ethiopia. However lack of exposure to tourism markets is a significant challenge in attempting to carve net market share in the region and optimize on the rents that can be obtained from these assets. Thus, one can understand the potential that tourism has in local economic development in Ethiopia.

### **2.3. Potential Tourism Resources of Amhara Region**

A tourist attraction is a place of interest where tourist visit, typically for it is inherent exhibited cultural value, historical significance, natural or built beauty or monuments opportunities. Concerning Amhara Region is a very rich in tourist attraction sites, some of the attraction sites like national parks, mountains, rivers, bridges, wild life, buildings, churches and masques (Aseres, 2015). Many tourists are attracted to Amhara Region for its tourism resources. As compared to other parts of Ethiopia, Amhara Region is the richest region in natural and historical attractions. The region is situated at the heart of the historic route of Ethiopia. In Ethiopia there are two historic routes. The northern rout compares both Tigray and Amhara region and most of the tourism sites to this rout are situated in Amhara region (ACTO, 2010).

According to Amhara Region Tourism office (2010), UNESCO has cited the following attraction in Amhara as world heritage sites, namely, the rock hewn church of Lalibela, the relate of Ethiopian emperors at Gondar, the Semen mountains National Park, Tana biosphere reserve, which is famous for its breath taking landscape and also shelter of world’s rare and endemic animal species of Walia ibex, Ethiopian wolf and Gelada baboon. Likewise, ACTO (2010) affirmed that there are popular tourist attraction sites such as the Blue Nile falls locally called ‘tiss esat’ and the nearby bridge built by king Fasil 300 years ago, the ancient monasteries of lake Tana which are noted for their traditional music’s, the mummified remains of Ethiopian kings and hand crafts, the replaces and treasures of the past Ethiopian emperors, numerous other historical church’s and Tigray sites from early Christianity located throughout the region. The Bureau added that the region’s endowments in different species of birds, pleasant climate,

beautiful scenery and hospitable people. Nevertheless, Lalibela is considered the most outstanding tourism potential of the region.

#### **2.4. Potential Tourism Resources of Lalibela Town and surroundings**

Lalibela Town cluster beyond its ideal destination for tourist it has a lot of important attractive sites like Abune Yoseph Mountain, which is one of the highest mountain in Ethiopia which, supports a lot of plant and animals. The 11<sup>th</sup> rock hewn churches of Lalibela, Yimrehane Kiristos cave church, Asheten Mariam church, Machina Maryam church, Abune Yoseph monastery, Nakuto La'ab, Geneta Maryam and others are some of the historical resources. Cultural attraction is grouped in to two types that is the tangible and intangible cultural attraction. Tangible cultural attraction includes ancient cross and religious books. Intangible cultural attraction like cultural dancing, Ashendye festival, Gena festival and unique dressing styles of Lalibela a place and others are the distinguished from others.

### 3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

#### 3.1. Description of the Study Area

##### 3.1.1. Geographical Location

Lalibela town is found in North Wollo Zone of Amhara Regional State. It is suited so called the “Historical Route” of northern Ethiopia at altitudinal and longitudinal extensions of  $12^{\circ}02'034''N$  and  $39^{\circ}02'611''E$  at an altitude of 2480 m.a.s.l. respectively at a distance of about 700 km far from north of Addis Ababa, and 300 km far from Bahir Dar, the regional capital. Lalibela Town is internationally renowned for its rock hewn church which is called one of the “eight” wonders of the world registered by UNESCO in 1978 (WTO, 2012). The study area is bounded by Lasta Woreda and in some west part Meket Woreda. Lalibela town has a significant tourism resources like Mount Abune Yoseph in the northeast of the town of Lalibela is, 4,190 m.a.s.l., which is one of the dominant features of the northern half of western Ethiopia. The south-east of Lalibela is followed by the headwaters of the Tekeze River. 11<sup>th</sup> Rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, Yimrehane Kiristos; Nakuto La’ab and Asheten Mariam monastery are some of the attractions which contribute for tourism development (culture and tourism office of Lalibela, 2016).

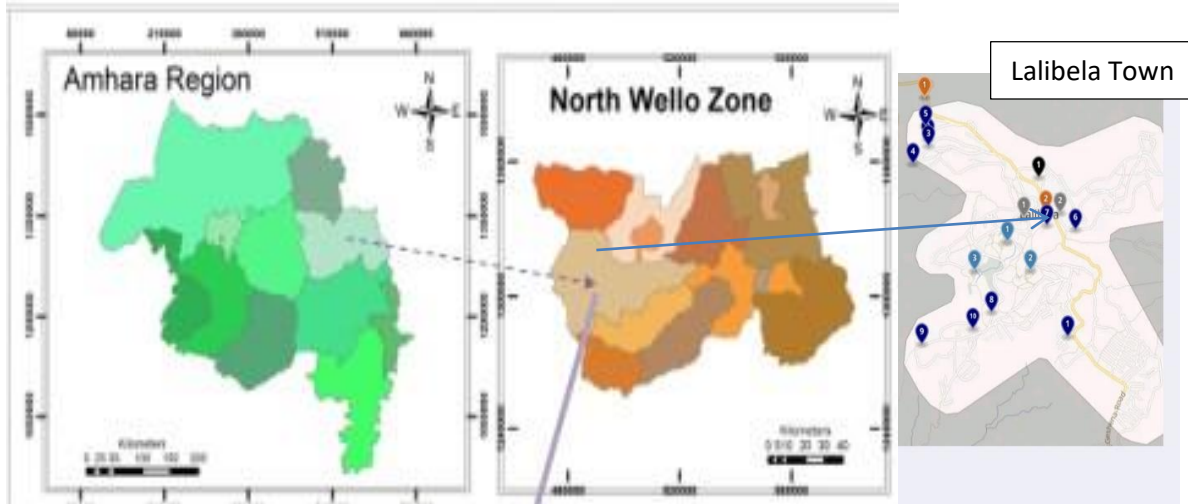


Figure 1: Map of the study area (*source*: Lalibela town culture and tourism office, 2019)

According to CSA (2007), the national census recorded the town population to be 17,367 of whom 8112 were males and 9255 were females. The total household reached at about 7095. The population of Lalibela is almost completely Orthodox Christian (Culture and Tourism Office of Lalibela, 2019).

### **3.1.2. Topography**

Lalibela is rugged, hilly, and rolling landforms, with only a small portion of plain areas, forming the topography of the town (Asfawossen *et al*, 2008). The present topography in and around Lalibela constitutes valleys and gorges and rugged mountains which include flat-topped plateaus and steep-sided volcanic plugs. Therefore, the town is characterized by impressive landscape features in which the natural landscapes of the province host many rock-hewn and built-in cave churches which are the most important tourist sites of the country.

### **3.1.3. Climate**

The climate of Lalibela is characterized by a wet season from June to early September and dry season from mid-September to May. Annual rainfall averages 2,000 mm, mostly falling between July and September. Short rains might fall in any month of the year, but particularly in March. Generally the area has bi-modal rainfall known as (Meher) long rainfall period: from June to September and (Belg) short rainfall period: from February to May. The mean annual temperature ranges from 7.5° C to 11°C which is characterized by moist and very cold conditions (Belay, *et al*, 2013)

### **3.1.4. Wildlife**

The major wildlife species of the study area are Ethiopian wolf, Gelada baboon, Anubis baboon, Hamadryas baboon, Aardwolf, Bat, eared fox, spotted Hyena, Antelope, water buck, Rabbit, grivet monkey, Vervet monkey, there are also many types of reptiles such as crocodile, green snake and grey snake. There are also different types of bird species like francolin, Jigra, dove and wattled ibis (Zemedekun, 2017).

### 3.2. Sampling design and sampling size determination

The study was used mixed approach type which means, the qualitative approach and the quantitative approach. purposive sampling technique was employed. First two Woreda was selected namely, Lasta and Meket purposively. From the two Woreda two kebeles were selected purposively, Lalibela kebele from Lasta Woreda and Meket kebele from Meket Woreda as a sample frame of the study. Lalibela kebele is a place where major of the tourist attractions located, such as the 11<sup>th</sup> rock hewn churches of Lalibela, festivals and different cave churches were existed. Similarly, in Meket kebele there is also many tourism attractions. The two kebeles have a total of 867 households. 30 respondents from Lalibela kebele and 30 respondents from Meket kebele were selected purposively based on their knowledge, experience and information about the potential resources of the study area. Among them 10 were local communities, 20 Lalibela tourism office employees, 20 religious leaders, 5 domestic tourists, and 5 foreign tourists were employed.

The sampling size of the study was determined based on formula adapted from Yamane (1967) as follows

$$n = N/1+N (e)^2$$

Where, n= the sample size required

N= the total population size

e = the level of precision= ±10%

60 respondents were selected as a representative of the whole study area.

### 3.3. Method of data collection and data sources

Both primary and secondary data sources were employed. The primary data were collected through questionnaire, field observation, focus group discussion and key informant interview. While the secondary data collected from both published and unpublished documents including books, journals and websites.

**Questionnaire:** First semi structured questionnaire were prepared for interviewing the respondents. The research data were collected from local community, domestic and foreign tourists and culture and tourism office of the destination. Because they know about the potential tourism resources in the study area.

**Key informant interview:** the target key informants were local communities, religious leaders, culture and tourism employees and tourists. The data were collected in depth information from

individuals through face to face. Basically, the interview methods with in these stakeholders were to know the issues in deep understanding through semi structured interview.

**Observation:** The data were gathered directly by observing the natural, cultural and historical resources. The researcher was used camera, video recorder and other materials for collecting relevant information for the study.

**Focus group discussion:** is also another qualitative method of data collection instrument which was used in the study. Accordingly, four focus group discussions from two selected kebeles and another four focus group discussions with non-user household members were held. Key participants were local communities, religious leaders, foreign and domestic tourist. A total of 5 to 8 respondents were participated.

### **3.4. Data analysis**

The data was analyzed by using simple descriptive (qualitative) method and quantitative (numerical) method. The data was analyzed by using simple descriptive statistics such as percentage, table, chart and picture.. Finally, the collected data was arranged in the excel sheet 2016.

## 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Demographic characteristics of the respondent

The demographic characteristics respondents had mentioned in table 1 below. The researcher clustered the respondents in different category such as: sex, age, education status and marital status. Regarding to sex category (58 %) of respondents were males and (42 %) of respondents

Were females. Regarding to educational level 41.6 % of the respondents were Bachelor degree, 20% of the respondent were Diploma, 25% of respondent were illiterate, 11.3 of respondent were certificate and 8.3 % of the respondents were masters. According to age category 20-30 age of respondent were (18%), 31-45 age of respondent were (52 %), and 46-60 age of respondent were 25% and > 60 age of respondent were (5 %). 86% of respondents were married and 14 % of respondents were single.

Table: 1 Demographic characteristics of sampled population (n=60)

Demographic characteristics of population	Section	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Sex	M	35	58
	F	25	42
	Total	60	100
Age	20-30	11	18
	31-45	31	52
	46-60	15	25
	>60	3	5
	Total	60	100
Education level	Certificate	7	11.6
	Diploma	8	13.3
	Bachelor Degree	25	41.6
	Master	5	8.3
	Illiterate	15	25
	Total	60	100
Marital status	Married	43	86
	Single	17	14

(Source: Field survey, 2019)

## 4.2. Potential tourism resources of Lalibela town and surroundings

As shown in the table 2 below 58% of the respondents responded cultural attraction is the most dominant tourist attraction with in the study area; 25% of the respondent responded that the study area is also a home of many historical attractions; 16.6% of the respondent told that the town has natural attractions.

Table: 2 Potential tourism resources of Lalibela

Attractions	frequency	percentage
Natural	10	16.66
Cultural	35	58.34
Historical	15	25

### 4.2.1. Natural tourism resources of the study area

As shown in the table 2 below 85% of the respondents responded spectacular topography was the most dominant tourist attraction with in the study area. Similarly, Negash *et al* (2011) defined as natural attraction landscape includes mountains area, rivers, caves, natural woodland, wetland, etc. and wildlife includes biodiversity, land-based mammals, flora, birds, and insects etc.

Table: 3 Potential natural tourism resources of Lalibela.

Items	Respondent			
	Yes		No	
	Frequency	percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Spectacular topography	51	85	19	15
Fauna	40	80	20	20
Flora	48	76	12	24

Source: data from culture and tourism office of Lalibela, 2019

#### 4.2.1. 1. Abune Yoseph Mountain Community Based Conservation Area

Mount Abune Yoseph is located in the Lasta massif in the North Wollo administrative zone of the Amhara National Regional State at a distance of 710 km from Addis Ababa, 340Km from the regional state Bahir Dar, which has been chosen for its outlet to the known rock hewn churches of Lalibela and Geneta Maryam. The mountain lay on the north of the town of Lalibela, in the Wollo province near the eastern escarpment of the Ethiopian Highlands. It is the 6<sup>th</sup> highest mountain in Ethiopia and the 19<sup>th</sup> highest in Africa (EWCA, 2012).

It lies between 12° 8' 7" N and 39° 15' 7" E. It is one of the long isolated mountains in the Northern massif with a total area of 50 km<sup>2</sup> (EWCA, 2012) and the highest peak of North Wollo 4, 286 m.a.s.l and the second peak of ANRS next to Ras Dashen 4620 m. a.s.l (ESP, 2001). The massif shows a complex mosaic of ecosystems where bush lands, woodlands, Montana dry forests and afro alpine grasslands are represented. It has been described its own attractiveness and special land scope position or structure different animals and plant species, remarkable tracking and route and eye catching road way to the Abune Yoseph mountain site.

In general Abune Yoseph and its surrounding obtain many attractions such as the beauty full wildlife and wildness Appeal to visitor satisfaction. Ethiopian wolfs can attract animals lovers to the mountain. It is also well known by extensive and dense giant lobelia forests of exceptional site a relative high density of the native and protected species.



Figure 2: Potential attractions of Abune Yoseph Mountain (Source: Lalibela culture and tourism office, 2019)

#### 4.2.1.2. Spectacular topography

Lalibela is endowed with spectacular topography. The rugged mountains make the Lalibela destination more attractive. The result of observation and interviews from the respondents revealed that most foreign and domestic tourists appreciate and entertain with the nature gifted topography. The mountainous areas of the Lalibela destination are good for developing sustainable tourism development and it can also be alternative tourism products in addition to the rock hewn churches. One of the foreign tourist interviewed at Lalibela said the following:

What the very attractive topography it is!!! The topography is just like the book. Just as you finished one mountain, you will get another mountain. The size, the view, the history, the names of each mounts sounds attractive. Looking the town at the peak of each mountain is very wonderful.

Lalibela topography

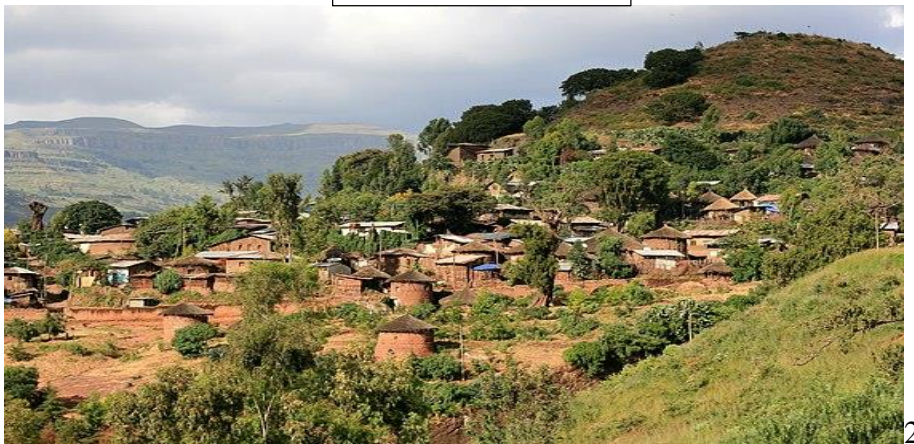


Figure 3: Spectacular topography of the study area (Source: Lalibela culture and tourism office)

According to the respondents Lalibela town is not limited on the magnificent rock hewn churches and its spectacular topography; it is also endowed with indigenous culture and traditions of the local communities. Most of the informants agreed that, in the Lalibela tourist destination site, each practices, cultures, traditions and norms are unique and indigenous. For instance, the music and dancing style, the hospitality practices of the communities during the annual festivals of the religious and cultural events, the ways of life of the communities, the destinations history, and the names of the each specific place of the town is attached to the Biblical symbol and interpretation. These all are the sign of the existence of the practices of

sustainable tourism development. Indigenous community's often have wide practices for the sustainable management of their destination. So indigenous practices have proven to be successful, they can produce similar results as Western approaches, they can be inexpensive, and, through religious or spiritual prescriptions, can sometimes be enforced. As shown in the table 4 below the town is rich in different cultural resources. Those resources grouped in to two tangible and intangible cultural tourism resources.

#### 4.2.2. Cultural tourism resources of Lalibela town and its surroundings

Table: 4 Cultural tourism resources of Lalibela

Intangible resources	Frequency	Percentage
Ashendye festival	16	26.6
Meskel festival	20	33.3
Ways of Weeding Ceremony	4	6.6
Dressing and dancing style	3	5
'Gena' festival	17	28.3

##### 4.2.2.1. Unique festivals of the town

The term “**Ashendye**” is named after a thin and long leaf, called Ashendye which the girls wear/tie it over their dress on their waist down in a fashionable pattern. So, to celebrate Ashendye festival, one of the most basic and important tool is green grass. Green grass is found if there is only naturally green environment. The communities are always looking the summer season to celebrate the festival. Especially it is highly celebrated through the females as the major aim of Ashendye is based the females as the sign of giving them freedom for the females and they are the active participant of the event. The festival has also its wide historical background. Ashendye festival is most well-known and outshines local and traditional festivals of Lalibela and its surroundings. The communities are always looking the summer season to celebrate the festival. Especially it is highly celebrated through the females as the major aim of Ashendye is based the females as the sign of giving them freedom for the females and they are the active participant of the event. The festival has also its wide historical background. So,

having great historical background on one of the historical routes of the country makes the festival with a lot of historical values.



Figure 4: Ashendye festivals, 2019 (Source: Lalibela culture and tourism office, 2019).

#### 4.2.2.2. Religious Festivals of Lalibela and surroundings

**Christmas which is locally known as Gena** falls on December 29 E.C (January 7 G.C). It is celebrated after 43 days fasting known as Tsome Gahad (Advent), with a spectacular procession, which begins at 6 AM and lasts until 9 AM. After the mass service, people go home to break the fast with the meat of chicken or lamb or beef accompanied with injera and the traditional drinks such as tella or tej. Bezakulu festival is the most famous religious festival which is celebrated during the Christmas holyday. As the respondent told charismas is one of the well-known celebrations in Lalibela town.



Figure 5: Christmas celebration, 2019 (Source: Lalibela culture and tourism office, 2019).

**Epiphany (Timket)** festival is another most attractive religious event in Lalibela like that of Christmas. The destination is fully occupied through foreign tourists to explore the practice of

the celebrations which is highly facilitated and conducted through the religious fathers and peoples like clergies, deacons, preachers, traditional musicians, local and traditional games and the like.



Figure 6: Timket celebrations, 2019 (*Source: Lalibela culture and tourism office, 2019*).

### **Tangible cultural tourism resources**

#### **The Lalibela crosses**

It is still another most likely and interesting treasures of the destinations. Unless lacking an opportunity, no tourist is going back to his original environment without watching the Lalibela cross. In Amharic language the Lalibela cross is named “Afro Ayigeba” and it means that the Lalibela cross can heal and save many religious patients from their disease. Each parts of the cross has its own meaning and Biblical symbolic. The Lalibela cross is found at bet Medhanialem rock hewn church. St. Lalibela constructed specific place for the cross.

As interview with religious fathers assured the Lalibela cross is public while there is annual and special religious holydays. At the time when it is public, most tourists are become very eager to be blessed and watch the cross.



Lalibela cross

Figure 7: some of the gold crosses found in Lalibela (*Source: Lalibela culture and tourism office, 2019*).

### **Traditional house design of Lalibela**

Besides the above attractions their house is constructed from grass, mud, wicker, eucalyptus and stone. Locally the house is named ‘Nass’.

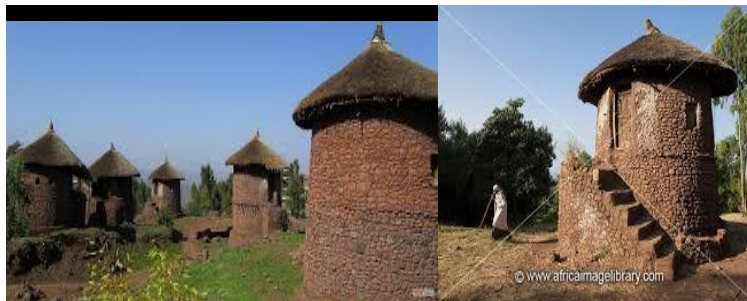


Figure 8: Traditional houses of Lalibela (*Source: Lalibela culture and tourism office, 2019*).

### 4. 3. Historical tourism resources of Lalibela Town

#### 4.3.1. The Rock-hewn churches of Lalibela

The Rock-Hewn Churches of Lalibela are the most impressive 11<sup>th</sup> century monolithic, semi monolithic and cave churches. According to the data collected from the local residents via the questionnaire, the ancient rock made churches are the key attractions for both foreign and domestic visitors to Lalibela town as well as to Ethiopia in general. They also believe that those rock-hewn churches, eleven in number, are the targets of most visits in Ethiopia.

➤ These churches are grouped into three facing the river called ‘Jordan’.

The first group north of Jordan River comprises six churches; Bete Medihane Alem, Bete Maryam, Bete Meskel, Bete Denagil, Bete Debre Sina and Bete Golgota. According to local priests, this group of churches symbolizes the Earthly Jerusalem.

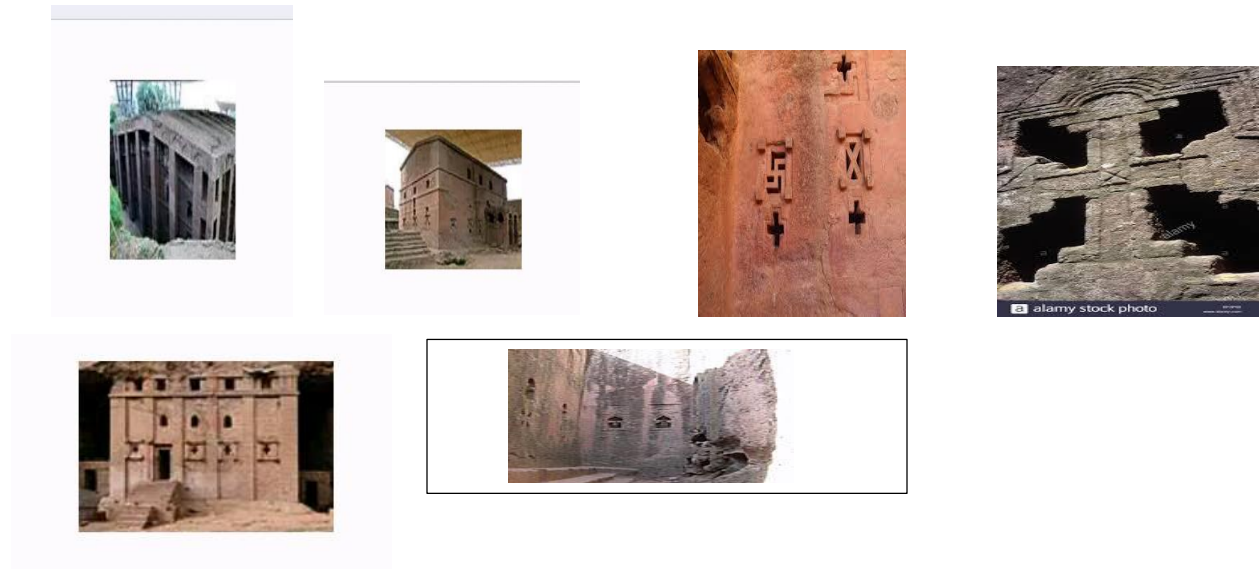


Figure 9: The six first groups north of Jordan River churches

- ❖ The second group of churches symbolizing the Heavenly Jerusalem is located east of the Jordan River and comprises Bete Amanuel, Bete Merkorios, Bete Abba Libanos and Bete Gabriel-Rafael.



Figure 10: second group Rock - Hewn churches of Lalibela (Source: Lalibela culture and tourism office, 2019)

- ❖ The third group constitutes only one church, Bete Giyorgis.



Bete Giyorgis

Figure 11: Bete Giyorgis (Source: Lalibela culture and tourism office, 2019)

The churches of Lalibela are unique in many ways. They were carved with all their architectural elements out of solid rock, without joining any piece of stone together. Their refined architectural and aesthetic expressions seem almost superhuman. They are still places of active and living worship for more than 850 years after they were built. More than many other monuments in the world, they constitute a living link with the past. Each one of the churches is different in style and has its own unique features. Four of them are strictly monolithic in structure and have no resemblance to others of their kind in the whole world. They are completely free standing and attached to the rock only at their bases.

These monolithic churches are Bete Medhanialem, Bete Mariam, Bete Amanuel and Bete Giyorgis. Besides those churches, there are plenty of rock-hewn cave and cave churches within 20-50 Km distance from the town. Each church has tourism value and can be considered as the center of religious pilgrimage. The churches are also known for their ample

heritages, festivals, and rich histories. Some of these churches around Lalibela include Asheten Maryam, Yimrehane Kiristos, Arbatu Ensessa, Bilbila Chirkos, Bilbila Giyorgis, Nakuto La'ab, Geneta Maryam, Machina Maryam and others.

#### **4.3.2. Yimrehane Kiristos cave church**

Yimrehane Kiristos church is a three-aisled basilica with a cupola and a tall saddle roof, constructed according to the Aksumite building tradition. It is one of the oldest standing examples of Christian architecture in Ethiopia. Ethiopia was the second country in the world, after Armenia, to convert to Christianity in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. A majority of Ethiopians are Christian, and vividly so, mainly in the northern highlands.

The Yimrehane Kiristos church is a high point in Ethiopian medieval architecture with great historical importance and one of the major tourist attractions in the area. The church was founded by the saintly King Yimrehane Kiristos, and named after him. He ruled in the 12<sup>th</sup> century from nearby Lalibela, then center of Ethiopian power, and is said to have retired to the site where the church and the palace were built. The biography gives a detailed description of how he discovered the cave and constructed the church.



Figure 12: Yimrehane Kiristos cave church (*Source: Lalibela culture and tourism office, 2019*).

#### 4.4. Major challenges for tourism development in Lalibela

Items	Respondent	Percentage %
Lack of infrastructure	21	35
Lack of promotion	13	21.6
Inadequate of Financial	9	15
Low level of Community Awareness	5	8.33
Low level of Community participation	7	11.6
Lack of festival management	5	8.33

Figure 13: challenges for tourism development in Lalibela, 2019

##### A. Lack of infrastructure

During focus group discussion 35% of the respondent confirmed that there is no enough infrastructure and accommodation in and around the tourist sites. Unless this infrastructure related problem is solved, it is challenging to successfully develop tourism activity. This result supported by Ketema (2015) stated that there is a dire absence of well-designed trekking passes, parking facilities, camping sites and effective land use planning alongside the lake. Ketema has also mentioned that there is a lack of transportation and comfortable roads, and there are no Eco lodges and catering facilities around the Lake Tana. Similarly, (Eshetie, 2012) also stated that a lack of basic facilities such as electricity, an effective road network to and from Borena Sayint National Park and health stations, are other major problems encountered. A common problem in tourism development is infrastructure development in the tourism development areas, such as roads, airports, widespread electricity, or construction of other tourist attractions would also, without doubt, change not only the number and type of tourists, but also the flows of money from tourism (Silva and Mcdill, 2004).

## **B. Lack of promotion**

As discussed in the previous potential tourism resources of the study area, there are a lot of natural, cultural and historical tourism resources, but not well promoted and benefited. Lack of effective and powerful promotion 21.6% is one of the main challenges for tourism development in Lalibela town and surroundings. Unless these resources are well promoted there will be no tourist hence no tourism development. So promoting of the area is necessary if tourism development is needed. Promotion is an integral component of destination growth and development. While product development is associated with the creation of attractions or experiences, promotion plays a key role in communicating the value and appeal of the products that would be consumers (WWF, 2001). Often, assumptions made about the marketability of a particular location or experience has been unrealistic and not based on research. As result, promotional activities have been misdirected. A problem has been the lack of tourism knowledge not only among local communities themselves but also among tourism suppliers and supporting agencies (WWF, 2001).

Similarly, this idea is also supported by Kauffmann. He stated that Promotion is very vital component of tourism business development and marketing. Effective promotion can motivate tourist visit to a particular destination even if there is infrastructural problem (Kauffmann, 2008). Promotion becomes effective whenever promotion is done through targeting the potential customers using appropriate Media.

## **C. Low level of Community Awareness**

The qualitative data analyzed from interviews showed that the level of community awareness 8.33% for conservation is very low. Societies consider tourism as a luxurious industry with little or no significance to the country's economy in general and to Lalibela town in particular and also there are societies which wrongly perceive tourists as rich persons who spend money at will who generously provide aims. Due to this, many service renders over-charged those tourists and many adults and street children follow them by saying 'Ferenj, Money! Money!'" This is due to low level of community's awareness and illiterate and old fashion consequently. This result agreed with (Meseret, 2015) Lack of knowledge about tourism and resistance towards the development was the main manifestation of the community during the starting time of CBT development. Even though the problem is not solved fully up to now, the community starting to acquire some knowledge about tourism due to the tourism practices in the CBET sites. Development works in

the area. In general, the overall results of this study identified knowledge as a critical obstacle of CBT.

#### **D. Lack of local community participation**

Another challenge of tourism development in the town identified was lack of local community participation. Accordingly, 11.6% of the respondents which is the majority, considered limited local community participation as a challenge for further tourism development. However, according to key informants, if any tourism development has to be productive, the local community should be fully involved in the planning, implementation and decision-making processes. This concurs with (Nicolaidis, 2016) in an article relating to Marian tourism in Spain.

#### **E. Lack of festival management**

As shown in figure 13 above, only 8.33% of the respondents confirmed the inability to manage religious festivals as a challenge for religious tourism development. Similarly, in Geshen Mariam there is no festival management plan during the festival. Though festivals have multidimensional benefits in terms of creating cross-cultural understanding, unless properly managed no doubt they would have huge costs going forward. The costs would be greater if the festival was religiously based because of the fragile nature of the sector. Therefore, as said by most key informants, besides developing religious festivals proper management should be in place conducted.

#### **F. Inadequate of Financial Resources**

By its nature, tourism sector is more of labor intensive and requires huge investment to develop tourism infrastructure in the destinations. Similarly, to develop tourism, it requires huge investment capital. But the result revealed in this study there is financial incapacity to undertake practical job in the site like tourism resource mapping and inventory, promotion, research and development. Besides, it is difficult to develop tourism infrastructure to facilitate tourism development. The result supported by (Berhanu, 2013) Conservation of wildlife and park management is an expensive task and lack of adequate financial resources for such activities is one of the most profound difficulties facing park managers.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **5.1. Conclusion**

The overall assessments of tourism potential revealed the natural, cultural and historical tourism attractions of the Lalibela town and its surroundings. The major tourism potential tourism resources of Lalibela and its surrounding were divided in to natural, cultural and historical. The natural attractions include mountains, mammals and birds; cultural attractions like historical house buildings, religious festivals like Timket, Charismas, Ashendye and Ancient religious crosses of Lalibela. Besides, the historical tourism resources includes 11<sup>th</sup> rock hewn churches of Lalibela, Yimrehane Kiristos cave church. Even though the town has a huge amounts of tourism potential resources, still there is not well recognized or fully changed to tourism product, due to major problems such as poor tourism management plan, lack of promotion, lack of infrastructural development like hotel, lodges, bed rooms, lack of skilled man power in tourism, lack of awareness, inadequate of financial resources, low level of community awareness and lack of working cooperatively with other sectors.

## 5.2. RECOMMENDATION

In order to make Lalibela Town as a major tourist destination the following recommendation is forwarded;

- ❖ Government should show its commitment in taking the initiative to construct asphalt road in order to increase arrival of tourist to the destination. Asphalted road that was intended to be constructed from Dessie to Gashena via Woldiya to Lalibela should come in to ground in time. Because this road could at least reduce road problem and also could motivate tourist followers. Its overall positive impact will become huge particularly in attracting international visitors at any time. Besides they should be fulfilled like hotels, communication network and lodges.
- ❖ There should be strong marketing campaign specially to promote the resources of the town and surroundings by using many systems like websites, gazette, brochures, and other social media by stakeholders such as tour operators and government tourism offices (Woreda to federal level).
- ❖ It is difficult to run tourism projects without the collaboration effort of the local community. Thus, Culture and Tourism offices of Lalibela should take the responsibility to develop the awareness of the local community on the concept and benefit of tourism in general. In addition, adequate training language and communication skills, tour guiding and service delivery should be given to the tourism participants of the area as to increase skilled man power in tourism.
- ❖ The regional and zonal government must follow the participatory planning among the stake holder to design polices and legislations that related to tourism.

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## APPENDIX

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCE

DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE AND ECOTOURISM MANAGEMENT

### Quaternary for Lalibela town culture and tourism office employee, Tourists and Households

Dear Respondents,

First and for most I like to thank you for your willingness!

I am Ayele Setie Damite graduate student at Wolkite University. Currently I am conducting a Research study on assessment of potential resources for tourism development in and around Lalibela town North Wollo zone, Amhara, Ethiopia. The case of in partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of science in Wildlife and Ecotourism management. I Require your help to spend some minutes of your time with us for interview. The purpose of this Interview is to gather information about the potential tourism resources in and around the town. I can assure you that any information that provide in this interview will be kept confidential.

Your kind cooperation would be greatly appreciated and is great importance for the Successful completion of this study. Thank you!!

The main objectives of this questionnaire are to collect information about “tourism potential resource in and around Lalibela town’s partial fulfillment for the Bachelor of Degree in Wildlife and Ecotourism management at Wolkite University. The researcher will like to thanks in advance for all your cooperation and participation.

#### General Instruction

- No need of writing your name
- Use (√)Mark in the box of your choice for closed questions
- Write your answer for open question on the space provided.



Could you list other problems?

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5. What measures should have to be taken to solve those problems?

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6. What is the level of tourism infrastructure and facilities in and around Lalibela town?

High  Medium  low

7. If your answer for question No 6 is low? Please write your justify? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Who is the most responsible body for potential tourism resources development in and around Lalibela town?

Government  tourism profession   
Local community  voluntary sector   
Private sector  tourists  all stakeholders

9. The implementation of tourism policy and strategy towards potential tourism resources development in Lalibela is?

High  medium  low

11. Do you think Lalibela town and its surrounding potential tourism resources are well promoted? Yes  No

If your answer for question number 11 is no? Please write your reasons \_\_\_\_\_

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12. What are the major positive and negative impacts of potential tourism resources development

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13. Do you think that the local communities are benefited from tourism development?

Yes  No

If you answer for question number 15 is not what is the reason? Please write your justification\_\_\_\_\_

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14. How do you assess local community awareness towards conservation of potential tourism resource?

Very high  high  medium  low

17. What are the solutions for those problems?

- A. Giving awareness to the community
- B. Increase government attention
- C. creates sustainable use of resource
- D. making participatory management plan
- E. Setting documentation in organized form
- F. Open discussion on the main problems and giving solution
- G. all of the above

18. What do you suggest that to develop tourism resource in and around Lalibela town?

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**ANNEX**

**ADVISORS' APPROVAL SHEET**

**WOLKITE UNIVERSITY**

**COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCE**

**ADVISORS' APPROVAL SHEET**

This is to certify that the senior research entitled “ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ ”

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Science  
(BSc) with in department of \_\_\_\_\_ undergraduate  
Program and has been carried out by \_\_\_\_\_ Id. No  
\_\_\_\_\_, under my/our supervision. Therefore, I/we recommend that the student has  
Fulfilled the requirements and hence hereby can submit the senior research to the department.

Name of major advisor: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of co-advisor: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_