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THE STATUS OF TOURIST GUIDES AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT IN AND AROUND THE CITY GONDAR SINCE 1991.

BY

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Abstract

The economy of Ethiopia has prospered for many years on agricultural products. In recent years, however, the country expands its industrialization and service providing in order to gain further incomes. Tourism is an important strategy of socio-economic development for countries which have rich historical, religious and socio cultural sites. Ethiopia is rich in multidimensional heritages. The main attractions tend to be of a historical and religious nature. The city of Gondar which formerly served as the capital of medieval Ethiopia holds the vestiges of numerous royal castles, including those in Fasil *Gebbi*, and other ancient churches attracting tourists from different parts of the world. Gondar also serves as a spring board for tourists who have vested interests to visit mount Ras Dashen of Ethiopia and others. The main objective of this paper is to provide a critical analysis of challenges and prospects of tourist Guides in and around the city of Gondar and historical development of tourist guide in the study area, with particular reference to the opportunities and challenges that the industry faces in order to provide future direction for sustainable tourism and community development to the country. The study is analyzed using qualitative method of data collection. The sample includes key informants from tourist guide centers in the city of Gondar and some other local community members and foreign tourists. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were used in addition to review of secondary sources. The results of this study show that the Gondar city administration tried to manage and preserve heritage sites in and around the city of Gondar. However, it is identified that almost all heritage site is in danger of ruin. In any country which needs sustainable development of tourist industry, there should be tourist guides' controlling mechanism. One of these mechanisms should be licensing and relicensing of tourist guides by putting standards to qualify as a tourist guide through short or long training strategies.

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INTRODUCTION

The definition of tourism is extremely broad and holds the full range of experiences. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), tourism is defined as a composite of activities, services, and industries that delivers a travel guide to individuals and groups travelling fifty miles or more from their homes for purposes of pleasure (WTO, 1997:2; Urban Tourism and Heritage Planning Manual, 2011: 11). In a broader sense, tourism is the business of providing information, transportation and other services to travellers. Thus, tourism industry is made up of companies that provide services to all types of travellers, whether travelling for business or pleasure (Foster, 1994: 21).

Sources indicate that tourism has three main functions. These are source of foreign exchange, promoting socio cultural aspects of a country and as an employment opportunity for young generation (Abate, 2013: 2; Wale, 2010: 24). The known protagonist of tourism development Emmanuel de Kadt, stated that “if undertaken consciously and methodically...tourism can make a substantial contribution to the economic and social development of many countries” (1979: 339). Thus, the economic advantages of tourism are far from debate.

According to United Nations (UN), tourism in general and international tourism in particular has tripled since 1967, accounting about 13 percent of all foreign trade. More importantly, it is pronounced that about 15 percent of this revenue is spent in third world countries (Foster, 1994: 22).

Africa is rich and diverse in nature, extent, size and variety of historical heritage resources. According to sources, the arrival of international tourists to Africa showed remarkable growth from 500,000 in 1950 to 24 million in 2000 (Asmare, 2016: 16).

Among the many African nations, Ethiopia has many recognized heritages by UNESCO. Between 1964 and 2008, the number of tourists visited Ethiopia increased from 19,836 to 383,399. However, the sector registered a devastating decline from 1974–1991, attributed to both economic and political crises (Asmare, 2016: 16).

Ethiopia has cultural, natural, religious and historical attractions. Asrat et al (2008: 11) described that Ethiopia has one of the most significant environmental and cultural reserves on earth. It is worth mentioning that the historical development of tourism in connection with motivations and forms of tourism that existed in the past has a pivotal role in order to better understand the recent tourism which could be valuable for policy makers (Inskeep, 1991: 3).

Nowadays, with the evolution of globalization, tour guiding business is becoming an important field of occupation. Besides economic advantage, it allows tourist guides to act as a bridge

between different cultures and tourist destinations (Moteke, 2014: 6). The study will focus on the challenges and prospects of Tourist Guides in and around Gondar since 1974.

In this paper the researcher provides a critical analysis of challenges and prospects of tourist Guides in and around the city of Gondar since 1974. The research attempts to meet the following Specific Objectives. The first one is assessing historical development of tourist guiding in and around the city of Gondar since the period under study. Secondly, to pinpoint the opportunities and challenges that the tour guides face in and around Gondar in order to provide future direction for sustainable tourism and community development to the country.

The study is analyzed using qualitative method of data collection. The sample includes key informants, including elderly residents, local and foreign tourists, tourism experts, hotel managers, members of local communities, and tourism bureau officials. In order to get detailed information about the issue, open-ended questions were prepared, focusing on the experiences, challenges, and related issues of tourism in the period under study. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were used in addition to review of secondary sources. To obtain the necessary data, both primary and secondary sources were consulted and cross checked with each other.

Development of Tourism in Ethiopia

Demographically, Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Africa constituting more than 80 ethnic groups. This diversity and unique features of ethnic identities in Ethiopia as well as its physical environment should have been used to promote tourism industry in the country. This is because the impact of the tourism industry on the national economy is quite significant. In 2005, for instance, Ethiopia received about US\$ 132 million from about 227,398 international tourists (Kidane-Mariam, 2015: 4).

Historically, the construction of Taytu hotel in 20th century is considered as the first infrastructure built to support tourism development in Ethiopia. Taytu hotel, also named as “*Itege* hotel” is a pioneer hotel in Ethiopia which was constructed during the reign of Menelik II. In 1947 the Ras Hotel was established at Addis Ababa. This hotel is historically well known because Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa has booked there during his stay in Ethiopia as a fugitive of apartheid. Soon the chain of Ghion hotels was established to support tourist industry of the country. In 1968 there were 4,764 beds all over Ethiopia, of which 1,870 beds were located in Addis Ababa. Among 2,794 beds located out of Addis Ababa only 1,500 beds were recommended for tourists (Angelini & Mougin, 1968: 37).

However, it is mentioned that tourism development in Ethiopia has properly started after the Second World War. Emperor Haile Selassie played a key role in recognizing tourism as a key element in economic development and in the history of tourism development in the country. Thus, in 1960s the first tourist logo of the country, titled “Ethiopia: Land of 13 Months of Sunshine” was invented as a promotion mechanism for tourism (Tafesse, 2003:973-4). This logo

symbolized Ethiopia's tourism promotion until 14 August 2016 when a new logo was employed; "Ethiopia: Land of Origins" based on Ethiopia's Spirit of Originality. (<https://www.ethiopia.travel/>)

Moreover, Emperor Haile Selassie I was very successful in attracting the headquarter offices of both the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and Organization of African Unity (OAU). This has its own contribution to the development of tourism sector in Ethiopia and enhanced tourist flow to the country (Kidane-Mariam, 2015: 4)

As stated above, national interest in the development of tourist industry in Ethiopia began in 1961 with the establishment of the Ethiopian Tourist Organization (ETO). In 1964, ETO emerged as an autonomous public organization to promote the industry and to undertake tourist activities. (Proclamation No. 36/1964; Tafesse, 2003:973-4). In 1969 Catering and Tourism Training Institute (CTTI) was also opened in order to provide training in basic skills to the stakeholders needed by tourism sector in the country. The responsibility of organizing this institute was given to ETO (Tafesse, 2003:973-4; Angelini & Mouglin, 1968: 37).

In relation to this, Emperor Haile Selassie was a forerunner in establishing legal tour guiding in the area. To this end, in 1962 E. C he has written orderly letter to Colonel Tamrat Yigezu, the then regent to the Begemeder and Semien Gevernorate General in order to assign some people who could escort Life Megazine photographers and Cameramen visiting Semien National Park (Girmay, 2016: 34).

However, tourism industry in Ethiopia culminated for about two decades following the 1974 revolution. Before the revolution, there was a rising trend of tourist flows from 19,215 in 1963 up to 73,662 in 1973. Yet the number of tourists went down to 50, 220 in 1974 and 30,640 in 1975. The policy of military regime, recurrent famine and the protracted civil war in the country were responsible for this decline. Moreover, private hotels, tour operators and travel agencies, like others, were nationalized just after the coming to power of the Darg regime (Walle, 2010: 6).

After the downfall of *Derg* in 1991, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), proclaimed new policies which could maximize tourist flow into the country. Due to the declaration of market economy, private sectors like hotels, tour and travel operation companies were established. Since 1993 regional culture and tourism bureaus have been set up in every regional state under proclamation No.43/1993, besides the establishment of Tourism Commission at national level. The renovation of the country from communist dictatorship to a federal democratic system and from command to free market economy has probably encouraged private investors to re engage in the activities related to the tourism industry. All these policies played a pivotal role in the development of tourism industry in the country (Tafesse, 2003:973-4). Thus, the 1991 political change brought about a relative increase in the arrival of tourists from 81,581 in 1991 to 139,000 in 1997, due to relative political stability and market liberalization (Asmare, 2016: 16).

The most important achievement in the period was possibly the attempt made by the current regime to decide the authority and duty of the central and regional governments to promote tourism in Ethiopia. Accordingly, the regional tourism bureaus were established by proclamation No.43/1993 with the responsibilities of developing and promoting tourist accommodations and recreational facilities, identifying, conserving and promoting tourism resources in the respective regions. Moreover, the tourism bureaus are responsible to license private service facilities and control their standards as well as to coordinate other institutions for the expansion of tourism industry (Proclamation No. 26, January 1993).

In recent times, tourism in Ethiopia has grown significantly. International tourist arrivals in Ethiopia in 2008 were 383,400 as compared to 139,000 in 1997. However, in a global perspective, tourism industry in Ethiopia remains largely at its infancy and international arrivals in 2005 represented 1.3 % of the total arrivals in Sub-Saharan Africa (17.6 million).

Tourism in Ethiopia focuses on its historical, natural and cultural heritage. The most popular historical sites are Aksum, Lalibala, Gondar and Harar (Tafesse, 2003:973-4). Recently, tourism is seen as a means of contributing to economic growth and poverty reduction for the sustainable development of a nation.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism under Proclamation number 471/2005 is authorized to strengthen the fragmented activities and guarantee harmonization of efforts being made by government, the private sector, communities at the tourism destinations and civic organizations, and to create a beneficial environment for these entities to be able to release their respective responsibilities appropriately (Urban Tourism and Heritage Planning Manual, 2011: 27).

As it is discussed above, Ethiopia has huge tourism potentials. Yet, the sector in Ethiopia has poor performance as compared to other African countries. For instance, the total number of tourist arrivals in Ethiopia and Kenya in 2006 is 290,000 and 1,644,000 respectively. Thus, Ethiopia registered more than five times smaller number of tourist arrivals than neighboring Kenya. The reasons behind this poor performance have not been fully addressed in scholarly works (Walle, 2010: 2-3).

UNESCO has registered nine heritage sites of Ethiopia as World Heritage Sites. These include the Aksum Obelisks registered in 1980; Fasil Ghebbi, Gondar in 1979; Harar Jugol, the Fortified historic town in 2006; Konso Cultural Landscape in 2011; Lower Valley of the Awash, in 1980; Lower Valley of the Omo in 1980; Rock-Hewn Churches of Lalibela in 1978; Tiya stones in 1980; and Simien Mountains National Park in 1978 (Walle, 2010: 5; Urban Tourism and Heritage Planning Manual, 2011: 3).

It is repeatedly mentioned that Ethiopia has several internationally renowned tourist attraction sites. Yet, its share in the tourism market in relation to other African countries is very low. The number of tourists visiting Ethiopia, for instance, in 2005 was 230,000 per year. This figure shows that Ethiopia is visited less than other African countries per year, such as Egypt, South

Africa, Tunisia, Morocco, or Zimbabwe. In short, tourism in Ethiopia is at its low level of progress (Urban Tourism and Heritage Planning Manual, 2011: 7).

Therefore, Ethiopia has potential tourist attraction sites in different parts of the regional States. Among these, Amhara Regional State is leading in having three universally recognised heritage resources such as Lalibela, Fasil Ghibbi and Semien mountains. Gondar, the capital of Christian kingdom during medieval period has the potential of attracting tourists due to its natural, cultural and historic beauties. Yet there emerged pitfalls with regard to promotion of the sites in order to attain sustainable development in the tourism sector.

Since 1991 tourism sector in Ethiopia is gaining momentum through the development strategy of the country which aimed at “accelerated and sustained development” strategy working to end poverty in the country. Moreover, in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the country, optimization of tourism policy is made to enhance the existing tourism resources as a driving force of economic growth for the whole country. Side by side, the federal government of Ethiopia is working hard to make Ethiopia one of the top ten tourist destinations in Africa by the year 2020 (Urban Tourism and Heritage Planning Manual, 2011: 6).

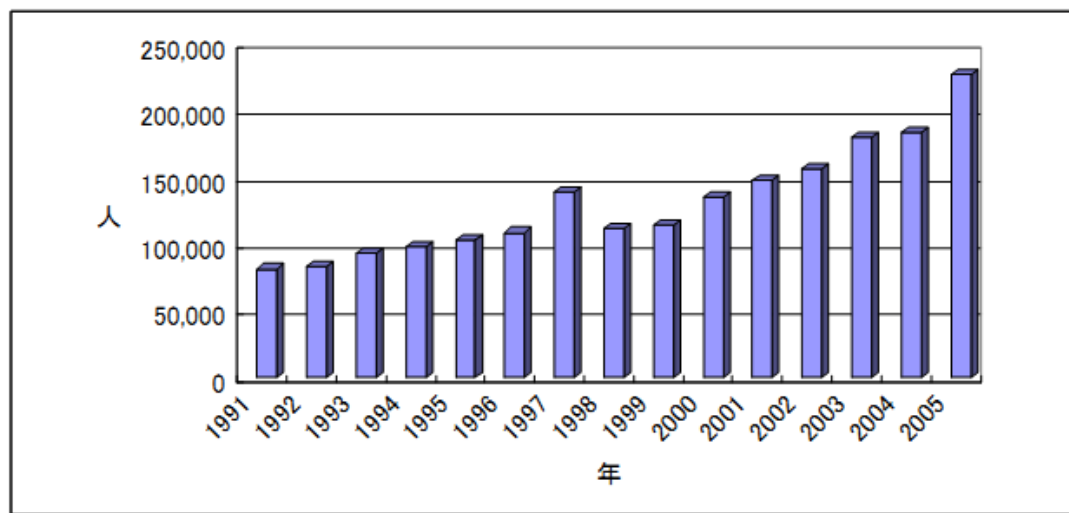
In order to meet poverty reduction strategies and promote tourist industry the government of Ethiopia has upgraded Tourism Commission to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MoCT) in 2005. Subsequently, tourism development is given due attention as an important driving force of poverty reduction strategy. Nowadays, tourism is the third biggest foreign currency earning business sector in Ethiopia, next to coffee and oilseeds (Urban Tourism and Heritage Planning Manual, 2011: 6).

Table 1: Trend of tourist arrivals and money received from international tourists who visited Ethiopia from 2002-2005.

Year	Tourists Arrived	Receipts (In Millions)		Growth Rate
		Birr	US\$	
2002	156,327	671.1	77.1	-
2003	179,910	778	89.9	15.1
2004	184,079	994.4	114.6	2.3
2005	227, 398	1,202.4	138.6	23

Source: Ethiopian Culture and Tourism, 2006.

Graph 1: Number of International Visitors to Ethiopia Based on Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MoCT).



Source: Tourism Statistics Bulletin, 2003-2005, No.8.

Due to unmanageable reasons, Ethiopia's tourism industry marked unsuccessful development and the country is earning little income of foreign exchange. Thus, the role of the government in tourism sector should be didactic and regulatory. In order to solve the pitfalls, the government should set standards for all the stakeholders of the sector. Hence, there should be inspection and grading strategies upon hotels and restaurants catering to tourists. Periodic appraisal on the quality of performance of tour companies as well as tour guides is also very vital in order to create sustainable development of tourism sector of the country (Henze, 2003: 195).

Nowadays, tourism industry is in the state of competitiveness. Countries, states and regions are in a competition with one another to win a high level of tourist experience in order to increase inflows of tourists and foreign currency as well. A key factor in this effort is to create a large resource base of professionally trained tour guides (Chowdhary, 2013).

Policies on Tour Guides

As mentioned in different scholarly works, World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA) has defined a tourist guide as an individual who guides guests and interprets the cultural and natural heritage of a destination in the language of their origin, holding specific qualification usually issued by the appropriate government body. (Salazar, 2008: 212; Koroglu & Guzel, 2013: 70). Similarly, International Association of Tour Managers and the European Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (EFTGA) also defines that a tour guide is someone who directs groups or individual tourists around the monuments, sites and museums of a city or region and communicates in an exciting and interesting way, in the language of their preference (Koroglu & Guzel, 2013: 70). Cimacio et.al., also said “a tour guide is an individual who leads groups of tourists around a town, museum or other tourist attraction” (2009: 30).

Cohen (1985) is considered as the pioneer scholar in the scientific study of tour guiding. Following his footsteps Pond (Pond, 1993: 76) and some others studied about the roles of tour guides. Pond for instance, identified some duties and responsibilities of tour guides such as being leader, educator, host, mediator and public relations representative. According to her, guides must play important roles as leaders, educators, public relations representatives, hosts, and agents which should be practiced with synergy.

Davidson & Black stated that in spite of their origin ranging from different natural and cultural environments, a tour guide is generally defined as a person who guides groups or individual visitors around the historical, cultural, and natural attractions providing stimulating and interesting explanation (2007: 28). They added that “tour guides are expected to perform a wide range of roles in facilitating the tourist experience, which might include leader, information giver, navigator, health and safety officer, organizer, and mediator” such as cultural mediator, information giver, interpreter, leader, role model and social catalyst (2007: 29).

Therefore, a tour guide is a person who, either as an employee or partner of a duly accredited travel and tour agency, guides tourists, either foreign or domestic, for payment, commission or in any form of payment on visiting the attractions and excursions. Similarly, Zillinger et. al. (2012) described a tour guide as a “leader who stops at certain places, performs a mixture of rehearsed and unprepared rituals, shows the way, tells tourists what to look at, and where to position themselves to view the attraction” (2012: 1-7) . Thus, insufficiently trained and incompetent tourist guides would ruin the sustainable development of tourism industry of a nation.

In a similar manner, Salazar expressed that tour guides are main actors in mediating tensions between existing effects of localization and globalization (2008: 207). He also added that being the only local person at a site or destination with whom tourists interact with significant amount of time, it is imperative to check and perceive the roles of tour guides for sustainable development of tourism sector (Salazar, 2008: 212). It is conjointly clear that the business of tour guiding is most likely one among of the oldest professions (Moteka, 2014: 12).

Most scholars agree that tour guiding has direct relation with tourism development, as tourist guides are bridges that connect tourists and tourist attraction sites. The role of tour guides is considered as key element in the tourism industry. Similarly, Cohen (1985: 10) listed about four specific roles of a tour guide such as arranging tours, transportations and accommodations; safeguarding the cohesion and morale of tourists; mediating between tourists and the people of the destination; and play in communicating destination-related information to tourists. Similarly, Wedaj described that through purposeful communication tour guides should disclose the natural and cultural values of places visited (2015: 2).

Therefore, tour guides have significant roles in the development of tourism sector in the country. It is an agreed fact that a capable promotion of tourism, not only allows significant earning of foreign cash but also it has its own impact in building the image of a nation (Markos, 2012: V).

There exist two contradicting views regarding the profession of tour guiding. One of these views is, it is a profession that anyone can jump in. The other view identifies the profession as neglected one ((Koroglu & Guzel, 2013: 70; Asmare, 2016: 15). With regard to this view Wedaj also described some neglected aspects of tour guiding such as modes of presentation and communication aspects as neglected parts which should be part and parcel of tour guiding (2015: 3). As it is identified by this research historical aspects are also neglected parts in the profession of tour guiding.

Studies showed that at many tourist destinations, young people harass tourists which could mess up tourists' enjoyment. Thus, the authority needs a consistent and unremitting program of instruction of its population about the importance of tourism to the economic and social development of a country (Henze, 2003: 196). Similarly, in Gondar too, youngsters also move around tourists seeking little income after conversation with them. In order to solve this problem, 'tourist police' of 16 members is organized at piazza to make movement of tourists safe. However, these 'tourist police' members were seen quarreling with tour guides (Interview: SS, MD).

In a broader context, tourist guides act as the middlemen between tourists and an unfamiliar environment. They play an important role in the triumph or malfunction of a tourism industry of a nation. The ability of tour guides even influences opinion of visitors to the host destination. Moreover, the performance of guides greatly influences tourist satisfaction and faithfulness to the place visited. In this regard the image of a country and the general travel experience and successful tourism development could be promoted (Koroglu & Guzel, 2013: 70). On the other hand, substandard tour guide may ruin the tourists' satisfaction of their visit experience and may even damage the image of a country (Koroglu & Guzel, 2013: 71).

According to Salazar "guiding is evolving and shifting from the logistical aspect to the facilitation of experience", that is from the vanguard to the adviser role (Salazar, 2008: 212). A choice of a tour destination depends on different factors. Hospitality of host community and tour

guides in particular is one of the most important factors which could make the visitors feel at home and enjoy his/her stay better (Bhatia, 2001: 53). Moreover, “a satisfied tourist is an asset and helps promote a destination in a much more effective way than any tourist promotional campaign or publicity” (Bhatia, 2001: 53).

It is mostly expressed that tourists perceive destinations through the eyes of the guide. Besides, the guided tours have a great deal of power over the impressions of tourists. In a similar manner, Overend claims that tourist guides construct sites (2012: 44-54). Thus, tour guides are forerunners in the tourism industry of a nation. When they are capable enough, tour guides have the power of changing the impression of the visit from a tour into an experience (Blyablina, 2015: 18).

More importantly, a certain level of education should be given to tour guides within the tourism sector. As being the largest service industry employing more people than any other industry, the field needs extra educational institutions offering tour guiding courses in order to establish their “identity and image” (El-Sharkawy, 2007: 79).

Some countries have the tradition of licensing and re-licensing strategies for tour guides. In Egypt, for instance, a person who is interested to work as a tourist guide should obtain license from the Ministry of Tourism and he/she must be a member of the Egyptian Tourist Guides Association. Additionally, he/she is expected to pass formal licensing examinations in general knowledge of Egyptian history, museums, cultural attraction and a foreign language that is developed by the Ministry of Tourism (El-Sahrawi, 2007: 80).

Some countries in the world have set legal grounds to authorize tourist guides. In Indonesia, for example, officials identify, certify, and manage three types of guides. These include tour leaders, who can escort visitors inside and outside the country; general guides, who are subject to local guiding in their respective regions; and site-specific guides, who are only devoted to guide at one site or attraction” (Salazar, 2008: 212).

Inskeep described that “any existing regulations applicable to tour and travel agencies and tour guides should be examined, including licensing and bonding requirements for agencies and examination procedures for tour guides to ascertain if they meet appropriate standards” (1991: 116). In this regard, tourist information facilities and services must be surveyed and evaluated with respect to suitability of location, convenience of access, capability, knowledge and foreign language competence of personnel (Inskeep, 1991: 117).

It is important to consider the potential impact of the tour guide on sustainable tourism development. With regard to the significance of tour guiding in the tourism sector, tourist guides must be carefully chosen, trained, motivated, monitored and regularly evaluated. Thus, it is very vital to train and evaluate guides as best as possible. Besides, well-organized nationwide curriculum should be developed through academic institutions and tour guide associations in

order to deliver efficient tour guiding courses in order to make tour guides who are capable in their business (El-Sharkawy, 2007: 91).

Tour guides have multifaceted roles, which may be composed of a number of sub roles which include types such as “information-giver and fount of knowledge”, “teacher or instructor”, “motivator and initiator into the rites of touristic experience”, “missionary or ambassador for one’s country”, “entertainer or catalyst for the group,” “confidant, shepherd and ministering angel,” and “group leader and disciplinarian” (Holloway, 1981, pp. 385-386).

Sahin & Balta stated that tour guiding requires proficient background knowledge in order to make the visit alive. Besides the university instruction, experience and persistent training before and after graduation from the university plays a very great role for the sustainable development of tourism sector. Tourist Guides would play a decisive role in visitors’ satisfaction from their holiday experiences and in providing a good country image in the minds of foreign tourists and in endorsement of national tourism potential. An excellent practice in this regard would be rewarding for both the individual and public profit (2007: 213). Furthermore, tour supervisors and above all the tour guides have to have very strong background knowledge and should have the knowledge of multi-disciplinary profession. Stamina and good health are also very important components of tour guides.

Tour guides “are the “spokespersons” representing the image and reputation of the company, and the “salespersons” who sell the next tour. From the host destination’s viewpoint, they are the “interpreters” making sense of the destination’s culture and heritage, the “mediators” mediating between the host community and its visitors, and the “ambassadors” entrusted with the public relations missions of the destination” (Koroglu & Guzel, 2013: 71).

A History of Tourism in Gondar

Gondar is one of centers of the “historic routes” located about 768kms from Addis Ababa to northwest direction (Angelini & Mougin, 1968: 15). In 1636 it was established as the capital city of Ethiopia by king Fasiladas (Martinez & Sahile, 2016: 40). During this period imperial castles and historical churches were built which become interesting tourist attraction sites. The castles are found inside the royal compound of 12 gates. Outside the compound there exist other remarkable buildings like the palace of King Michael Sehul of Tigrai, the bath of Fasiledas, Qusquam Mariam church and Debre Berhan Sellase church (Angelini & Mougin, 1968: 15). It is scholarly agreed that all of the Gondar castles have foreign influence in one way or another. (Rifkind, 2011: 494; Angelini & Mougin, 1968: 37). Yet, tourist guides around the castle are not in a position to mention it due to different reasons. Probably, one of the reasons is not to undermine the glory of Gondarine ancestors (Interview: SS).

Scholars identified that Gondar has expanded dramatically after the conquest of Ethiopia by Fascist Italy in 1936. Then it served as a colonial administrative center for Italian East Africa in

general and for Amhara in particular. During this period, a new style of Italian architecture was introduced to the city (Wion, 2014: 26). Gondar reveals a wonderful topography and historical heritages as well as its different cultural expressions. Moreover, the city also has the variety of Italian buildings which survived to date (Rifkind, 2011: 493).

Rifkind also mentioned that geographically, Gondar is located at an elevation of roughly 2,200 meters, and is surrounded different mountains of at least 3,000 meters high. Lake Tana, which is the source of the Blue Nile, is located to the south of the city. The city is very well known in having a complex of castles constructed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Besides, the city of Gondar is known in its forty-four historic orthodox churches survived until today. (Rifkind, 2011: 494). In the 17th and 18th centuries, Emperor Fasiledes and his successors have constructed Palaces within the royal enclosure. These castles of Gondar are surrounded by a 900 meters long wall with about 12 gates. The architectural beauty of the castles is one of the markers of the country's ancient civilization. As a result, the royal enclosure, Fasil Ghebbi, was registered by UNESCO as a world Heritage site in 1980. (FANOS Ethiopia Tours: www.fanosethiopiatours.com).

Hotel construction in Gondar started with the coming of Italian occupation. Subsequently, Rifkind stated that in 1938 Gondar had owned two small hotels with fourteen bed rooms (2011: 500). During Italian period, *Ethiopia Hotel* and *Yalew Ayker Hotels* were built in Gondar with 30 and 12 bedrooms respectively. Following them, Africa Hotel, Gennat Hotel and Gondar Hotels were also built accounting not more than 30 bedrooms together. Nowadays, hotel infrastructure is mushrooming in the city of Gondar similar to the rest of the cities in the country. To this end, Goha Hotel with 65 bedrooms, Landmark Hotel with 63 bed rooms, Florida Hotel with 61 bed rooms, Quara Hotel with 51 bedrooms, Taye Belay Hotel with 80 bedrooms are among top tourist standard hotels constructed in the city (Gondar City Administration Culture and Tourism department service providing Institutes organizing case team, Yearly Report, 2009).

The Simien Mountains National Park, which is located about 120 kilometers north of the historic town of Gondar, is also another tourist destination site of the area. The Park is established in 1969 and it is also registered by UNESCO in 1978 (Girmay, 2016: 24). The park is identified as one of the most impressive landscapes in the world with Sharp mountain peaks and deep valleys. The highest peak which is named as Ras Dashen, measures an altitude of 4620 meters. Moreover, the park is home of wild animals that are endemic to Ethiopia such as the Gelada baboon, the Semen fox and the Walia Ibex. Yet, the park has been registered as one of the endangered natural attractions in 1996 as a result of the decline of the number of Walia Ibex. This was happened due to the encroachment of human beings towards the park. However, recently, the number of Walia Ibex is increasing after the government has taken counter measures of conservation to the area. (FANOS Ethiopia Tours, www.fanosethiopiatours.com).

Different sources confirmed that untrained and informal tour guides and escorts have the ability to create chaos on the side of visitors. Consequently, this could result in poor image of the

country and negative effect on tourism development. Chowdhary & Prakash, for instance, have identified a lot of examples where guides are not familiar with history. According to them, this can spoil the image of tourist destination (2009: 164). Training tour guides before they are licensed is an important part for controlling the issue of illegal guides from misleading tourists (Chowdhary & Prakash, 2009: 165).

Chowdhary & Prakash also stated that European countries have established an official tour guide licensing system and authorization of tour guide associations. Similarly, in France and Great Britain there is a licensing system for guides while their training takes place either at university or college. In Australia, too, guide licensing is a matter of regional authority and could be taken place by the respective regional government (Chowdhary & Prakash, 2009: 165).

With regard to communication strategies, it is commented that tour guides must be fluent in at least two foreign languages in addition to their home language. Besides, he/she must be in good health, and have basic historical knowledge of a particular site. It could be very interesting if they took academic courses in the fields of art, music, drama, history, geography, and speaking skills. There must be an authority who forces guides to take exams and authorize them when they pass exams. Similarly, authorities in Great Britain request guides to take guiding courses, complete course work, and take examinations in written and oral form. The Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council has also set nationwide standards for tour guide training in Canada. Thus, Chowdhary & Prakash stated that in developing countries where nations demand to control the supply of tourism, they are also “responsible for the supply of professionally trained tour guides” (2009: 167).

Tour guides should not only be disseminator of information to visitors in their day to day activities. The role and responsibilities of the tour guides should include, being good host, travel manager, interpreter, and responsible leader. They should critically follow necessary approaches of responsible tourism with concern for the environment and responsiveness for host communities (Chowdhary & Prakash, 2009: 184).

In Gondar city and the surrounding areas, there are wonderful places to be visited. These include Fasil castle; ancient churches- Selassie, Gemjabet Mariam, Qusquam church; Guzara Palace; Kossoye scenic beauty, Semen mountains national park and Temqet Cultural celebration. The Temqet which is equivalently known as the Baptism of Jesus Chirst, is colourfully celebrated in Gondar on *Terr* 10th and 11th (18th to 19th of January) annually (Wion, 2014: 59).

Since Gondar was medieval capital it attracted different visitors worldwide. James Bruce, Charles Poncet, Martin Flad and other travellers had visited Gondar and wrote accounts to the region. Poncet, who was well known as a French doctor in Ethiopia and lived in Gondar in 1700, has a detail accounted about the epiphany celebration at Fasil Bath (Wion, 2014:24).

Conservation strategies of heritage site in Ethiopia in general and in Gondar in particular started after 1941 liberation of the country from Italian occupation. After restoration, the emperor

established National Heritages Conservation Authority (NHCA). Through this authority repairing of damaged heritage sites was conducted across the country. As a result, some heritage sites in Gondar like Debre Berhane Selassie were also repaired during this time. Side by side the emperor had invited British nationals to visit heritage site of Ethiopia. Due to his relation many European visitors also visited Gondar. During this period there were free tour guides in Gondar, particularly, in Fasil Ghebi who guide for free. Getnet Yigzaw and Belay Gidey are among well known free guides of the period (Interview: SS).

During the Derg region tour guiding was also culminated due to the policy of military government. National Tourist Operation (NTO) was established and run the business of tour guiding in the country. Then tourists came to Gondar through this organization and were put under the surveillance of the government to control them from intelligence service. That means government representatives were also serving as tour guides. (Interview: MF). Thus tour guiding during this period has little attention. From 1974 to 1991 Goha hotel served as the main tourist catering place of the period (Interview: SS).

After 1991 there was a policy change in all sectors of the government. One of its part is it ended NTO's monopoly in the tourism sector of the country (Tafesse, 2003: 973). In addition to establishment of regional culture and tourism offices, the opening of Tourism departments at the University of Gondar in 2004 was considered as success in tourism development (Tafesse, 2003: 974). However, the department is organized as the department of Tourism Management at which much of contents deal with management issues rather than historical, cultural and natural issues.

Tourism Management in Gondar Today

Due to the aforementioned reasons, a large number of tourists are coming to visit Gondar and its heritage sites in the surrounding every year. In the last three years, international tourists who visited Fasil castle in 2005 E. C, 2006 E.C and 2007 E.C were 38169, 26611 and 23376 respectively. This figure shows decline in the number of tourists which would have an adverse effect on economic development of a nation.

Table 2: number of tourist who visited Fasil Ghebbi

Year (in Ethiopian Calendar)	Number of tourist who visited Fasil Ghebbi		Total	Money earned		Total money earned
	Domestic	International		From domestic	From International	
2007	97, 459	23, 376	120, 830	947,651	4,635,200	5,582,851
2006	120, 907	26, 611	147, 518	557,200	2,407,350	2,964,550
2005	124, 353	38, 169	162, 522	1,082,362	3,816,900	4,899,262

Source: Gondar City Culture & Tourism Department, 2008 E.C. Report.

The above table shows decline in the number of tourists. This is due to different factors. One of these factors can be mismanagement by tourist guides. In Gondar and the surrounding there are two types of tourist guides. Local tourist guides and tour operators (regional & national level). Local tourist guides are organized in the form of associations. These tourist guides are organized in Fasil castle (57, 4 female), Debark (70 men), Kosoye (68 men), Gorgora (only 2 men) (Interview: MY; Gondar City Culture & Tourism Department, 2008 E.C). According to the figure, the associations of tour guides established around Gondar are not gender inclusive. Thus, much has to be done to promote women tour guides to be competent enough and participate in this economic sector. Moreover, the Gorgora site has small number of tourist guides. This shows that tourist guiding has given little attention particularly out of Gondar city.

As a result, tourist guiding in and around Gondar has a numerous of pitfalls. To begin with, membership criteria for tour guides' associations is not clearly set. Membership is usually made based on area of residence not based on educational status. In any scenario anyone who developed fluency in one of foreign languages can join membership and start guiding whatever his educational background is (Interview: SS). This could have its own effect on conduct of tour guides as well as historical facts being transfer to visitors.

Absence of standardization in tourist guiding remains the main challenge of sustainable tourism development. Here in Fasil castle there is no standard not only in history telling but also in amount of payment for tour guides. For instance, foreign tourists and domestic tourists have no standardized amount of payment. Besides, German-speaking guides charge higher than those English-speaking. In turn, English-speaking guides charge higher than Amharic guides. Moreover, in Fasil castle, tour guiding is not served in other Ethiopian languages like Afaan Oromo or Tigrigna other than Amharic (Interview: SS). Besides, tour guides tend to ask exaggerated fees from tourists in any case (Interview: MD).

In relation to the above view, local informants confirmed that there is no binding law in relation to visiting and guiding. There is no any written guideline or law that binds tour guides when conflict with each other appears. Some tour guides have unfriendly relationships with church officials. Hence, some church officials allow some tour guides to get in to the church but not others. Or some tourists may be allowed to take pictures but not others (Interview: SS). Thus, there should be any standard policy to make tourist attraction sites open or if necessary, close.

The other challenge of tour guiding in Gondar and the surrounding is the relationship of tour guides with tourists and with each other. The relationship of tour guides is mostly superficial. They persist on criticism of each other rather than learning together. Their relation with tourists is basically focused on the income they can get from them. At every junction of their conversation they want to earn something. Even though they are paid well, they want to get commission from tourist catering institutions. For instance, they want commission from hotels

due to the fact that they bring tourists to them with the expense of tourists' safety (Interview: MD, MY).

Thus, tour guiding became an occupation that anybody who claims fluency in English and other foreign languages can join. But tour guiding in Gondar and the surrounding faced a number of challenges. According to local informants, for instance, Fasil castle has been repaired so many times due to its damage by natural and human effects. However, tour guides persist in telling tourists that the castle is still alive since the time of its construction. With regard to art, tour guides claim that paintings in the church mainly in Debre Berhane Selassie are the 17th century original paintings still alive to date. However, it is assured that the paintings of the church are repainted in 19th century (Interview: MY, SS). Gondar is visited by not only lay people but scholars will also come and visit the area. At this scenario, they may conclude that the tour guides are layers.

It is also confirmed that Gondar has been looted at least twice in 19th century. During the reign of Tewodros II and the invasion of Sudanese Mahadists, Gondar was looted and its castles were ruined. The wall surrounding the Fasil castles was totally ruined. (Woin, 2014: 9). Ras Asrat Kassa, governor general of Semien and Begemidir Awraja was in charge of reconstructing the wall of Fasil Ghebbi. It was during his period that the wall was reconstructed. Later Kentiba Seyoum Gebre Egzabher of Gondar has organized the construction of wall gates with iron door (Interview: SS). Yet, most tour guides in Gondar still persist in describing that all of the buildings are original constructions of the 17th century and still alive to date (Interview: MD).

It is perhaps due to the above problems that some tourists do not want to enjoy the support of guides. It is reported that some tourists who seek to visit Semien Mountains National Park said "we would pay fee for the guides but we do not need guides to be with us." Meaning, they paid fee for tour guides but made a visit without tour guide (Interview: MD, MY). This could have a devastating effect on sustainable tourism development of the country.

The other challenge of tour guiding in Ethiopia in general and in Gondar in particular is absence of specialization. It could be better if there are content specialized tour guides at specific tourist attractions. That means it could be better if art specialized people guide at churches and monasteries; men of urban studies specialization around the city; and men of natural environment specialists guide around the natural attraction areas. According to local informants, a tour guide who made a deal with tourists stays with them until their departure guiding heritage sites, churches, natural environments and cultural celebrations (Interview: SS, MD).

Despite numerous challenges, tourist guiding in Gondar has some promising future. The construction of asphalted road is more important not only for tourist flow but also for earning of sustainable income for tourist guides. Besides, Gondar has standardized airport which could support tourist flow to the city. The *Azezo* airport of Gondar was expanded in 2000 to

international standards. Thus, it enabled easy tourist flow to the historic city of Gondar (Woin, 2014: 63; Interview: MY).

Recently, youth of better academic status are joining tourist guiding profession. Thus, tourism in Gondar could be led by proficient guides that could enhance tourism development too. In addition to this, NGOs & government organizations are actively involving in giving in service training to tourist guides. University of Gondar is named as forerunner in giving trainings for tourist guides (Interview: SS).

One of the strategies of the current government is bringing transformation not only in tourism sector but also in tourist guides. Thus, it is advised that local tour guides should transform into tour operators within couple of years. There are some tour guides that fit the standard and upgraded into tour operators. This could be model for the rest of tour guides (Interview: MY). However, some tourist guides, though they are in a position to upgrade themselves to tour operators, remain a position for a long period of time. This on its part affects others job seekers not to join the position in their place (Interview: MF).

Moreover, the government is designing the policy of licensing and relicensing of tourist guides. Tour guides are being invigilated to get the licence of guiding during joining the associations. With this, policy competent tour guides would be promoted to the business of tour guiding. Thus, this will contribute in bringing sustainable development of tourism industry economic development of a nation. However, type of exams taken by tour guides are mentioned as substandard (Interview: MD).

CONCLUING REMARKS

In and around Gondar, tourist guides support tourists during their stay in many ways. However, there are some challenges of tour guiding in and around the city of Gondar. Lack of enough knowledge /mostly historical, Disagreement among tourist guides, Disagreement between tourist guides and tourist police, illegal tourist guides, ethical problem are some of features observed in the sector. Besides some tourist guides who are better economically attempt to select tourists to guide, for instance, they chose European tourists than African, American tourist than Asia, according to the currency they hold. Relatively speaking, tour guides in Fasil castle are better in ethics as well as in knowledge than tour guides working outside of Gondar.

Promising futures are also seen in the sector of tourist guiding in and around Gondar. Among these, Youth of better academic status are joining tourist guides. NGOs & government organizations are becoming active by giving training to tourist guides; Local tour guides are transforming into tour operators; and the government is designing the policy of licensing and relicensing of tourist guides.

From this study the following recommendations are drawn. In the first place the economy that is being gained from the tourism sector should be utilized for expanding tourism infrastructures of

Gondar. Besides, it should be clearly seen that the community around the tourism destinations benefiting from the income of the tourism industry. Secondly, the heritage sites that are found in and around the city of Gondar should be restored with skilled personnel to stay with the physical feature as they were built before.

Last not least, continuous training should be to the tourist guides who are working in the area. In particular, department of “tourist guiding” should be opened as a specific department at the University of Gondar which could offer course in collaboration with other departments such as department of Management, History and Heritage Management, Linguistics and Law. By doing these, it could be possible to attract as many tourists as possible into the historic city of Gondar.

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