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## **PILGRIMAGE TO HOLY SITES IN WALLO: PAST AND PRESENT**

Assefa Balcha

### **ABSTRACT**

*Participation in pilgrimages to one or more of the holy sites has been, and is, viewed as a spiritually-inspired unifying and assimilative force that transcended ethno-linguistic, cultural, regional, and religious boundaries. Holy sites are embodiments and living testimonies of peoples' deep-rooted socio-cultural, religious, historical and healing traditions. These sites are meant to protect and nurture core socio-religious values and attributes essential for peaceful coexistence, communal welfare, mutual collaboration, and resolution of conflicts and disputes. For most people taking part in a pilgrimage has been considered as a major spiritual accomplishment in their lifetime. Based on the data gathered from both primary and secondary source materials, this historically-informed article attempts to describe and analyze the multifaceted nature of socio-religiously-motivated pilgrimages to the many shrines and churches in Wallo and the accompanying changes that these popular traditions underwent over time.*

**KEY WORDS:** Christianity; Churches; Islam; Holy Sites; *Sheikhs*; Shrines; Wallo; *Wali*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Pilgrimage or *ziyāra* to the holy sites has been an age-old spiritual and socio-cultural tradition among the Orthodox Christian and Muslim communities in Wallo. Despite the difficulty tracing the exact time period when people actually began to travel to the holy sites, it appears that the increasing reputation and popularity of some

religious establishments and shrines seem to have persuaded the faithful to pay homage to them. Mecca and Jerusalem are the two major destinations of pilgrimage for the world's Muslim and Christian adherents respectively. Pilgrimage has been "a feature of most of the world's religions, and its origins probably go back long before the written record." The intrinsic search for a long-lasting solution to their physical or spiritual problems seems to have compelled human beings to identify and endorse some places as sites of pilgrimage.<sup>1</sup> The reason/s why people occasionally or regularly visit these holy sites differ from place to place. Depending on the needs and expectations of pilgrims, the number and composition of attendants in a particular site may also significantly vary. Pilgrimage to a holy site should be understood as a 'preplanned spiritual journey' being undertaken to accomplish a specific task/s at a particular place and time. This spiritually-inspired activity deserves to be closely studied as it is part and parcel of peoples' social/religious history. The role of the holy sites in easing the day to day problems and challenges of the public was at the center of their indispensability, sustainability and uninterrupted service. All pilgrimage sites have been proud of their founders who were known to have performed certain miraculous deeds in the past. Their purported spiritual deeds helped the sites become sacrosanct and permanent abodes of the intercessory and healing power of the holy men who first chose these sites, resided and served their communities for long, died and buried at the same place. Many devotees paid visit to these places believing wholeheartedly that the omnipresent spirits of the dead *wali* are still capable of doing miracles and mediating between human beings and God. Devotees would strenuously pray to earn the spiritual assistance and the blessing (or *baraka*) of the holy figures. By doing so, they would get what they would want to obtain. For the majority of pilgrims, the need for maintaining their health and wellbeing, overcoming their ailments,

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1 Gemechu Jemal Geda, "The Faraqasa indigenous pilgrimage center: History and ritual practices," M.A. Thesis (Norway: University of Tromsø, 2007), p.20.

getting consolations for their current personal troubles and life challenges often take precedence. Others might be interested in obtaining instant solutions for their economic or social problems.

It should be remembered that some selected churches, monasteries and shrines as well as hot or cold springs, being considered holy sites consistently serve their troubled visitors across religious lines. This highly-esteemed societal service has promoted and strengthened inter-faith harmony in the region. These sites also served as places of interaction and experience sharing among the attendees on diverse personal, local and communal issues. As the purported significance of pilgrimage sites spread, they began to attract people from within and outside of the country. The unquestioning devotion of attendants of diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds and their cooperative involvement in ritual ceremonies being held in honor of the holy figures would noticeably facilitate 'dialogue and understanding' among them.<sup>2</sup>

### **Holy Sites in Wallo: Beginnings and Growth**

In Wallo the majority of Christian and Muslim pilgrimage sites, whose function range from pure or mainstream spiritual worship to that of learning religious education and healing methods, were established in the period between the 9th and the late 19th centuries. It was in between AD 9th and 13th centuries that the first churches and monasteries as well as mosques were founded in *Beta Amhara*, a generic name that constituted most of the today's Wallo. For example, the Island church of the famous St. Estifanos (St. Stephen) and the church of Debre Egziabher in the vicinity of Lake Haiq are said to have been built in the 9th and 13th century respectively. In an effort to expand Christianity and uproot pre-Christian local beliefs and practices from the Lake Haiq region, Emperor Lalibela built at Amba Geshen the church of Egziabher Ab (God the Father), a church where a segment of the True Cross was deposited later. According to Almeida, "Emperor Lalibela ordered the first church [Amba Geshen]

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2 Ibid, 48.

to be built there ... in order to uproot the worship of the Devil by heathens and sorcerers who offered him many oxen and cows in sacrifices underneath a bower of Endod" (Almeida, 1954:89). In addition to the aforementioned churches, Geshe Mariam in Ambassel, Mekane Selassie in Wore Ilu, Genete Giyorgis and Atronse Mariam in Amhara Sayint, among others, were established prior to the infamous Muslim-Christian conflict of the 16th Century. Local oral tradition also recounts that many churches had been in existence around the today's Dessie area such as Tosa Felana, Yegof, Gerado, Kedijo, and Tigaja, and all of whom were said to have been destroyed by Ahmed Ibrahim al-Ghazi or *Gran* in the 16th C. This indicates that the erstwhile position of Christianity in the region, later renamed Wallo, had been greatly eroded, which was to be restored long after the end of the Moslem ascendancy of the 16th century and the settlement in the subsequent centuries of the Oromo. As we see below, this reassertion for the most part was realized after the massive and forceful conversion to Christianity of the Wallo Muslims during the reign of Emperor Yohannes IV, that is, in the last quarter of the 19th century.

The introduction and eventual dissemination of Islamic beliefs and ritual practices, radiating initially from the Red Sea littorals and the Gulf of Aden Coast, had similar effects on the region. The initial penetration of Islam into the present day Wallo had a long history of connection to the coastal areas. Oral tradition has it that through the instrumentality of the Ulama of Ifat and some Muslim Arab immigrants the initial Islamization process in the region had taken place between the 9th and 13th centuries. This makes Islam contemporaneous as well as a competitor to Orthodox Christianity in Wallo. Islam had actually expanded in a relatively slow pace, however, as opposed to the widespread belief that Islamic religious communities were first seen during the 16th century, a number of Islamic communities were known to have existed in the area long before the Moslem-Christian wars of the 16th century. At least people living in areas adjoining Ifat had definitely accepted and professed Islam as their faith centuries before *Gran's* appearance. As oral

informants asserted, the establishment of mosques in south-eastern parts of Wallo goes to as far back as the 12th century. Despite that, during Ahmed Gran's brief period of hegemony when large number of people embraced Islam with or without coercion, the degree of expansion and consolidation of Islam in Wallo had been greatly enhanced. This resulted in the loosening of Christianity's grip and Muslim preachers and institutions actively and enthusiastically proselytized and intensified the process of Islamization in the region. By the end of the short-term antagonism, the Muslim communities had already established a number of 'mosques, urban and trading settlements, shrine centers, commercial areas, cultural itineraries and graves ...',<sup>3</sup> and these edifices rekindled the religious and cultural interpenetration of the Islamic and non-Islamic communities. As Abbink (1998) has correctly observed, the trajectory, '[t]hey (the Muslims) had their phases of violent antagonism and confrontation, but in the past centuries evolved a *modus vivendi* of practical everyday co-existence and cooperation, especially in the last three centuries'.<sup>4</sup>

This peaceful process of interpenetration continued up until the coming to the political scene of Emperors Tewodros II and Yohannes IV in the second half of the 19th century. Their internal religious policies were highly influenced by external threats from the Mahdists and the Egyptians "with which the Wallo Muslims were allegedly associated." Being perceived inimical to the religious unification of the country under the Orthodox Church, the Wallo Muslims were confronted with a stark choice of either conversion/reconversion to Christianity or to leave the area. Many Muslims were forced to migrate to other places. Sitti Momina, also dubbed *Ayyo Momina*, the founder of the famous shrine at Faraqasa in Arsi, is said to have fled from her birth place Sanqa, Yejju Wallo, to escape persecution (Geda, 2007:36ff). Emperor Yohannes IV (1872-1889) vigorously

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3 Kassaye Begashaw, "The Archaeology of Islam in North East Shoa", p.12.

4 Jon Abbink, "An historical-anthropological approach to Islam in Ethiopia: issues of identity and politics," *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 11(2), 109-124, December 1998, p.113.

implemented this brazen policy following the conclusion, in 1878, of the religious council he presided over at Boru Meda, Wallo. The conversion to Christianity at Boru Meda of the two powerful local Muslim chiefs, Mohammed Ali and Amedie Liben being christened as *Ras Mikael* and *Dejach Haile Mariam* respectively, immensely assisted the Emperor to build several new churches in Wallo. Churches were also built in areas where a number of Muslim Sheikhs had previously established their centers of worship and religious learning. Withstanding the chaos and instability the religious policy of Emperor Yohannes had created for some time, the practice of Christian-Moslem intermingling, one of the dearly cherished social capitals of the inhabitants in the previous centuries began to resurface and develop with renewed vigor after the passing away of the sovereign in 1889. In short, the massive religious conversion and reconversion of the local people over the centuries was a decisive factor for the retention among the Wallo public of mixed beliefs and sentiments that were compounded by little or no fanatical bias.<sup>5</sup> For instance, while many Orthodox Christians paid visit to several Muslim shrines, many Muslim families would likewise travel to a number of churches and holy springs. We shall see this and related matters in some detail later. Based on the available literature on the subject of pilgrimage in Ethiopia, interreligious participation is a widespread phenomenon, not unique to Wallo.

Although the professed objectives and activities of the holy sites duplicate in large measure, each site has its own narrative to beef up its reputation and to attract pilgrims throughout its long history of existence. This can easily be understood by asking pilgrims why they have been, and still are, attracted to one or more of the holy sites. As hinted above, the preference to pay homage to a particular holy site of an Orthodox Christian or a Muslim person has been determined largely by his/her mind-set, personal conviction and choice as well as her/his wishes and expectations for the simple reason that no one would pay visit to a holy site without expecting something in return. We may call this personal action as “transactional relationship.”

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5 Assefa Balcha, “Traditional Medicine in Wallo,” p.36.

However, pilgrims expectations have been myriad and wide-ranging, some of which may appear strange or unusual. While some pilgrims went to their preferred holy site/s in order to express their gratification by presenting their votive offerings for the fulfillment of the vows they had made previously, others being highly optimistic to have solutions to their immediate personal, familial or social problems would pay a visit for the first time to participate in the communal prayer ceremony and make vows. Even if there have been some gender-based differences, the demands of most of the pilgrims often revolved around regaining their health, bearing children or getting wealth, maintaining their marriage and household peace, long life, and success in business, or about good inter-personal relationships, chastisement of their adversaries, real or imagined, and much more. It is also common to hear pilgrims asking spiritual assistance in issues such as to stop bearing children, to have peaceful divorce from wedlock, to get a hint about their stolen property or to identify the person who afflicted them with a 'magical' attack etc. In other words, these sites were expected to cater to the spiritual, secular, social and private needs of their devotees. These socio-culturally accepted beliefs and practices seemed to inundate, if not necessarily overshadow the purely spiritual services of the many religious establishments in the region.

Veneration of local Muslim holymen or Saints (Ar. *Awliya*, sing. *Wali*) is a good illustrative example. It appears that pre-Islamic cults of nature spirits had been transformed into and mingled with Islamic traditions of saint worship. The introduction and expansion of mystic orders (*tariqas*) in Wallo at least since the end of the 18th century had given rise to the emergence of "various centers of learning and local pilgrimage" (Hussein Ahmed, 1986:96). It was from Harar that 'Sufism in the form of the Qadiri order was introduced into Wallo.'<sup>6</sup> With the exception of the shrine at Geta, which is from *Tijaniyya*, the other Muslim shrines in Wallo were of the *Qadiriyya* Sufi order.<sup>7</sup>

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6 Hussein Ahmed, "Harar-Wallo Relations Revisited," p.112.

7 Jon Abbink, "Transformations of Islam and Communal Relations in Wallo," p.68.

These esteemed native holy men, often dubbed *sheikhs*, to whom shrines had been dedicated, were perceived as local saints.<sup>8</sup> The Muslim saints were believed to have been endowed with tremendous wonder-working, or mystic, powers, including a reputation for curing illnesses and helping people suffering from other non-physical problems. "Sufi's best traditions of tolerance, humility, openness to local traditions and public service enabled Islam to be" embraced as an organic part of the community and as a "major foundation for its survival and continuity."<sup>9</sup> Even some of the student disciples of prominent *wali* had established their own schools of learning in other places which later became local pilgrimage centers. For example, *Sheikh* Siraj Mohammed Awel (b. c1885), a famous *sheikh* from Dana in Yeju, had first established a shrine at Tiru Sina in Jille Dhumugaa (in Oromiya Zone, Amhara region). He later founded other shrines in Mekdessa, Chafa Robit, Jubaruhman, Chiri and Karakore.<sup>10</sup> Sufi shrines, serving as trans-religious pilgrimage centers or *ziyāra* (places for venerating the tombs and shrines of deceased *wali* or saints)<sup>11</sup>, have continued to attract both Orthodox Christian and Moslem adherents within, and outside of, Wallo.

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8 Elevating Muslim religious figures to sainthood might have been one of the earliest influences of Christianity.

9 Alem Hailu, "Islamism and Its Threats to Africa's Rich heritages of Pluralism: Ethiopian and Wallo as Cases from the Horn of Africa," *Horn of Africa*, Volume XXIX, 2011, p.18.

10 Meron Zeleke, "Ye Shakoch Chilot (The court of the sheikhs): A traditional institution of conflict resolution in Oromiya zone of Amhara regional state, Ethiopia," *African Journal of Conflict Resolution* 10 (1). 2010a, pp, 63-84.

11 For the social and cultural acceptance of local pilgrimage centers and their role in the diffusion of spirit possession, see Minako Ishihara, "Spirit Possession and Pilgrimage: The Formation and Configuration of the *Tijjānī* Cult in Western Oromoland," *Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, ed. by Svein Ege, Harald Aspen, Birhanu Teferra and Shiferaw Bekele, (Trondheim 2009), p.505.

The most valuable societal duty the *Sheikhs'* courts regularly execute at the shrines emanates from their possession of informal, quasi-legal power, a socially-validated authority with which they resolve variety of cases ranging from murder to that of theft and interpersonal disagreements on financial, marital or familial issues such as entitlement to land and property. People present their cases by making vows and demand their adversaries to come to the shrines to prove their innocence and make oaths in front of the *Sheikhs*. For instance, a famous *Sheikh* at Mekoy, at a place customarily referred to as *Mesal* (lit: vow making) near Kemisie town, located about 70 km from Dessie, is still serving a cross-section of the Muslim and Orthodox Christian population in Wallo. It is believed that for fear of being cursed for seven successive generations, which may also entail the untimely death of the wrong doers and their family members, the guilty ones would not try to deny their criminal deeds; and they would eventually agree to recompense and get pardoned by the wronged party through the *sheikh's* mediation (Oral Informants).

Tesfaye Berhanu (2006) has briefly touched upon the reason why Wallo has been referred to as a land of *wali*, *sheikhs* and *ulama*, and almost all of them had extraordinary healing capability and clairvoyant power of foreseeing the future. They also provided inestimable assistance in allaying the dread and apprehension of the countless people who consulted them in their lifetime, he added.<sup>12</sup>

Most of these local *Sheikhs*, who were later elevated to sainthood, made considerable contribution to the propagation and consolidation of Islam; and in recognition of their spiritual service, shrines have been dedicated in their names while they were still alive or soon after their death. In most cases shrines were founded around the Wali's tomb (*wujib*) or mausoleum (*qubba*).<sup>13</sup> The tombs of *Sheikh* Mohammed Shafi of Jama Negus and *Al-Hajji* Bushera of Geta may

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12 Tesfaye Berhanu, *The Four Eyed* (Amharic). Addis Ababa: Berana Printing Press, 1999. p.3.

13 Minako Ishihara, "Beyond Authenticity: Diverse Images of Muslim Awliya in Ethiopia," *African Study Monographs*, Suppl. 41:81-89, March 2010, P. 84ff.

be taken as two classic examples of local saint veneration and local pilgrimage centers in Qallu, Wallo. We also find highly-venerated ancestral shrines that had been initially dedicated to a number of local Muslim saints across the entire province. As a process of syncretism, elevation of prominent Muslim religious personalities to sainthood may have been one of the earliest influences of Christianity. For instance, Dirre *Sheikh* Hussein of Bale has been, and is, perceived as a patron saint of ordinary Muslims of Ethiopia as well as Northeast Africa.<sup>14</sup> The famous Muslim shrine he had established in Bale in the late 18<sup>th</sup> C has been, and is, providing wide-ranging services to both Muslims and Christians alike. His shrine, being a very popular pilgrimage center for those who cannot afford the religious journey or *hajji* to Saudi Arabia, has been dubbed: "Northeast African Mecca."<sup>15</sup>

Among the many holy figures or *wali* who were known to have been endowed with supernormal prophetic and health-giving power in Wallo included *Getaw/Sheikh* Sherefedin of Borena; Seid Mujahid of Albuko; Ahmed Adam of Dana; *Sheikh* Seid of Maybar; *Sheikh* Indris of Mesale; *Sheikh* Seid Ibrahim of Chalie; *Sheikh* Mohammed al-Anni of Raya; *Sheikh* Mohammed Meawa of Mersa; *Sheikh* Ahmed Lahadi of Dessie; *Sheikh* Hamza Boru; *Sheikh* Adam Derqa and *Sheikh* Ahmed Yusuf.<sup>16</sup> Some of them have been remembered for composing prayerful chants and litanies called *menzuma*.<sup>17</sup> Let us see what local oral tradition recounts on how the shrine at Dana was founded by

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14 Sintayehu Tola "Conservation of Dirre Sheikh Hussein Heritage Site" [www.hdm.lth.se](http://www.hdm.lth.se)

15 Ibid, 10-13.

16 For a very brief history of the life and deeds of these individuals, see Tesfaye Berhanu, *The Four-Eyed* (Amharic). (Addis Ababa: Berana Printing Enterprise, 1999 EC).

17 For the nature and purpose of *menzuma*, see Assefa Mamo, "Some Prominent Features of the *Menzuma* Genre in Wallo Region," M.A. Thesis, Literature, (Addis Ababa University, 1987). On the type and personalities of *menzuma* composers, see Solomon Teshome Bayu, *Folklore: Its Nature and Research Perspective* (Amharic) (Addis Ababa: Far East Trading Private Ltd., Co, 2007EC), pp.228-229.

*sheikh* Aniye, named correctly as *Sheikh* Mohammed al-Anni (d. 1887). He is said to have introduced *chat* (*Catha edulis*) usage in Wallo. Aniye was living in Rayya and was expelled from there by Emperor Yohannes IV. He then settled at Dana, Yeju. He resided and died at the same place and he soon became one of the venerated local Muslim saints in Wallo with a shrine dedicated to him. It is not clear why the use of *chat* has been associated with Aniye. But it is reasonable to argue that associating the use of *chat* with this famous Muslim local saint underpinned the need for legitimizing the culture of *chat* chewing. As enunciated by many users, *chat* has a reputation for curing almost all kinds of human ailments. In fact, chewing *chat*, a mildly narcotic plant containing an active psycho-stimulant substance known as cathinone, and drinking coffee seem to have assisted *chat* chewers to stay awake and pray all through the night, envisioning the spiritual assistance (or *Baraka*) of the *Sheikhs* so as to acquire “the remedy for all their ills, the consolation for all their griefs [sic], and the solution to all their problems.”<sup>18</sup>

Local Muslim Saints were believed to have an amazing capacity to diagnose and cure a wide variety of human illnesses having physical or spiritual causations. Based on this belief, pilgrims seeking miraculous cures to their internal or external illnesses caused by spiritual or physical agents would simply drink smear their bodies with the soil of the saints' tombs. People would also gather around their tombs and emphatically pray to avert actual or perceived natural adversity such as drought, famine and communicable human or animal diseases. It is worthy of note that these local shrines and the *wujib* (burial) grounds, often surrounded by purposefully protected indigenous trees and shrubs, were ideal spots for ritual and religious services such as to conduct *wadaja* prayer sessions. Communal prayers at these sacred spots were mostly performed to tap the intervening power of the *Wali*, a purportedly helpful spiritual force being harnessed to alleviate the problems of individuals and society at large. People honestly

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18 Sintayehu Tola “Conservation of Dirre Sheikh Hussein Heritage Site” p.7.

believed that the intercessory role of the *Wali* has always been an indispensable tool to reverse all types of misfortune that would threaten the survival and livelihood of the community of sinners. In the same way, the most important reason why pilgrims have been attracted to the shrines was to free themselves from the unwanted possessions or the direct/indirect influences of malignant spiritual beings.

Similar to the teachings of Christianity, Islamic cosmology underlines that many human illnesses of the body or the mind are in most cases caused by noxious spiritual entities either by their own or in the service of some ill-motivated individuals who deploy them to do evil to their fellow human beings. The adoption of a group prayer ritual called *wadaja* from the Oromo inhabitants was an important cross-cultural development. The settlement in Wallo of the Oromo since the turn of the seventeenth century had tremendously impacted the religious and cultural beliefs and practices of the pre-Oromo inhabitants of the area. This interaction had also cherished the ethnic heterogeneity, cultural admixture, and cross-fertilization, of the beliefs and values of the local population. The accommodating nature of Christianity and Islam as well as the indigenous belief system, made the region a melting pot of religious and local traditions. The tradition of preparing *wadaja* ritual session, a ceremony of group or communal prayer, for warding off or tackling individual, family and community problems greatly helped the acceptance and popularity of Islam in Wallo. It was in fact with the passing of time that the *wadaja*, an originally Oromo ceremonial, had been modified to fit into the conventional Islamic prayers through which participants could easily obtain the blessing and protection of Allah as well as other benevolent spiritual entities. The idea that conducting *wadaja* session for tackling myriads of human problems, primarily of its alleged significance in alleviating health-related challenges, seems to have been the major reason for the acceptance and popularity of the ritual amongst the local population until now.

The *wadaja* ritual often accompanied by *chat* chewing, coffee drinking, animal sacrifice and, above all, the collective chanting of prayers in and around the Muslim shrines induced pilgrims to visit the sites in different occasions such as on Fridays or during *Mawlid*, the annual celebration of the Prophet Mohammed's birthday. By actively participating in the *wadaja* prayer and healing sessions, pilgrims genuinely believed that they would be liberated from a host of human or spiritually-caused personal, familial and societal problems. People visiting the shrines for a range of reasons presented votive offerings and attended the joint prayer sessions (*dua*) for a couple of days. Quite conceivably, the need for participation in the ritual prayer and healing session/s has been the main pulling factor and the uninterrupted flow of pilgrims to the shrines for centuries.<sup>19</sup> People paid visits to the shrines for various reasons. After saying urgent prayers and greet with great respect of the shrines' custodians (i.e. living descendants of the Muslim saints), often bearing gifts, they consulted them about their personal or social problems in private. Apart from developing self-confidence and feeling of success individually, the attraction of pilgrims from across the social spectrum and different religious persuasions seemed to have strengthened interfaith harmony, mutual tolerance and peaceful coexistence among the region's Christian-Muslim inhabitants. This was a valuable sociocultural heritage in Wallo. And this culturally advanced expression, as Abbink (2007) remarks, was a hallmark of 'a remarkable instance of religious intermingling, [which] exemplifies sociocultural hybridity, pragmatic tolerance, and the accommodation of diversity.'<sup>20</sup> Abbink has postulated that the "shared poverty and desperation [of both the Christian and Moslem populations in Wallo] may have contributed to local

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19 The same is true to the attraction of pilgrims to local shrines in different parts of Ethiopia. For a similar argument in Arsi, see Gemechu Jemal Geda, "The Faraqasa indigenous pilgrimage center", pp.51-78.

20 Jon Abbink, "Transformations of Islam and Communal Relations in Wallo, Ethiopia," p.66.

coexistence and mutual sociability."<sup>21</sup> Beyond such a reductionist and dubious assertion, however, conversion and reconversion as well as the continuous intermingling and interaction over the last several centuries must have been responsible for the emergence of a unique mode of coexistence, interdependence and harmony of the two religious communities in Wallo. Poverty, by any stretch of the imagination, could have been a viable denominator for promoting peaceful interaction and mutual respect among a non-affluent public. It appears that such cultural coalescence and interaction was further pronounced by the accommodating and assimilative traditions that the Oromo settlers brought to the region. It must be this cultural amalgam that made Wallo conducive for nurturing an 'enormous effervescence of ideas'<sup>22</sup> and spiritual intermingling. Mixed Christian-Muslim participation has been a very common scene while paying their respect to local Muslim saints or conducting joint *wadaja* prayer sessions as well as during their visitations to holy springs. The following examples may demonstrate the existence of a shared notion of the curative value of holy waters and hot springs.

It was in search of miraculous healing that Muslim patients like their Christian counterparts every so often visited holy springs (*tabal* or *tsebel*). This suggests that the need to obtain a cure or to regain health, often cut across religious boundaries. An outstanding example in this regard is the existence at a place called Bilen (about 3 Km south of the center of Dessie) of a sacred spring named after *Sheikh* Ali Jirru, a venerated holy figure in whose name the spring has been identified. Local oral tradition has it that the *sheikh* with his blessing endowed the spring with a miraculous healing power.<sup>23</sup> The blessed water of this spring, gushing out beneath a big *Shola* (*Ficus*)

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21 Ibid, p.67.

22 For a recent and very brief observation of interreligious cooperation and tolerance in Dessie, see Ghelawdewos Araia, "Wallo: Microcosm Ethiopia and Exemplar of Ethiopian Unity," *Institute of Development & Education, Inc*, October, 2011.

23 Personal observation and communication with Oral Informants.

tree, was, and is, frequented by both Muslim and Christian visitors. This suggested that springs have been changed from earlier notions of being "abode of nature spirits" to that of "spring of saints".<sup>24</sup> The tradition has been maintained to these days that a new holy spring named after *Sheikh* Tolha in Dessie has become a popular visitation site for both Muslim and Christian patients. Likewise, at a place called Harbu in Qallu a mythical *sheikh* by the name Zechariah is believed to have endowed a hot-spring with inestimable curative powers. With his blessing and a dramatic pierce of his wonder-working spear into the ground, the *sheikh* created a therapeutically important hot-spring at this particular spot. This belief could have been a local variant of the legendary achievement of Ibrahim who made available the blessed spring of *Yezemzem Wuha* (Water of *Zemzem*) with his holy grace or *Baraka* at Mecca. The Harbu hot spring is still famous for curing a variety of skin diseases. Irrespective of their religion, patients would bathe their bodies together, praising and blessing the curative powers of the hot spring and its 'creator'. In spite of the association of the *sheikh* and his alleged role in endowing the hot spring with medicinal virtue, however, many people traveling to the hot spring are simply interested in obtaining fast recovery or healing from their ills.

The veneration of St. Gebre Manfas Qedus or Abbo (also the mythical Gebre-Kristos) as a patron saint of the infirm including leprosy-sufferers, and St. Tekle Haymanot as a patron saint of patients suffering from skin diseases by both Muslims and Christians, can be a living proof of the interpenetration of the two major religions. St. Tekle Haymanot being perceived a benefactor and protector of health and wellbeing has been praised by the laity as 'Lord of my health'. Many Muslim families used to drink and smear their bodies with the holy water and *Emnet* (burnt ash of incense, also called holy ash) of the church of St. Tekle Haymanot. Some Muslim individuals even commemorated the saint's feast day by offering *tella* (locally brewed beer), *qollo* (roasted barely) and *dabbo* (bread) once in

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24 Spencer Trimingham, *Islam in Ethiopia*, p.260.

a year on *Nehassie* 24 (2 September).<sup>25</sup> In the words of Jan Abbink (2007):

In this mixed setting of Christians and Muslims, both indigenous to the area and sharing many customs, a pattern of open borders and accommodative social practices developed. Muslims and Christians frequently intermarry, socialize, attend each other's festivities, and undertake joint activities. Sometimes Muslims accept the mediation efforts of Christian priests and the healing power of Christian priests and saints, to whom there are also some shrines in the area. On the other hand, many Christians visit the tombs of Muslim shaykhs (for instance, at mawlid) and consult the shaykhs' living descendants in cases of personal problems, illness, and other affliction.<sup>26</sup>

Such cheerful festivities seem to have cultivated a religiously and culturally pluralistic society based on a fairly strong inter-regional and inter-communal foundation. Marshaling inter-religious cooperation in times of adversity has also served as a valuable building block of mutual trust, social cohesion and solidarity.

Pilgrims of predominantly Orthodox Christians still continue to travel to attend religious ceremonies held at some famous churches or monasteries in Wallo. One of the much-celebrated religious festivities being attended by hundreds of thousands of pilgrims is *Geshen Mariam* Church in Ambassel, Wallo. As hinted above on the establishments of the two churches, *Geshen* attracts more and more pilgrims from time to time as its history has been spread through the conventional faith-based associations such as *Mahbere Qedusan* and the expansion of the electronic media in recent times makes it much easier to reach the not-well-informed public and youth. *Geshen* has been revered for housing the *Gemad* or a parcel of the True Cross together with a number of sacred relics and artifacts. Emperors Dawit

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26 Jon Abbink, "Transformations of Islam and Communal Relations in Wallo," p.72.

II (1382-1412) and Zara Yaqob (1434-1468) have been accredited for bringing from Egypt to Ethiopia and depositing on Mount *Geshen* of the True Cross on which Jesus Christ was believed to be crucified respectively. After the coming of the True Cross to *Geshen* and its entombment beneath the Church of Egziabher Ab, the name Mount *Geshen* earlier known as *Debre Negodgwad* ('Roaring Mountain') and *Amba Nagast* ('Kings' Plateau') owing to its service as a royal prison for nearly two centuries (1270-1446), was replaced by *Debre Kerbe*, meaning literally: 'a place where the Cross is located'. This last name might have been associated with the story that Emperor Zara Yaqob's spiritually-inspired search for a cross-shaped high plateau resembling Golgotha was finally resolved by selecting Mount *Geshen* as a proper resting place of the True Cross, hence, *Debre Kerbe*.

Setting aside its role in the secular political history of Ethiopia, visiting a sacred site is the main motivating factor for many religious tourists. For the majority of the devotees, however, travelling to *Geshen* is more than participating in the yearly jovial ceremonies held on 21st Meskerem (September) and 21st Tir (January). More than anything else, pilgrims being eager to obtain healing to their bodily or mental derangements strenuously plead while kneeling or prostrating in front of the icons or depictions of holy figures lighting candles or *Tewaf* (candles made of beeswax); and as a sign of devotion they drink a small amount of the sanctified holy water (*Tsebel*) and a potion of the much esteemed *Emnet*, that is, the burnt ash (ash from the incense burner) or holy soil (soil from the churchyard). Pilgrims normally paint their foreheads, often in cross-shaped style, or any part of their body with *Emnet*. Apart from buying souvenirs such as hand curved stone, wooden crosses or items serving as amulet/talismans, paintings of angels/saints, also religious texts and manuscripts, pilgrims often take some *Tsebel* and *Emnet* back home for their family members and their neighbors or for their ailing relatives, believing that they would obtain similar benefit by drinking and sprinkling their homes with the holy water and painting their bodies with *Emnet* or taking a small potion of it. Hanging a bottle of *Tsebel* above the entrance of a house has been considered beneficial

to ward off anything evil and keep the house sanctified. Those who did not go to *Geshen* would compete to greet the returning pilgrims with utmost respect hoping that they would get blessed as well. Before embarking on a return journey many pilgrims also make vows and swear to offer gifts if their prayers are heard and their wishes fulfilled (Chaillot, 2002:144).

As the demands and wishes of pilgrims differ, the kinds of gift items they promise to offer to the churches are also exceedingly diverse and myriad to mention all. However, offerings often constitute items needed for everyday liturgical and ritual activities, such as candles, umbrellas, curtains, carpets, resins, incense, crosses, pictures, perfumes, not to mention the most common gifts of money, cattle and jewelry. Pilgrims buy many of the gift items from the small traders who temporarily flock to the holy sites to sell assortment of merchandises required for the occasion. It is not uncommon to hear pilgrims publicly announce or give their testimonies on the amazing fulfillment of their wishes in accordance with their previous vows and they also encourage others to do the same. Many pilgrims also make all sorts of vows, including traveling by foot if their demands get answered until next year. In short, gifts are made by those who demand penance for their past sins and those who wish to be assisted with their current problems. Some pilgrims who even travel by foot or by draught animals to reach ahead of time do stay around the church and devotedly pray for days. For some pilgrims returning home without having the Eucharist or Holy Communion is unthinkable. Some newly-wed or older couples as well as bachelors and widows take Holy Communion at *Geshen*, which they consider it a once in a life time opportunity to confess their sin, obtain absolution and cleanse their body and spirit. And this sacramental experience give them spiritual rejuvenation and strength. Most rural folks from far-off places walk on foot for several days to join the religious rites and to listen to more than a few hermit monks and preachers who provide lectures on various spiritual and worldly issues without intimidation and fear. The atmosphere becomes so enchanting and elating that women pilgrims frequently ululate and chant religious

songs in unison for two or three consecutive nights. The spirit of collegiality is also expressed in different ways, such as sharing food and drinks or other personal stuff among themselves.

Taking advantage of the annual celebrations, people of the surrounding community have a good chance of getting financial benefits by renting their houses temporarily or selling cooked food and drinks, including live animals for slaughter. The youth and the able-bodied would avail themselves to help the weak and the old in every way possible such as carrying their stuff to the summit of the mountain and washing their feet when reaching there. The other vital point worth noting is that pilgrims from distant places and travelling to *Geshen* using motor transport often make elaborate plans and preparations on the necessary daily provisions of foods and drinks as well as their lodgings, including the use of tents, till they return to their homes. They execute these tasks in a cooperative and friendly mood. Moreover, several communities do also offer diverse kinds of assistances to the pilgrims passing through their towns or villages. Pilgrims while travelling in groups also share ideas on issues like the presence and efficacy of holy springs in other places and similar other health promoting experiences; and such intimate discussions often enable them to create lasting relationships. Chaillot confirms: "When people hear of miracles in one place, many will go on pilgrimage to the place" (Chaillot, 2002:143). Miracles of holy springs have been mostly associated with their past history of curing the chronically ill.

The pilgrimage to Lalibela to celebrate the Ethiopian Christmas or *Genna* has had a long history. The carving of 11 churches from the rocky volcanic mountains of Lalibela in the 12th century AD bestowed the Roha area a new name called the Second Jerusalem. This was so because travelling through the Sinai to Jerusalem, captured by the Muslims in 1187, was impossible for Ethiopian pilgrims to participate in the annual celebration of Jesus Christ's birthday there. King Lalibela, who was greatly assisted by angels during the construction time as widely believed and later elevated to Sainthood, then decided to build another Jerusalem at Roha, his capital city before it took the new name Lalibela. This same city was

also identified as Adafa previously. This historic site being described by foreign visitors and travelers as the most beautiful and poignant man-made edifice of medieval Ethiopia attracted pilgrims and visitors from within and outside of the country. Participating in the spectacular religious *Genna* celebration at Lalibela being maintained for the last several hundred years with little or no interruptions has been depicted as 'like going back in time' in a 'place and tradition untouched by modernity'. For local pilgrims who travel to Lalibela in need of faith healing, the most important thing they want to accomplish is to have their bodies massaged with the most revered Cross called *Afro Aygeba* (lit: 'A Cross that won't let you down'); to get drenched with the sanctified holy water (*Tsebel*); to smear their foreheads or any part of their diseased body with the soil from the church ground or the sacred ash (*emnet*) being collected from the censer after the end of the Holy Mass. But this is not always the same to those pilgrims attending the annual festival or visiting the churches on other occasions. In short, the majority of pilgrims make vows to come to the same church or to other churches or monasteries in future.

## **PERCEPTIBLE CHANGES AND CONCLUSION**

Despite witnessing some apparent changes in Christian-Muslim relationships in recent years and the increasing trend in what may be called 'religious tourism', local pilgrimage centers have managed to maintain their integrity and promote the affiliation of the two religious communities in Wallo. Though one can see a sharp increase in the number of pilgrims traveling to various Christian holy sites in recent years, it is a daunting task to distinguish and measure the degree of religiosity between the genuinely devoted adherents and those who may be considered as religious-oriented tourists/visitors. Evidently, those who belong to the latter category often make themselves busy roaming around videotaping or taking photographs, sightseeing and admiring the surrounding geographical features, having festivities in group as well as collecting local souvenirs. There are also individuals who simply come to

observe the celebrations and have some fun. As most parents would not oppose their daughters to attend religious festivals, several girls take the opportunity to travel and spend some time with their boyfriends in a relatively relaxed mood and freedom. There is also an unmistakable clash between the traditional, commonly accepted 'code of conduct' and that of the changing or 'modern-day' manners of the new generation. The author himself saw a hermit monk arguing with a couple of metropolitan young women on the inappropriateness of wearing around the church area of modern outfits particularly of trousers. The monk then advised them that wearing the hand-woven traditional *shemma* costume (*qemis* and *kuta*) is the conventional and legitimate dressing protocol. Disregarding the unacceptability of their actions, youngsters being in group and pitching their own tents freely chew *chat*, smoke cigarettes and drink beer or other alcoholic beverages which they brought with them.

Many dishonest individuals from different urban areas deliberately travel to steal the personal belongings of pilgrims who are hemmed in in the limited space available often slumbering out of exhaustion or fully engrossed in their prayers pleading forgiveness for their sins or being totally absorbed in making vows and in anticipation that their demands will be heard and their future desires fulfilled. Theft has become a daunting challenging in recent years that both the police and church authorities repeatedly warn pilgrims to be vigilant and to watch over their money or personal possessions all the time. Paradoxically, however, on top of being places of atonement, holy sites have continued to attract ill-motivated individuals who do not hesitate to committing all kinds of sinful deeds in and around these sacred spots. Though unofficial and theoretically disallowed, some if not all pilgrims devote most of their time to staunchly appeal or demand for some sort of supernatural punishment upon their adversaries. Those who were denied fair justice seem to have obtained internal peace and tranquility after making vows confidently and waiting for their complaints to be addressed through some form of spiritual intervention. In fact, while demanding satisfying solutions to their countless problems,

emanating in most cases from flawed interpersonal dealings, pilgrims express their emotional outbursts in the form of repetitive pleading and weeping for hours and hours.

One may not be surprised to overhear pilgrims talking loudly about the most common topics of marriage and employment; also issues like HIV and DV Lottery are among the ones being raised. Those who have been infected with the deadly virus enthusiastically pray to be rescued from untimely death or to obtain miraculous healing. It may be worth quoting what an elderly person comments in this regard. He says: "While the number of pilgrims who would come to genuinely pray for the country's peace and security is noticeably dwindling, those who come to attend church ceremonies particularly of the younger generation are significantly increasing. This drastic upsurge in number has very little to do with religiosity. Rather, most youngsters seem to be interested in their own affairs, such as winning the DV Lottery or obtaining exit visas so as to migrate to the US or any western European nation". This may not be surprising in a country where the youth has been the prime victim of political, social and economic injustices for long.

This same argument is particularly valid for figuring out why the revival of religion in a massive scale and the increasing engagement in religious affairs of the youth had begun to surface after the demise, in 1991, of the *Darg* regime. In the social sphere the military junta made an effort to inculcate the Marxist ideology at the expense of the religious and local belief systems. In the political arena the military government, adopting Marx's dictum: 'religion is the opium of people', attributed the country's material and cultural backwardness to the people's beliefs in supernatural beings and their adherence to religion. By unleashing a relentless campaign to restructure society in a radical way, the political cadres avowed to root out every stripe of religious beliefs and practices. An official communiqué issued by the Ministry of Information entitled 'Religious Belief is an Enemy to the Revolution' called for the immediate eradication of religious beliefs from Ethiopian soil. To get rid of religious beliefs and institutions, more than a dozen strategies, *inter alia*, the closure of

prominent churches and monasteries, and their subsequent transformation into public art centers, and the collection and removal of all religious texts were considered.<sup>27</sup>

When the lack of freedom of worship of the *Darg's* irreligious administration came to an end and when religious activities resurrected due to the loosening of the state's firm control, the construction as well as inauguration of new churches and mosques had been intensified. This may be taken as one of the long-awaited reactions to the 'official atheism' of the socialist regime and the spiritual and cultural corrosion that characterized the period. By revitalizing their faith as a source of moral inspiration and spiritual emancipation, the majority of the Ethiopian public began to turn to their mosques and churches in a spirit of liberty and gusto. A specific example in this regard is the multiplication of public notices and announcements on 'Extraordinary and specially prepared spiritual journey to such-and-such church or monastery in such-and-such month and time.' Such religious travel announcements have become a very common scene across the entire nation. Many of the parish churches in the country organize group journeys, which require logistical preparations, obviously stimulate the transport and other business activities. These journeys often involve a mix of several youngsters and elderly individuals of both sexes.

Not surprisingly, the ostensibly major political transformation, in 1991, from Socialism, also dubbed "Garrison Socialism" by some critics, to so-called free-market economy of the post-Darg period has accomplished very little to alleviate the multi-branched problems of the youth. In such a situation, one of the alternatives for the many unemployed, enraged and despairing youth was to make a religious pilgrimage to supplicate the Almighty and other benevolent spiritual beings to listen to their pleas and help them realize their immediate or long-term aspirations. If seen from a different perspective, however, the issue of religiosity among the youth has been debatable

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27 Assefa Balcha, *A Century of Magico-Religious Healing: The African, Ethiopian Case (1900-1980s)*, (New Jersey: The Red Sea Press, 2015), PP.190-191.

and/or questionable. To what extent a complex set of taboos allegedly indispensable at pilgrimage sites has been strictly observed or applied may give us a clue on the changing nature of this age-old tradition. Chief among them, what may be labeled as 'ritual purity' takes precedence. The preliminary findings of this study show that the majority of the young generation does not give the required level of attention to this purportedly vital issue.

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# THE ROLE OF *GUDDIFACHAA* AND *MOGGAASAA* IN THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE OROMO SOCIETY\*

Gemeda Hunde Wordoffa

## **Abstract**

*This paper examined the role guddifachaa ‘child adoption’ and moggaasaa ‘incorporating individual’, ‘clan/ethnic groups’, and ‘war captives’ among the cultural practices of the Oromo people. Guddifachaa and moggaasaa are different customary practices, which the Oromo people have been practicing for different purposes. The practices have been playing significant role in the social construction of the Oromo people. However, their contributions to the social construction of the people have not been well studied and acknowledged in academic circles. The traditional practices are exposed to*

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*distortion. Based on empirical data gathered through fieldworks, and document analysis, this study analyzed the customary practices of guddifachaa and moggaasaa, to elucidate their role. The data were analyzed in view of social construction and symbolic interpretation theory. The practices have been assisting the Oromo people in establishing relationships with non-Oromo ethnic groups. Furthermore, the Oromo people have been using the customary practice of moggaasaa in maintaining the established relationships and facilitating the peaceful coexistence among the Oromo people and the non-Oromo groups. Finally, the paper pointed out that since the moggaasaa ritual fully incorporated different non-Oromo ethnic groups to the Oromo people, nowadays, it is difficult to identify the 'new' Oromo and the 'true' Oromo. Likewise, it is difficult to find out the 'pure' Oromo.*

## 1. Introduction

The Oromo people are the largest in number and the most widely dispersed people in Ethiopia. According to the Population and Housing Census Report (2007:16), in Ethiopia the Oromo population was 25, 488,344. This number accounts 34.5% of the total population of the country. The Oromo people are composed of approximately dozens of tribal clusters (Bender: 1971). They inhabit the wider area of the country, from the Tigray region of Ethiopia to the Tana river in central Kenya (Aguilar 1998:1), from the western border of Ethiopia to the far east of the country to the area between the western highlands to the Blue Nile in the north, Gojeb in the south and in the large part of Shoa of Ethiopia (Kebede: 2005, Baye: 1986). Oromo represent one of the largest Cushitic-speaking groups inhabiting the Horn of Africa, they are predominantly found in Ethiopia.

The Oromo people are divided into two great moieties; Borana and *Bareentu*, which further divide into a collection of clan families. The *Borana* or *Boran* Oromo, besides the current Borana zone of Oromia, inhabit the former provinces of Shoa, Wollegga, Illu Abbabor, Jimma, and Sidamo <sup>1</sup> in Ethiopia and the northern, northeastern and central Kenya, and Somalia (Asmarom:1973).

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1 The writer's spelling is retained.

The *Bareentu* or *Bareento* moiety divided into clans and inhabits different regions in Ethiopia. Accordingly, they inhabit West and East Hararghe, Arsi, Bale, and East Shoa, Zones of Oromia Region; Dire Dawa City Council, the Jigjiga Zone of Somali Region, Harari Region, Zone three of Afar Region, the Oromo Zone of Amhara Region, and also the Raya Azebo *woreda* of Tigray Region (Mamma, 1986; Nuro, 1989).

Different Oromo groups inhabit the wider area in Ethiopia. Although they are interrelated and share common culture, slight differences are observed between their culture. The relationship that exists among different Oromo groups is complex. In this relationship, the cultural practices of the groups influence one another. These influences, which the cultural practices exhort on each other, are resulted in the extinction of some cultural traits of the Oromo people. Since the role of culture is significant in the social, economic, and political development of a society, its contribution should not be disregarded.

## 2. Guddifachaa and Moggaasaa

### 2.1 Guddifachaa

The word *guddifachaa* ‘adoption’ is derived from the verb *guddisuu* ‘to care for, ‘to bring up’, ‘to foster’, ‘to rear’, and ‘to adopt’. In this sense, *guddifachaa* applies to the practice of *daa’ima guddifachuu* ‘adopting a child at its infant stage’. According to the customary rule of the Oromo people, *guddifachaa* also signifies the practice and the process of child adoption. It is a mechanism through, which infertile parents or the parents with few numbers of children could get more children. The adopted children through *guddifachaa* are considered and treated equal to the biological children; both by the adoptive parents and by the whole members of the society.

Sometimes the term *guddifachaa* denotes the practices of adoption and incorporation. In this sense, *guddifachaa* includes child adoption and incorporation of individual, clan/ethnic groups, and war captives to the Oromo society. Some writers, (Hassen, 1990;

Blackhurst, 1994; Tesema, 2006; and Gragg, 1986) use the term *guddifachaa* as a holistic term to discuss different types of adoptions; i.e. *daa'ima guddifachuu* 'adopting a child', *hiyyeessa guddifachuu* 'orphan fostering', *ilma galu guddifachuu* 'adopting a child later returns back to her/his 'true' parent', and *moggaasuu/Arsoomsuu* 'incorporating an individual, clan/ethnic groups, and war captives'.

Unlike the term adoption, which is all-encompassing, in Afaan Oromo different terminologies - *guddifachaa* 'child adoption' and *moggaasaa* 'incorporation of an individual, clan/ethnic groups, and war captives' are used to designate these cultural practices. The Oromo society performs these practices in line with the traditional Oromo Gada system. Hence, depending on their purposes, the Oromo people conduct *guddifachaa* and *moggaasaa* according to the customary rule of the Oromo society. The practices also follow their own processes. To elucidate the practices of *guddifachaa* and *moggaasaa*, the paper presents types of *guddifachaa* and *moggaasaa* practices among the Oromo society.

### 2.1.1 *Daa'ima Guddifachuu* (Adopting a Child)

We have discussed that the Oromo people have established different types of adoptions with their multiple purposes. *Daa'ima guddifachuu* is one of the types of adoptions, which is widely practiced among the Oromo society. *Guddifachaa* is a traditional mechanism used by the Oromo society as a response to the infertility that leads to lack of children in a family.

The practice of *daa'ima guddifachuu* includes either *ilma guddifachuu* 'adopting a male' or *intala guddifachuu* 'adopting a female'. However, in the Oromo society *guddifachaa* encompasses both sexes, the practice prefers male to female. Tesema (2006: 41) states that the main purpose of *ilma guddifachuu* is to secure the family line, to get an heir to family property and to have economic support during old age or poor health. A family also adopts males to enlarge the family size and to get more labor forces.

Some Oromo groups, for instance, the Arsi Oromo and the Borana Oromo emphasize more on the male's line. According to the

customary rule of Arsi Oromo and Borana Oromo, females do not inherit their fathers' property. Furthermore, the customary rule of Arsi Oromo states that after marriage, females change their fathers' names to their husbands' names. This reveals that in Arsi Oromo and Borana Oromo, *guddifachaa* mainly aims at securing continuity of the lineage and getting inheritance of the father's property.

Most of the time, *guddifachaa* conducts among blood relatives, who are from father's line. It may also be practiced among members of the same *gosa* 'clan' or among the people who have strong social relationships; i.e. between friends, neighbors, etc.

### 2.1.2 *Hiyyeessa Guddifachuu* (Orphan Fostering)

The Oromo people use to establish strong relationships among their members. The relationships are established in line with the customary rule of the society. They serve in any endeavor, which aimed at enduring the wellbeing of the Oromo society. For instance, the Arsi Oromo establish relationship among their members. They identify the relationship in three principal ways. The first is *aanooma* 'relationship through descent or parentage'. The second is relationship through *soddooma* 'relationship through marriage'. *Aanooma* and *soddooma* relationships indicate the people's system of classifying *worrooma* 'family relationship'. The third and the broadest form of relationship among the Arsi Oromo is *Arsoomaa* 'Arsihood', which refers to the cultural homogeneity and the *aaloo* 'the customary rule of the people'. Arsihood provides the people with an identity that cuts across allegiances based on moiety and from explanation of patrilineal relationship of the Arsi Oromo. This strong relationship among the Arsi Oromo is also serving in the practice of *hiyyeessa guddifachuu*.

*Hiyyeessaa guddifachuu* is one of the practices of the Oromo groups, which focuses mainly on the established relationships among the Oromo society. In customary Oromo society, the close relatives are responsible to foster orphans. Ayalew (2002) discusses the practice of *hiyyeessaa guddifachuu* 'orphan fostering' as the process by which children are related to a family or persons, who are not their

true parents to be reared, nurtured and educated with social and practical skills.

The Oromo people usually give the priority of raising orphans to the grandparents, who are from father's line. If either the grandparents or the brothers of the deceased are incapable to take the position, because of poor health, low income, or social factors (such as drunkenness and addiction), the community elders and the relatives' assign the orphans to other close relatives, who are from the father's line. If the deceased does not have a close relative, a responsible person is selected from the *gosa* members, who live in the nearby area, to foster the orphan. If the orphans are large in number, they are assigned to relatives or the responsible persons. The person, who fosters an orphan, is expected to provide everything that necessitates for the child's development. Furthermore, he is responsible to educate and nurture the orphan, according to the culture of the social group.

In Arsi Oromo, when a married man dies, the brother of the deceased inherits the wife, the children, and the property of his deceased brother. The priority of inheriting is given to the elder brothers. If the deceased does not have any brother or his brother is incapable to heir the wife and the children, because of poor health, old age, low economic status, or unacceptable personal behavior, the nearest relative would take the responsibility. Owning the position of the deceased, the successor ought to rear the children like a 'true' father. To succeed the position, the successor should get approval of the relatives, elderly members of the community, the *gosa* leaders, and the religious leaders. When the heritance is approved, the handover is performed according to the customary rule of Arsi Oromo and the Waataa people.

In the customary rule of the Oromo society, the father's line is responsible to foster orphans. Sometimes where there are convincing reasons, the orphans' *gosa* can allow the fostering to the relatives of the orphans' mother's line; i.e. to the grandmother (orphan's mother's mother), orphan's mother's brothers (uncles), and orphan's mother's sisters (aunts). Fostering the orphans to the mother's line

requires approval of the orphan's *gosa* members. To ratify the fostering, the orphans' *gosa* members consider economic and social status of the adopter. The parents, who adopt the orphans, give oath to raise the orphans as the 'true' parent and not to discriminate them. The practice of orphan fostering is performed according to the customary rule of the Oromo society.

### **2.1.3 Ilma Galu Guddifachuu (Adopting a child, who later returns back to his/her 'True' Parent)**

*Ilma galu guddifachuu* is one of the customary practices of the Oromo people. The *ilma galu guddifachuu* is widely practiced among the Borana Oromo. *Ilma galu guddisuu* means literally 'bringing up a child, who later returns back to his/her 'true' parent, when he/she is grown up'.

The aim of *ilma galu guddifachuu* is mainly economical; i.e. to satisfy the economic need of either the adoptive or the 'true' parent. The practice also aims to support the true family in rearing children. According to the customary rule of the Borana Oromo, if the true family could not rear their children, close relatives or every member of the Borana Oromo are responsible to adopt the children. The practice involves both male and female children. The families with lesser number of children, either male or female, may conduct the adoption to get more labor force/forces. Aged grandparents also practice formal grandchildren adoption, according to the customary rule of the Borana Oromo. In Borana Oromo, the adoption practice favored females to males. Ayalew (2002) asserts that one can observe many female children, who adopted to their grandparents, in most Borana *olla* (village). The adopted children live with grandparents' until they mature or the death of their grandparents.

The adopted males serve their new parents' in different works. They build the cattle pens, take cattle to distant pastures, and carry out different domestic works. Girls are mainly engaged in household works.

*Ilma galuu* adoption can conduct among different clans and social groups. The adoption also confers the adopted children equal

right with the biological children of a family. They are assigned to do the same works with the biological children and other family members. The adopted teenagers also involve in easy works near homesteads.

Like *daa'ima guddifachuu* and *hiyyeessa guddifachuu* practices, the 'new' family, who adopts children through *ilma galu* practice, also feeds, clothes, fosters and lives with the adopted children in the same house. The new family is also responsible to bring up the adopted children in the culture of the Borana Oromo.

The children, who adopted by *ilma galuu* adoption, are given cattle, when they are supposed to return back to their biological parents, or while they engage in marriage. The adoptive father pays for dowry and assists them in establishing social relations and economically. In a similar way, the adopted girls are offered heifers for their services. The offerings are considered as the payment or acknowledgement for the services the children have provided.

The *ilma galu guddifachuu* is different from *daa'ima guddifachuu* and *hiyyeessaa guddifachuu*, as the adopted children remain to be their true parents. The children, who are adopted by *ilma galu* adoption, return back to their true parents before or after their marriage. Even if the adopted children by such kind of adoption remain near the adoptive parents, they do not change their biological fathers' names. They also remain to be members of their biological fathers' *gosas*. In other words, the practice does not change the status of a child and the child's relationship with the biological family. The Oromo people perceive it as a variation of *guddifachaa*, and the term adoption is then not appropriate. Hence, instead of signifying it as 'adoption', rather can be considered as a kind of 'longer borrowing' of children, for legally the children remain the children of their biological parents, and will refer to them for any ritual purpose, inheritance etc.

## 2.2 Moggaasuu (Incorporating Individual, Clan/Ethnic Groups, and War Captives)

The Oromo society employs a number of cultural mechanisms to establish relationships with the outsiders. *Moggaasaa* is one of the

mechanisms<sup>2</sup>, which is unique and significant cultural trait of the Oromo society. There are two types of *moggaasaa* practices in the Oromo society. The first type of *moggaasaa* signifies the practice of *fedhaan moggaasuu* 'incorporating individual, clan/ethnic groups with the consent of the incorporated individual, clans, or ethnic groups.

The practice of incorporating non-Oromo groups to the Oromo society is practiced according to the customary rule of the Oromo Gada system. Tesema (1986:51-52) discusses that in Macha Oromo, the whole procedure of adoption, whether individual or group adoption was undertaken according to the Oromo *Gada* rules, in which the elderly members of the community and the Oromo Gada officials were invited for ratification and blessing. Local drinks will be served to the participants, bulls will be slaughtered and a great feast will be given. As a symbol of the newly established unity of the groups, the representative of the adopting clan ties *meendhicha* 'freshly cut off skin from the limbs of the slaughtered bull' on the wrist of the representative of the adopted clan. Then the two representatives cut their own thighs, take drops of blood from their thighs and mix the blood. Then both groups receive blessings from the Gada leaders and take an oath to help each other in time of peace and war. This process signifies the complete incorporation of the adopted group to the adopting Oromo group. The adopted group will be conferred exactly equal privileges with the adopting Oromo groups and will be completely integrated into the Oromo Gada system.

Alike *guddifachaa*, *moggaasaa* 'incorporating individual, clan/ethnic groups, or war captives,' is a widespread customary practice in Arsi Oromo. The Arsi Oromo incorporates individual, different clan/ethnic groups, and war captives to the conqueror's clan and the society through the *moggaasaa* ritual. The *moggaasaa* practice is also known to the Arsi Oromo as *Arsoomsuu* or *Oromsuu* 'causing

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2 Marriage, *harma hodhaa*, *guddifachaa*, and *moggassaa* are different mechanisms, which the Oromo people use to establish relationships within the Oromo members of the society and with non - Oromo social groups.

to be Arsi or Oromo'. In the past, the Hadiyya people were among the groups who incorporated to Arsi Oromo through the established practice of *Arsoomsuu* 'incorporating to Arsi'.

Taddesse (1972) states that before the beginning of the great 16<sup>th</sup> C Oromo expansion, the present Arsi land was occupied by the groups of Bali, Hadiyya, Dawaro, Waji, Arbabini, and Sharka (Shirka). These people seem to have been overwhelmingly Muslim of Hadiyya and Sidama extraction. Mohammad (1974) also states that the majority of the original inhabitants of Arsi land, particularly Ziway Dugda *woreda* (district) were apparently the Hadiyya people of a Muslim Sultanate, whose Islamization goes back to 13<sup>th</sup> C, which the great 16<sup>th</sup> C Oromo expansion changed the existing situation. Ketebo (1999) affirms the incorporation of Hadiyya people to Arsi Oromo by the existences of localities in the current Arsi Zone, which still retain a combination of non-Oromo and Oromo names. For instance, *Tullu Dawe* and *Tullu Ganje* in Hetossa *woreda* are named after two Hadiyya fighters, *Dawe* and *Ganje* respectively. He also exemplifies *Tullu Semma* (Sema Hill) in Kofale *woreda*, which its name is coined from Afan Oromo and Sidama language. *Semma* is a woven cloth made up of cotton, which even nowadays worn at night by the Arsi Oromo and Sidama people. According to the Oral tradition, the Hill is named *Semma* after the Sidama fighter, who lost his *Semma* at the Foothill, while running away from the incoming Arsi Oromo during the great Oromo expansion of 16<sup>th</sup> C.

Likewise, today one can find some Hadiyya elements in the current Arsi Zone, Ziway Dugda *woreda*. For instance, villages' names such as *Uboo*, *Abargada*, *Kormine*; names of clans; such as *Abbure*, *Baddosa*, *Habarnosa*, and *Habura* (*Abura*) are Hadiyya names. In addition, Hussen (2000) discusses the Hadiyya and Kambata people, who were incorporated into the Arsi Oromo through the *Arsoomsuu* ceremony constitute ten clans; namely: *Abargada*, *Abbure*, *Badoosa*, *Catmanna*, *Habarnosa*, *Habura*, *Haximanna*, *Heexossaa*, *Kormine*, and *Shamanna*. Ketebo (1999: 4) also discusses the incorporation of different groups to the Arsi Oromo and describes that the Arsi Oromo did not chase out all Hadiyya and Sidama people from their

earlier land. A few of them surrendered and were later assimilated by the process of *moggaasaa* and became part of Arsi Oromo society.

The above points reveal that the Arsi Oromo did not expel some of the original inhabitants of Hadiyya people. Islamic influence persisted and the ethnic groups continued living together amalgamated into one ethnic group.<sup>3</sup> In this process, the Arsi Oromo living in Arsi Zone; particularly Ziway Dugda and the neighboring *woredas*, have absorbed the religion of the Hadiyya people; i.e. Islam, into their traditional religion - *Waaqeffannaa*.

My informants, Ahimed Geleto, Aman Jano, and Gada Tusura, who are community elders from Arsi Oromo, discuss that even today anybody, individual, group, or clan, who wish to incorporate to Arsi Oromo can present the request to the religious leaders, the *gosa* leaders, the group of elderly people, or the Waataa.<sup>4</sup> The religious leaders, the *gosa* leaders, the group of elderly people, or the Waataa, submit the request they received from the groups to the adopting *gosa* leaders to get their consensus. When the adopted and the adoptive groups agreed, the adoption ritual is organized. Like the Macha Oromo, the Arsi Oromo conducts the incorporation in line with the customary rule of the Oromo Gada system.

The second type of *moggaasaa* is *booji'amaa moggaasuu* 'incorporating war captive'. The Oromo people have a long tradition of treating *booji'amaa* 'war captives' in humane manner. The customary rule of the Oromo society asserts that war captives are not killed or enslaved; rather they are adopted and integrated through the practice of *booji'amaa moggaasuu*, or returned back to their original groups in exchange of a certain amount of cattle in ransom.

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3 Braukaemper, *The Islamisation of Arsi Oromo*, in Taddesse Beyene, *the proceeding of 8th International Conference of Ethiopian studies*, Addis Ababa, 26 – 30 November 1984. (PP. 768).

4 In Ziway Dugda and neighbouring *woredas*, Waataa stands for the Waataa people as a social group, each individual of the Waataa people, and the 'gifted' members of the Waataa community. (See Gameda: 2016).

Furthermore, the customary rule of the Oromo society states, the Oromo people do not kill incapable individuals, young children, aged person, even if they were involving in a fight or attacking; instead treat them as *booji'amaa* 'conquered'. At the end of the war, the conqueror takes the war captives to his home and provides them milk. Then, the incorporation ritual, of the war captives to the society, will be practiced. In Arsi Oromo incorporating the war captive through the *booji'amaa moggaasuu* is called *abboomsuu*. The captive adds the conqueror's name as a family name. The practice also confers the captive equal right to the children of the conqueror and becomes the son of the conqueror; also becomes members of the conqueror's clan. The practice also confers the captive the right to heir the conqueror's property. Furthermore, the practice reveals that the conqueror becomes 'parent' for the war captive.

Aman and Gada, the community elders from Arsi Oromo, discuss that for the Oromo clans such as Borana, Guji, Karrayyu, Jille, and Arsi, killing *booji'amaa* is considered as *haluu* 'taboo'. Moreover, they discuss that killing a war captive reduces the heroic deeds of a conqueror, while capturing an enemy alive enables the conqueror get the high-status and significant symbolic figure in the society. Moreover, they state that an individual or group, who disobeyed and violate the customary rule of handling war captives, are punished. The punishment is the complete isolation of the individual or group from the society. This makes the new members enjoyed every rights and privileges equal to the original members of the clan.

Nowadays, there are no observable differences between the newly assimilated groups and the 'true' Arsi Oromo clans. It is almost impossible to make any distinction between the 'true' Arsi Oromo clans and the newly incorporated Hadiyya, Kambata, Sidama, etc. groups; since the incorporation of *Arsoomsuu* took place completely.

We can learn from the customary *moggaasaa/Arsoomsuu* practice of the Arsi Oromo that some of the ancestors of the current Arsi Oromo were not the 'true' Arsi Oromo, but different groups, who have been incorporated to the Arsi Oromo clans. Although,

*Arsoomsuu/moggaasuu* is a familiar practice among the Arsi Oromo *gosas* and the customary rule of the Oromo society confers equal legal rights in every aspect, some members of the social group show prejudice. The following verses from the Arsi Oromo cultural wedding song reveal this fact. The bride sings the song to her girlfriends on her wedding day, just before she leaves with the bridegroom.

1. *Masaanu'u dagonda'a*  
 masa:nu?u dagonda?a  
 co-wife ant  
 Like an ant, my husband's co-wife
2. *Miila jalaan nama nyaattii*  
 mi:la dʒala:n nama na:t:i:  
 foot under-FOC person eat.PART.3SGL.F  
 (She) bites the foot of (a human).
3. *Waaqa dhaqaa labooban hinlawwisaa*  
 wa:k'a dā k'a: laβo:βa-n hinlaw:isa:  
 God go wing-FOC float.M  
 The wing is flying fast, with the intention of going to God.
4. *Nyaaphaa dhaqaa attamiin gad caldhisaa?*  
 na:p':a: dak'a: at:ami:n gad ʃ'ldisa:  
 enemy go how down stay quiet  
 How can I stay calm, while I am going to live with an enemy?
5. *Qarri isaa jalli riga'a qaanidhaafini fayyaa godhee*  
 k'ar:i isa: dʒal:i riga?a k'a:ni-dā:-fi-ni faj:a: god-e:  
 ancestor.NOM his under.NOM repaired shame-CP-and-1SNG.NOM normal make-1SNG.PF  
 His background is shameful, however, I considered him as if he was normal
6. *Worratti jaleen garbaa lallabni balchaa godhee*  
 wor:a-t:i dʒal-e:n garba: lal:ab-ni balʃa: god-e:

Family.NOM under-of them slave decree-NOM free make-PF

The ancestors of the bridegroom's were slaves; but the incorporation enabled them free (non-slave).

The song is about the marriage conducted among the Arsi girl and the Arsi man, who was incorporated to the Arsi Oromo through the customary *moggaasaa* ritual and conferred equal rights and privileges with the 'true' Arsi Oromo. The friends of the bride are unhappy for the ancestors of the bridegroom's family were the non-Arsi, though later they incorporated to Arsi Oromo.

Ayalew (2002) states that in customary rule of the Borana Oromo the conqueror brings up the captive girl as his daughter or as his future wife. But the Guji Oromo social groups transfer and give the captive women to their friends. If the captive woman is a pregnant, the conqueror marries her and the child is considered the conqueror's legitimate son or daughter.

The Borana Oromo has different means of appeasing war captives. If the captive is an adult, they give him a number of heads of cattle and get him married. Different efforts are made to make the captive happy and unite with the society. If the war captive is intelligent and active enough, the Borana may elect him *hayyuu* 'chief of a community'. These attributes of privileged status make the captive feel proud in the 'new' society.

### 3. Rituals of Guddifachaa and Moggaasaa

In this sub-section, the paper presented the customary *guddifachaa* and *moggaasaa* rituals conducted by the Oromo society. The rituals and the stuffs needed are basically similar among the Oromo social groups. However, the focus of this paper is on the rituals which the Arsi Oromo conducts and the Waataa's role in the rituals. The paper will describe the procedures, materials used, and rituals of *guddifachaa*. The descriptions are based on the researcher's field notes, i.e. focus groups discussions, interviews, observations, and document analysis. It also presented interpretations and significances of the

materials used in the rituals. In addition, it portrays how objects and ideas are constructed and realities are represented in the Arsi Oromo.

The Oromo social groups, who are neighboring the Waataa people need the Waataa's blessing, particularly while the adopted children by a family die and do not grow. The Oromo society believes that death occurs to the adopted children because of evil spirit, *abaarree* 'curse', and *safuu*<sup>5</sup>, which the family, who adopted the children, was committed and remained hidden. Therefore, when such a family or a 'new' family conducts *guddifachaa*, they need to invite the Waataa to bless the *guddifachaa* ritual and the adopted child. The Waataa also cleans the family, who was committed *safuu*, from sins. When the Waataa performs the *guddifachaa* ritual, he holds the right hand's thumb of the adopted child with his right hand and utters the blessings. Next the Waataa bites the child's ear and pierce it with his teeth. Then he puts a *qinshoo* 'red copper wire' through the hole, as the earring. The *qinshoo*, which the child wears, signifies that the child is blessed by the Waataa. The intention of biting the child's ear is to convey the Waataa's spiritual power to the child. My informants, who participated in the focus group discussion: Gudeta, Tuji, Telila, Eda'o, and Merga, are members of the Waataa community and perform the *guddifachaa* ritual. They affirm me that the aim of biting the ear and spitting on the face and head of the child is to pass on the power of *Waaqaa* 'God' through the Waataa to the child. By doing so, the Waataa entrusts the child to *Waaqaa* that *Waaqaa* cares for this child. Often, the *guddifachaa* ritual is celebrated throughout the night. The participants sing and dance. Different spiritual and cultural songs will be rehearsed by the participants, among which the praise songs to *Waaqaa*, *Ateetee*, and praising the cattle are the major ones. In the absence of the Waataa, Gada leaders,

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5 *Safuu* is a cultural term, which signifies wider concepts. According to Gemetchu (1998:42) *safuu* is a moral category. The Oromo people believe that *safuu* involves respecting one another, avoiding embarrassment, insulting one's mother's and father's and elders, lying, stealing, and disrespecting elders, etc.

religious leaders, or the elderly members of the community lead the *guddifachaa* ritual. When the members of the Waataa people adopt children from each other, they usually conduct the practice of biting the children's ears and wear them *qinshoo*.

According to the customary rule of the Oromo society, the 'new' parents take oath to consider the adopted child as their true child, in front of the participants. Although, the customary rule of the Oromo people confers the adopted children equal rights with the biological children of a family; the 'new' family ought to approve by oath. In addition, the participants also carry out oath not to tell the biological parents of the adopted children, not to marginalize, and show avoidances to the adopted children. Furthermore, Telila, Gurracha, Merga, and Tuji, elders from the Waataa community, and Aman, Abdella, Gada, and Midhasso, community elders from Arsi Oromo, underline that the 'new' parents, participants, and the neighboring groups in general, obliged to keep the *guddifachaa* secret and not to tell the biological parents of the adopted children. Telling the biological parents of the adopted children is against the customary rule of the Oromo society. Hence, the person, who leads the adoption ritual, let the participants take oath not to tell the biological parent of the child. The case remains confidential. He also puts curse, if anyone would break the customary rule of the society.

Customarily, the Arsi Oromo establish close relationships among the members, of the social. These relationships assist the Arsi Oromo to share and resolve problems that encounter the individual members and *gosas*. One of my research informants, Midhasso Korro, an elderly member from Arsi Oromo, affirms that the Arsi Oromo developed the habit of helping their needy members. The close relatives and the *gosa* members, particularly the community elders, know the need of their *gosa* members. For instance, they know each member of the *gosa*, who has many children and who lacks children, or the family, who has a smaller number of children or the family, who lacks male. Therefore, they enable the childless family or the family, who lacks male, to get children or male child through *guddifachaa*.

Therefore, in Arsi Oromo, first the request of *guddifachaa* presents to the biological parents. To practice *guddifachaa*, the request should be accepted by the biological parents. Often, the community elders, the *gosa* leaders, the religious leaders, brothers(s) or father of a person, who wants to adopt a child, conduct the deal. The request is first presented to the close-relatives, i.e. the brother(s) of the person, who desired *guddifachaa*. Next, they submit the request to the nephew(s), and then to the *gosa* members. Unless, they could not able to adopt from the close relatives or the *gosa* members, they do not present the request to the non-relatives. When they find the child to adopt and make the consensus, the *guddifachaa* ritual will be arranged.

According to the customary rule of the Oromo society, the *guddifachaa* ritual requires different materials. Hence, to practice *guddifachaa*, the 'new' parents should carry *sardoo* 'grass', *Wandabboo* 'cultural cloth that the Arsi Oromo women wear, during rituals and prayers', *caaccuu* 'bead, cowries worn by young children and women', and *siinqee* 'ritual stick', *alangaa* 'whips', *okolee* 'milking vessel', *gaadii* 'leather used to tie the two hind legs of a cow while milking', and *bulbulaa* 'fresh cultural drink made of honey'. Huseen (2000:63-64) also discusses the need of *garbuu* 'barley', *eebool/woraana* 'spear', *dhoqqee* (fresh manure), and black dog, while handover of the child is conducted among the Arsi Oromo.

*Sardoo/coqorsaa* is a fresh grass. It is a symbol of fertility. The Oromo people carry *sardoo* during prayer to *Waaqaa* as offering. The society also considers *sardoo* as a symbol of peace. Thus, they carry *sardoo* when they conduct rituals, such as *Irreechaa* 'Thanks Giving to *Waaqaa*', blessing, and during request of girls for marriage. The Oromo people also carry *sardoo* to bring conflicts to end and during reconciliation rituals.

*Okolee* is a cultural stuff, which is usable in *guddifachaa* ritual. It symbolizes wealth. Traditionally cattle are economic base for the Oromo society in general and the Arsi Oromo in particular. The number of cattle was also used to decide one's social status in the society.

*Wandabboo*, *caaccuu* and *siinqee*, are cultural materials used by the married women, when they practice rituals. These cultural stuffs symbolize fertility, power, and religion.

*Alangaa* has different purposes in the Oromo society in accordance to the particular context. *Alangaa* is usable only by men, who are non-Waataa Oromo social groups. Usually, it is made up of either the hide of cattle or skin of hippopotamus. The whip that is used for local service, such as to ride a horse by the horseman is made from the cattle's hide. The second type of whip, which is used by the *abbaa gada*, the religious leaders, and the elderly members of the community, is made from the skin of hippopotamus. They use *alangaa* to make new rules and enact decisions. They also need to carry *alangaa*, during the *guddifachaa* ritual. In Arsi Oromo, he who leads the *guddifachaa* ritual ratifies the practice by the *alangaa*. Here, *alangaa* entails the enforcement of the traditional customary rule of the Oromo society, where breaking the rule results in punishment to the wrongdoer, according to the customary rule of the Oromo society.

*Garbuu* is one of the materials required to conduct the *guddifachaa* ritual. According to some sources, barley is indigenous crop to Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, it is used to prepare different cultural foods and drinks. Barley is used to bake bread, and *injera* (Ethiopian cultural food). Furthermore, barley is used to prepare *basso* 'food from roasted barley flour', *kolo* 'roasted grain', porridge, and different cultural foods. Moreover, barley is used to make cultural drinks, such as *tella* 'local fermented beer', *borde* 'thick, gruel like, local beer made from barley, corn, etc.', *qaribo* 'unfermented local beer', etc. Thus, for its multiple purposes, barley is considered 'king' of crops. Hence, to signify different uses of barley, it is carried during the practice of *guddifachaa*.

Traditionally, *eeboo* is used to protect the holder from wild animals and attack an enemy. Furthermore, the Oromo people used to carry *eeboo*, when they conduct customary reconciliation ritual. For instances, when the conflicting parties conduct the final reconciliation practices, they take oath, crossing over the laid down

*eeboo*, not to fight again. Similarly, in Arsi Oromo, the parent, who adopts a child, take an oath to nurture the 'new' child equal to the true child/children of the family requires carrying *eeboo*.

Generally, the materials needed during the *guddifachaa* ritual and carried by the person, who leads the ceremony symbolize fertility, wealth, peace, and the traditional belief of the Oromo society.

The practices of *daa'ima guddifachuu* and *booji'amaa moggaasuu/Arsoomsuu* 'incorporating individual', 'clan/ethnic groups', and 'war captives', to the Arsi Oromo require the Waataa's involvement. The practices necessitate Waataas' blessings. In Arsi Oromo and the neighboring groups, during rituals such as cleansing and child adoption, prayer is bestowed by the Waataa. The Waataa carries the *bottooyyaa* to confer the blessings, spits the milk or *bulbula* 'a local drink made of honey' on the faces, foreheads and heads of the participants. These practices, which are conducted by the Arsi Oromo, reveal the Waataa's role in broader socio-cultural contexts of the Arsi Oromo and the neighboring Oromo groups. Generally, the Arsi Oromo and the neighboring Oromo groups, consider the Waataa people as the blessed people, who give blessing and lay curses.

Traditionally, in the Oromo society, the formal blessings are performed by Gada leaders, religious leaders, the Waataa, and elderly members of the community. Aman, a community elder from Arsi Oromo, states that after the decline of the Oromo Gada system and Islamization of Arsi Oromo, the community elders, the religious leaders and/or the Waataa leads the practices of *daa'ima guddifachuu* and *booji'amaa moggaasuu*.

#### **4. Analysis of Guddifachaa and Moggaasaa**

Some scholars (Bequele, 1971; Beckstrom, 1972; Tesema, 1980; Hultin, 1984; Mohammad, 1990; and Triulzi, 1996) discuss that the Oromo people use incorporation as a mechanism to incorporate non-Oromo ethnic groups in the vicinity or as a means of alliance creation for political reasons. Although, politics can be thought as one of the reasons of incorporating the non-Oromo social groups to Oromo people, it is not the main reason of incorporation. The foundation of

incorporation practice that incorporates the non-Oromo social groups to Oromo society, is the Oromo Gada System. In the Oromo Gada System, death penalty was not enacted. Thus, the customary rule of the Oromo society compensated the death penalty by incorporation practice, which incorporates the war captives to the Oromo society. Hence, for the Oromo society, killing war captives is against their customary rule and it is *safuu*. Therefore, the Oromo society incorporate the war captives to their families/clans and confer them equal rights with the 'true' members of the Oromo people.

Ayalew (2002) refers to Taddecha (1988) and states that killing a war captive reduces the heroic deeds of a conqueror, while capturing an enemy alive enables him to get the high-status and significant symbolic figure in the society. Thus, the Oromo society used to incorporate the war captives, the defeated individual, or groups to the conqueror's clan and to the society through the customary *moggaasaa* ritual.

*Guddifachaa* and *moggaasaa* are customary practices and indigenous knowledge of the Oromo society, which have been playing significant roles in the social construction of the Oromo society. The roles of *guddifachaa* and *moggaasaa* can be examined from social, economic, political, geographical, and demographical points.

Socially, *guddifachaa* helps the two families, who engage in the practice, to establish close relationship. It also strengthens the established relationship among the biological parents and adoptive parents; the two clans, in the case it was conducted among parents, who are from different clans. The relationship remains unbroken and the two families consider one another as relative. Even if the family, who adopted a child, bears children after they conducted the adoption, the adopted child is considered as an elder child of the family. The customary rule of the Oromo society states that in such a family, the biological children and the adopted child consider each other as the 'true' brothers/sisters. Thus, the adopted child and the biological children of the family cannot engage in marriage. Furthermore, *guddifachaa* helps in maintaining the family line of the 'new' family. The practice also enables the orphan children get

'parents', who foster them according to the culture of the Oromo society.

Economically, *guddifachaa* helps the 'new' family to get labor forces. In light of this the practice can be considered as the customary poverty reduction strategy used by the Oromo people. Furthermore, the practice also assists the Oromo society to support each other, particularly the needy members of the social group.

The role of *moggaasaa* in the Oromo society can be examined from social points. *Moggaasaa* helps the Oromo people to pass on their culture to the next generation. It also helps to maintain the customary cultural practices of the Oromo society for the future use.

*Moggaasaa* practice confers the incorporated clan/ethnic groups, equal social, economic, and political rights and privileges with the 'true' Oromo members. The practice shows a mutual-relationship, which exists between the two groups. Furthermore, the *moggaasaa* practice enables the Oromo people to inhabit the wider areas, where the Oromo people coexist with different non-Oromo groups by assigning them different roles. *Moggaasaa* seems to justify the established social rule among the Oromo society and the newly incorporated clan/ethnic groups, and war captives by explaining that the Oromo *Gada* system originated it.

Demographically, *moggaasaa* increases the population size of the Oromo society. In other words, incorporating different clan/ethnic groups through *moggaasaa* to the Oromo society increases the population size of the Oromo people, while it decreases the population size of the other groups. Negaso (1984: 16) affirms this point by exemplifying the westward expansion of the Oromo people; "... during the long process of expansion up their final settlement in Qellem, one can be sure that a considerable increase of the Oromo population through birth and through incorporation of other clans and segments of other peoples to occurred."

The *moggaasaa* practice provides the Oromo people an inexhaustible capacity to incorporate large number of non-Oromo groups. This enables the Oromo society to have a greater number of warriors during war. Obviously, a society, who has wider

population, can easily conquer a society, who has small number of populations. Furthermore, larger population is a 'wealth' and labor force to the social group or the country, if they are employed wisely.

Most of the time the minority clan/ethnic groups, who are integrated to the Oromo society, are the minority groups who cannot defend themselves and their members/groups from the attack of the wider clan/ethnic groups. In other words, incorporating the minority clan/ethnic groups to the Oromo society, gives them a protection

Geographically, the Oromo people inhabit the wider areas by the great 16<sup>th</sup>C expansion of the Oromo people. After they lived for years, isolated from their former areas, they changed their former dialects of Afaan Oromo little by little and came up with different dialects of the language. The development of different Afan Oromo dialects helped the Oromo people to acquire 'rich' language; lexical knowledge, and vocabularies.

Furthermore, incorporating non-Oromo groups and living neighboring among different non-Oromo groups helped the Oromo society to realize the culture of these groups. This in turn enabled the Oromo people to live in multicultural setting. Thus, the great 16<sup>th</sup>C expansion helped the Oromo society to coexist with the outsiders. In addition, the expansion paved ways to the individuals and different Oromo groups, to migrate to the 'new' areas, which were inhabited by their relatives during the expansion; while drought, epidemic diseases, natural disasters, etc. appeared in their former areas.

The customary practices of *guddifachaa* and *moggaasaa* empowered the Oromo society and played significant roles, to maintain their status as a social group. In addition, they employed the customary practices to maintain their culture. The practices also assisted the Oromo people to lead a peaceful living. Furthermore, the relationships, which they established with non-Oromo groups through *guddifachaa* and *moggaasaa*, secured them a peaceful coexistence with the outsiders. These points reveal the interactional function of *guddifachaa* and *moggaasaa*.

Generally, the customary practices of *guddifachaa* and *moggaasaa* have contributed to the continuity of the Oromo people as a society

in large, which also assisted the Oromo people to develop slightly different culture, religions, and life styles. Hence, the current Oromo people are the result of the cumulative social, political, and economical activities, which the Oromo people have been practicing. The culture of the current Oromo people is the result of the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experiences, beliefs, values, attitudes, religions, and material objects and possessions acquired by the Oromo people in the course of generations through group striving.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper examined *guddifachaa* and *moggaasaa* among the cultural practices of the Oromo society. The practices have been playing significant roles in the social construction of the Oromo society in general and the Arsi Oromo in particular. The paper also presented performances, rituals, objects associated with the practices, and descriptions of the practices. It also presented interpretations and meanings associated to materials used in the cultural practices. In addition, it portrays how objects, ideas, meanings, are constructed, and realities are represented in the practices.

Social construction is an observable social, political and economic change, which occurred in the long existence of a society. The culture of a society is dynamic. Thus, the society's culture changes through times. In this change, they ignore some cultural traits and maintain the culture that they thought more important to their members. In other words, the society constructs and reconstructs the culture of the society. The culture also shapes and guides its followers. Hence, we can say that society is a construct. In this construction, the society establishes intra- and intergroup relationships; i.e. the society establishes relationship within the social groups and with the outsiders.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning the contribution of the great 16<sup>th</sup>C Oromo expansion, in the social construction of the Oromo society. The expansion enabled the Oromo society to inhabit the wider areas and different ecological zones in Ethiopia. The expansion

also assisted the Oromo people to get *huraa* 'salty water' for their cattle, land for crops cultivation, forests, and grass land for grazing. This in turn helped the Oromo people to practice different economic activities.

Furthermore, the expansion helped the Oromo people to establish relationship with non-Oromo groups. The Oromo society mainly uses *moggaasaa* to establish relationships with non-Oromo groups. In addition to *moggaasaa*, they use marriage as the customary conflict transformation mechanism to establish relationships and maintain the peaceful co-existence with non-Oromo groups. The Oromo people thought the marriage, which they conducted with non-Oromo groups as a 'thread' that binds the two groups together. In these relationships the Oromo people could absorb some cultural traits and linguistic features of the 'new' groups.

Baxter, P.T.W.; Hultin, Jan; and Triulzi, Alessandro (1997) affirm that although the Oromo people retain similarities in their descent system; they differ considerably in religion, life style, and political organization. Hence, nowadays most of the Oromo people are followers of Christian religion, Islam religion, and *Waaqeffannaa* 'traditional Oromo belief'. In addition, Afaan Oromo speak different dialects of the language. Furthermore, Ketebo (2010) exemplifies that it was after the conquest of the Hadiyya people by the Arsi Oromo and their relations with the Hadiyya people that the activities in economic, social interaction, cultural and religious spheres slightly, but with significant changes took place, which most probably has facilitated the expansion of Islam religion among the Arsi Oromo.

The relationships, which the Oromo people were established through *moggaasaa* and marriage with non-Oromo groups, unified the two groups. Thus, the current Oromo society is not such a 'pure' Oromo; rather they are interconnected with different non-Oromo groups. Like the Hadiyya people, who incorporated to the Arsi Oromo, the Sayyoo Oromo subjugated the indigenous inhabitants of the western Wallagaa. Negaso (1984: 61 – 62) affirms the incorporation of different linguistic and ethnic groups to the Sayyoo Oromo based on the information he has gathered about the pre-

Maccaa peoples of Wallagaa among, which the Sayyoo are one group.

The understanding of the history of the Sayyoo<sup>6</sup> would be incomplete without at least some reference to the pre-Oromoo peoples in the areas where the Sayyyoo live today or where they lived at the time of the westward migration of the Oromoo people. .... Some of these peoples may have belonged to one non-Oromoo linguistic and ethnic cluster and some may have even been the ancestors of the present-day Sayyoo.

According to Negaso (1984) many of the current Sayyoo clans may be descendants of these autochthonous people, who were inhabited the western Wallagaa prior to the expansion of the Sayyoo people and incorporated to them through the customary practices of the society.

Furthermore, Ketebo (1999) refers to Mohammed (1990) and discusses:

[T]here was no such thing as ‘pure’ Oromo tribe derived from a founding father ... the history of the Oromo people is not a collection of histories of individual tribes or group of tribes, but a story of fusion and interaction by which all tribes and groups had altered and been transformed constantly. This was made possible by a dynamic Oromo institution (the Gada system), the process of adoption, continual migration, conquest, assimilation, and interaction with other groups.

We can learn from these writers, different practices and processes, which the traditional Oromo people have been conducting to incorporate different non-Oromo ethnic groups to the Oromo society. The writers reveal *moggaasaa* ‘incorporation’, *Oromsuul/Arsoomsuu* ‘enabling to be Oromo/Arsi’, and *Abboomsuu* ‘assigning to the Oromo clan/giving a new clan name’, among the customary incorporation practices of the Oromo society. Furthermore, the Oromo people have been using marriage as a mechanism to establish

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6 The author’s spelling is retained.

relationship with the neighboring non-Oromo groups. The incorporation and the marriage practices are amalgamated the non-Oromo groups to the Oromo people. These practices render the non-Oromo ethnic groups to be Oromo. The customary rule of the Oromo society, particularly the Oromo Gada system, confers the 'newly' incorporated groups equal rights and privileges with the 'true' Oromo. Thus, nowadays, one cannot identify the 'true' Oromo and the 'new' groups, for they fully assimilated to the Oromo people. Despite the Oromo people conducted the incorporation practices over the wider areas inhabited by the Oromo people, and the practice fully incorporated different non-Oromo ethnic groups to Oromo people, nowadays it is difficult to identify the 'new' Oromo from the 'true' Oromo; likewise it is difficult to find a 'pure' Oromo.

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# AN EXAMINATION OF AMHARIC GRAMMAR FROM PRE-17TH CENTURY MANUSCRIPTS\*

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## **Abstract**

The paper examines pre-17<sup>th</sup> century Amharic manuscripts with regard to the diachronic grammar of Amharic. It examines particularly the imperial songs of Amdetsion (1314-1344), Dawit (1375-1404), Yishak (1413-1428), Zere Yaqob (1433-1467), Gelawdios (1540-1559) as presented in Guidi (1889); two manuscripts discussed by Cowley (1974, 1983); and a glossary manuscript discussed by Getatchew Haile (1970) which can all safely be dated back to the 16<sup>th</sup> and pre-16<sup>th</sup> centuries. It focuses mainly on the peculiar grammatical features of that period which are not observable in modern Amharic.

Pre-17<sup>th</sup> century Amharic exhibits all the pharyngeal and glottal phonemes typical of Semitic languages. Modern Amharic has rigid SOV. Relative clauses and adjectives must also follow their head noun. However, pre-17<sup>th</sup> century Amharic was not rigid in this regard. Although structures like those in modern Amharic are also attested, we find a VSO order in pre-17<sup>th</sup> century Amharic. Relative

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\* The main part of this article is published in my book on the diachronic grammar of Amharic. This article was first written (in 2013) as a contribution to a book project on African writing traditions. Unfortunately, due to financial reasons, the book didn't publish. I am not sure also when, if at all, will it be published. Although the content is found in my book, I decided to publish it (as is) in this journal for those who cannot have access to my book.

clauses and adjectives also follow the noun they modify. Pre-17th century Amharic in general shows more Semitic features than present-day Amharic. This is, in fact, expected if Amharic is seen as a descendant of a Semitic language; not as one created through a pidgin-induced process.

## 1. Introduction

Amharic came to be known as *Lissane Nigus* 'language of the king' during the reign of Yikuno Amlak (1270 - 1285) who claimed to be a descendant of the Biblical King Solomon and the legendary Queen Sheba (cf. Aleqa Taye 1914 EC/ 1964 EC). Some, however suggest that Amharic had already been in use at the imperial court before the 13<sup>th</sup> century during the Zagwe dynasty (1137-1270) and the term *Lissane Nigus* in reference to Amharic goes well back to this period (cf. Sergew 1972: 278-279). The usage of Amharic as lingua franca is reported to start in the 9<sup>th</sup> century (cf. Bender 1983). This latter date corresponds with the fall of the Axumite kingdom and the end of Ge'ez as a language of verbal communication. One of Ge'ez's golden times in writing, however, corresponds with the rise of Solomonic dynasty in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately, we have not found any record of Amharic written material dated to this or earlier centuries. James Bruce of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century in his travelogue reported the existence of an old traditional law which condemns the writing of Amharic. According to this traditional law the one found guilty should be punished by death, "his family sold to slavery, and his house razed to the ground" (Bruce 1790/ 1813: 341- 342). Whether due to the existence of such law or not, we do not find much manuscripts of Amharic until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Amharic in general is not lucky in having old manuscripts.

The earliest attested manuscript dates back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century which appears as a form of lyrics. Its dating is controversial. Some claim that it was written later although its content is definitely that of the 14<sup>th</sup> century as it is created in praise of the great Emperor Amdetsion (1314-1344). More writings in Amharic are found in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century when missionaries started to convert the locals with

the vernacular language. This also prompted the Ethiopian Orthodox scholars to write back in Amharic to defend their religion. When the European missionaries were expelled in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, this practice was halted. Amharic then remained only as an oral language for about two centuries. Effective writing in this language started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the reestablishment of the relation with European countries, whose missionaries preferred to write and teach in Amharic. With the reign of Emperor Theodore II (1855-1868), Amharic officially acquired the status as a language for writing.

It is not the intention of this paper to undertake annotation of Amharic manuscripts. The paper rather examines old Amharic manuscripts with regard to the diachronic grammar of Amharic - the implication of which may be broad in terms of genetic classification and history of Ethiopian Semitic languages. My aim in doing this is (a) to give basic information on the relevance of studying Amharic manuscripts with regard to its diachronic grammar and (b) to bring to the attention of linguists and philologists an area of further research.

There are three core points which I like to address through the examination of the diachronic grammar of Amharic. It is widely entertained that through a pidgin-induced process (a) Amharic lost the core pharyngeal and glottal Semitic phonetic features (cf. Yimam 2000 EC); (b) the syntax of Amharic became untypical for a Semitic language (cf. Bender 1983, Yimam 2000 EC) and (c) its morphology acquired properties of Cushitic languages (cf. Yimam 2000 EC). To check the validity of these statements, I will mainly focus with the 16<sup>th</sup> and pre-16<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts.

Besides the panegyrics of Amdetsion (1314-1344), Dawit (1375-1404), Yishak (1413-1428), Zere Yaqob (1433-1467), Gelawdios (1540-1559),<sup>1</sup> there are two important manuscripts that can be safely dated back to 16<sup>th</sup> and pre-16<sup>th</sup> century. These are Timhirte Haymant 'Teaching of the Faith', discussed by Cowley (1974) and a manuscript about Mary who anointed Jesus' feet also discussed by Cowley

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1 For the imperial songs, I use Guidi (1889).

(1983).<sup>2</sup> My argumentation in this work is based on these oldest Amharic manuscripts. There are in fact other manuscripts of this period. For instance, Getatchew Haile (1970) brought to our attention a manuscript which can be dated to the same period containing a glossary of Arabic with a translation into Ge'ez and Amharic.<sup>3</sup>

The manuscript about Mary who anointed Jesus' feet discussed by Cowley (1983) is also appeared in Ludolf (1698a&b). The version in Ludolf however is shorter than what Cowley found in the Jerusalem collection of Ethiopian manuscripts. Cowley's (1983) discussion includes both versions of the manuscript. The manuscript is referred as *Fragmentum Piquesii* and abbreviated as FP in Cowley. I will use Cowley's abbreviation and call this manuscript FP.<sup>4</sup> I focus on the Jerusalem version of the manuscript as it is more complete than the one discussed by Ludolf. Unless and otherwise mentioned, FP refers only to the Jerusalem manuscript as it appeared in Cowley (1983). Following Cowley (1974), I will refer to Timhirte Haymant as TM.

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2 According to Cowley (1974) Timhirte Haymant can be dated as the 16th century manuscript. With regard to the manuscript about Mary who anointed Jesus' feet Cowley (1983) suggests that in some respects it "represents a very slightly more archaic stage than TH [Timhirte Haymant]" (1983: 21). In fact, this manuscript contains more archaic features than Timhirte Haymant. Hence, it is reasonable to consider the manuscript about Mary as a 16th or a pre-16th century one.

3 Getatchew Haile discusses two manuscripts which he dated to the 16th and 17th centuries. However, he mostly used the one from the 16th century. I also will consider some examples from Getachew Haile (1970) although it remained unclear to which of the two manuscripts a particular example belongs. There are also no copies of the original texts given in an appendix.

4 As Cowley notes, Ludolf got the manuscript from his friend Ludovicus Piques who found it "among Ethiopic folios of Seguiet's library" (Cowley 1983: 1). Ludolf made use of the text in his grammar and dictionary and appended a short fragment of it in his grammar work (see Ludolf 1698:59).

My aim here is to examine the grammar of Amharic as reflected through the aforementioned manuscripts. It is not my intention to look at the historical changes that Amharic made through different periods although I may make a remark here and there. I will refer to the language of this period as old Amharic, OA, although this term is also used in some works in reference to pre-20<sup>th</sup> century Amharic. I use the term modern Amharic, MA, for the language spoken today without giving any theoretical status to my usages.<sup>5, 6</sup>

## 2. Phonology

The general assumption with regard to Ethiopic letters which are also used for writing Amharic is that ሐ and ፀ represent the pharyngeal fricatives /ħ/ and /ʕ/ respectively, አ the glottal stop /ʔ/ and ሀ the glottal fricative /h/.<sup>7</sup> However, it is unclear what the phonetic representation of ህ had been in Ge'ez. In current Tigrinya, ህ is just an alternative representation of the voiceless pharyngeal fricative ሐ /ħ/. However, this form most probably was representing the velar fricative /x/ in Ge'ez, which in the modern languages is written with ኸ (see also Dillmann 1899/ 1907:16). Haile (1970: 61) also observed that “a word is written with ህ because it is very often closer to ሐ than to ሀ. A good example would be አህፃ “now” (today normally spelt አሁን) which is sometimes written አህን”. This usage is probably a result of Ge'ez influence. We cannot rely on this matter with regard to its usage in OA, however. OA has ኸ which, with no question is

5 A similar naming and abbreviation are used in Cowley (1983).

6 To establish a clear theoretically categorization of the various periods of Amharic, one needs to carefully examine the grammar and lexicon of the language as exemplified in different periods. For such comparison, there are valuable sources on Amharic grammar such as Ludolf (1698), Isenberg (1842), Praetorius (1879), Armbruster (1908), Leslau (1995) and Yimam (2000 EC) that one should consider. See also Little (1974) and the works cited here-and-there in this paper for some discussion on the historical grammar of Amharic.

7 I am using here and throughout the paper the first order of the Ethiopic alphabet to represent consonants. For further issues on transcription, see “Notes on Transcription” in the appendix.

phonemically closer to /h/ as they share place of articulation. In some words ሐ is used instead of ኸ. For instance, the MA preposition ከ /kâ/ is sometimes written with ሐ in OA as in ሐዳኗ *xi-dañña* to-judge 'to a judge' FP, (Cowley 1983:10) and (16) ሐአባትህ አገር *x-abbat-ih agär* from-father-2mspos country 'from the land/ country of your father' DL, L8 (Guidi 1889: 58). This same preposition is also written with ኸ as recent as the 19<sup>th</sup> century as can be seen from D'Abbadie's (1881: 3) dictionary ኸ-ገብያ ነበርኑ *xi-gäbüya näbbär-hu in-market was-1ss* 'I was in the market', ኸ-ታች *xi-tačč* from-below 'down'. This kind of confusion is found in a number of Ge'ez texts as well. The mixing of the symbols has most probably to do with the writer's poor knowledge of the alphabet.

As pointed out above, the current usage of ኸ in Tigrinya is an alternate to ሐ. In OA, except few cases, its usage seems also related to ሐ rather than to ኸ. Consider, for instance, ኸገገቴ 'my neck' FP (Cowley 1983: 7) and ሐገገት 'neck' YL, L. 37 (Guidi 1889: 55). The same word 'neck' is written in the former with ኸ and in the latter with ሐ. It is logical to suggest in these two cases that both represent the same sound, most probably the pharyngeal fricative /ħ/ as in Tigrinya. Hence, these two words can be transcribed as follows:

- (1) a. ኸገገቴ FP (Cowley 1983: 7)  
 ḥaŋgät-e  
 neck-1sposs  
 'my neck'
- b. ሐገገት YL, L. 37 (Guidi 1889: 55)  
 ḥaŋgät  
 'neck'

The present form of (1) is አገገት *angät* 'neck' with the loss of the initial consonant /ħ/. The alternation of ሐ and ኸ in old Amharic is, in fact, very common as can be seen also in (2) with the perfective verb

'see'. It is logical to assume that ሐ and ኅ in these examples represent the same sound /h/.<sup>8</sup>

(2) a. ኅዩ TM, Plate II, Column 2

ḥay-u

see<sub>perf-3pls</sub>

'they saw'

b. የሐዩኸ YL, L. 11 (Guidi 1889: 54)

yä-ḥay-ä-x

RM-see<sub>perf-3mss-2mso</sub>

'that/who saw you'

From the example in (2b), it is important to consider the usage of the symbol ኸ, which I transcribe as /x/. ኸ in this example is the second person masculine singular subject agreement marker (2mss) as can be seen also from the morphological gloss.<sup>9</sup> Although in current Amharic this sound is pronounced /h/, I assume that the 2mss marker ኸ in (2b) is /x/. The change from OA /x/ to MA /h/ is caused by phonological conditioning. Hence, in OA it is safe to assume the pronunciation of ኅ to be the same as ሐ.<sup>10</sup> Considering this to be the case, I investigate the phonemic features of this and other sounds which are not found in MA or are marginal in § 2.1. A few words on

8 Note that there seems to be a phonological change between pharyngeal and glottal sounds. Such change, however seems only to occur during derivations as evidenced by the following Shonke Argobba example: ሐለቕ *halläq* 'he ended' vs. ማለቕ *mahläq* 'to end, ending'. *halläq* is a perfective verb with a default third masculine singular subject agreement whereas *mahläq* is an infinitive which, in Argobba and other Ethio-Semitic languages, is a verbal noun corresponding to the English gerund rather than to the infinitive.

9 Note that ኸ has an allomorph /k/ in MA.

10 The inconsistency of spelling has to do with the scribe's knowledge of the alphabet as it is found in some cases in a single manuscript. For instance, in TM we have በተሐዩ Plate II, column 3, የሚከሐዩን plate III, column 3 and ኅዩ Plate II, Column 2 (cf. 2a above).

the historical loss of such phonemes and the phonological process made before their loss will be discussed in § 2.2.

## 2.1 Phonemic features

Modern Amharic is known for lacking the pharyngeal sounds *ħ* /ħ/ and *ʕ* /ʕ/ and the glottal sound *ʔ* /ʔ/ which are typical of Semitic languages. Yimam (2000 EC) even considers this as a support of Bender's claim of Amharic's pidgin past. This assumption is challenged in Demeke (2009) due to, among other factors, the existence of such phonemes in Argobba<sup>11</sup> and in historical Amharic itself as recent as 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup> The manuscripts considered here show the existence of such sounds in Old Amharic.

There seems to be no difference between *ħ* and *ʔ* in OA. As pointed out above, both in most cases represent the pharyngeal sound /ħ/. In MA no existence of this pharyngeal sound is found. Despite that, the reduction of this and other pharyngeal consonants may have started even at an earlier time. /ħ/ is found almost in every word position in the manuscripts investigated.<sup>13</sup> Consider the following where it exists at the initial position in all manuscripts under consideration:<sup>14</sup>

- (3) a. ሐርበኛ ሳምድ ጽዮን AL, L.1 (Guidi 1889:62)  
 ħarbāñña ṣamdä s'iyon  
 warrior Amde Tsion

11 This is true especially with the Shonke-Tollaha variety of Argobba (cf. Wetter 2011, Demeke 2011). Argobba is a closely related language to Amharic and was assumed to be its dialect.

12 The pharyngeal constants have been lost in the 19th century. For instance, Isenberg (1842) claims that the distinction is totally lost in his time Amharic: "In the present Amharic [i.e. mid-19th century], *ʕ*: *ħ* and *ʔ* are pronounced alike, like *h* in horse, and are often exchanged for *ħ*; thus entirely dropping the aspiration" (Isenberg 1842: 6).

13 See also for a brief discussion on this and the other pharyngeal and glottal sounds Cowley (1974) and Cowley (1983).

14 The translation given here may not exactly correspond to their contextual meaning in the text that they are found.

- 'the warrior Amde Tsion'  
 b. ሐፍዕ YL, L. 5 (Guidi 1889:55)  
 ḥafs-o  
 scoop up/gather<sub>gerund</sub>-3mss  
 'after gathering, scooping up'  
 c. ሐንገት ZYL, L2 (Guidi 1889:55)  
 ḥanžät  
 'intestine'  
 d. ሐርብ GL, L9  
 ḥarb  
 'military force'  
 e. ሐንጽ TM Plate III, Column 2 (Cowley 1974)  
 ḥand  
 'one'  
 f. ኃጣፅ (Haile 1970: 72)  
 lose<sub>perf</sub>.3mss  
 ḥat'aſ  
 'he did not find (it), he lost'  
 g. ሐጸቦችው FP (Cowley 1974:11)  
 ḥas's'äb-äčč-ïw  
 wash<sub>perf</sub>-3fss-3mso  
 'She washed it'  
 h. ሐረር DL, L. 36 (Guidi 1889:59)  
 ḥarrär  
 burn<sub>perf</sub>.3mss  
 'it burned'

A number of occurrences of this pharyngeal sound /ħ/ in the medial position of a word are also attested, as in ሞሐላ mäḥala 'promise' DL, L.17 (Guidi 1889:62), ጠሐለው t'äḥal-ä-w fail<sub>perf</sub>-3mss-3mso 'he made him fall, he lost it' GL, L. 23 (Guidi 1889:60), ለአምሐራ lä-ጎamḥara 'for Amhara' DL, L.29 (Guidi 1889:59), በመስተሐየት bämästihayät 'by mirror, glass' FP, (Cowley 1983: 5), and የሐዘ yä-yähaz RM-catch<sub>perf</sub>.3mss 'he who caught' YL, L. 111 (Guidi 1889: 58). /ħ/'s occurrence in word-final position is also attested. Consider for instance በፍልሐ bä-filih 'by hot-iron' YL, L. 51 (Guidi 1889:55), ንስሐ

nisiha 'confession' FP, (Cowley 1983: 6), and ኢቃሕ ገዳሕ 'goods, materials, things' (Haile 1970: 73).

In the examination of the FP manuscript, Cowley (1983: 21) states with regard to the opposition between *h* /ʔ/ and *o* /ɣ/ that they are lost in the majority of words. The imperial songs do not have also much of these sounds. However, we find in these manuscripts the retention of *h* /ʔ/ and *o* /ɣ/ in a sizeable minority of words in all positions.<sup>15</sup> For the pharyngeal *o*, at the initial position we have examples such as ዓይን ሰላም 'eye' YL, L.8 (Guidi 1889:54), ዓዋቂ ሰላም 'a wise (man)' FP, (Cowley 1983:10), and ዕለት ናይት 'day' FP, (Cowley 1983: 6); at the medial position, ማርገን ሰላም 'grass-Acc 'grass' TM, Plate III, Column 4, ከሰባት ናይት 'from-seven-def 'from the seven' (Cowley 1983: 4), ግር ጸግር ሰላም 'wailing (and) agony' (Cowley 1983: 6), በዓል-ጽት ከሰላም 'Madame' ZYL, L.8 (Guidi 1889: 63), ማዕለ- ሰላም 'wave/storm-def 'the wave, storm' YL, L.13 (Guidi 1889: 54), and ራብት ሰላም 'after after tomorrow', *i.e.*, the 4th day from today' (Haile 1970: 4);<sup>16</sup> and, at word final position, ቁጥጥር 'anger' GL, L13 (Guidi 1889:65), ሰላም ሰላም 'face, color, feature', ሰላም ሰላም 'food' FP, (Cowley 1983: 4), ተጽኑት ሰላም ሰላም 'from-fierce enemy 'from bad enemy' TM, Plate II, Column 1, ይቃኑት ሰላም 'eager' <sub>Impf</sub> '(was) eager' ZYL, L.52 (Guidi 1889:64), ትልል ሰላም 'warm', and ተኝት ሰላም 'sleep' <sub>perf.3mss</sub> 'he slept' (Haile 1970: 71).

It is very difficult to tell whether the glottal stop *h* /ʔ/ is found in OA at the initial position or not, as the symbol that represents it also indicates vowel word-initially. Hence, forms such as ኢቃሕ 'goods' (Haile 1970: 73) can possibly be either /ʔiqah/ or without the glottal stop /iqah/. Similarly, አርአጅ 'a kind of a polecat, skunk' (Ibid.) can be /ʔarʔaj/ or /arʔaj/. However, we have a number of cases that proves

15 Note that, as in the case with *h* and *ḥ*, there is also a confusion between *h* and *o* in usages. Such confusion is found sometimes in the same manuscript and with the same word. For instance, /ɣ/ is written as *h* in ከሰላም ሰላም *nibālsaxu māhala* (DL, L. 17, Guidi 1889:62) and as *o* in ከሰላም ሰላም *ʔannibālsam māhala* (DL, L. 22, Guidi 1889:62) where in both examples *bālsa* 'to eat' is the same imperfective verb.

16 A slightly different form exists in Argobba (see Demeke 2011).

its existence in Old Amharic. For instance, in the latter example, the medial *h* cannot be other than /ʔ/, or a representation of a consonant, as sequence of vowels is not allowed.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, we have plenty of examples that show its existence in word medial and final positions as in - *Medial Position* - ከበአሰን *kä-bäʔas-ä-n* if-bad<sub>perf-3mss-1plo</sub> DL, L.17 'if (things) affected us, if (things) go wrong for us' (Guidi 1889: 62), ከከፍአት *kä-kifʔat* from-evil 'from evil' FP, (Cowely 1983: 7) and ዘአን *zäʔag-ä* rust<sub>perf-3mss</sub> 'it did rust' (Haile 1970: 77); and - *Final Position* - ተመታአ *tä-mättaʔ* passive-hit<sub>perf.3mss</sub> 'he was hit' YL-III, L. 3 (Guidi 1889: 58), እንዲእ *ʔindiʔ* 'there is no knowledge' MA እንጃ *ʔinጃ* (Haile 1970: 74), ቀንኢቶ *qänʔit-o*<sup>18</sup> jealous<sub>perf-3mss</sub> 'he was being jealous' TM, Plate II, Column 3, and መጽላኢትን *mäs'laʔit-n*<sup>19</sup> hate-Acc 'hate' TM, Plate II, Column 1.

Although still in use, the glottal fricative /h/, like *h* /ʔ/ does not seem to be used as what it appeared in OA. Below are few OA examples of *u* /h/ which are lost in MA.

- (4) a. ሄት FP, (Cowely 1983:6)  
 het  
 'where'
- b. ያበራህ FP, (Cowely 1983:8)  
 y-abärrah  
 RM-light<sub>perf-2mss</sub>  
 'you, who (made the blind) see'
- c. ሀኾኹ ZYL, L. 47 (Guidi 1889: 64)  
 hayä-hu  
 see<sub>perf-1ss</sub>  
 'I saw'

17 Note that the glottal stop is not totally lost in MA. We have some words that preserved it such as *mäʔat* 'disaster, a lot', *maʔqäb* 'sanctions', *maʔkäl* 'central' etc.

18 The -t in *qänʔito* is not part of the root. The root only consists of q, n and ʔ -  $\sqrt{qnʔ}$ .

19 The -t in this example as well is not part of the root. The form is in the infinitive, i.e. a verbal noun in Amharic, marked by the prefix *mä-*. The root is  $\sqrt{slʔ}$ .

d. ሀባይ ZYL, L. 48 (Guidi 1889: 64)  
 habay  
 'lair'

The current form of (4a) is የት yät, (4b) ያበራ y-abärra, (4c) አየሁ ayähu, and (4d) አባይ abay. The current form of (4a) is different from its old form not only with the loss of /h/ but also with the addition of the glide followed by the mid central vowel. The deletion of /h/ when followed by the vowel /e/ does not seem to result always to /yä/. For instance, in the glossary given by Haile (1970: 65) we have ሄሊ where in MA it is ኤሊ 'tortoise'.<sup>20</sup> In general, losses of the glottal and pharyngeal sounds however will leave in many cases traces.

## 2.2. Phonological process

Cowley (1983: 21) on the examination of FP remarks that “in a few forms, the vowel which would have been in final position is retracted and attached to the penultimate consonant ..., or even attached to the penultimate consonant as well as remaining in final position”.<sup>21</sup> This statement is only partially true. Among the examples that he gave, it only applies to ስሚዕ and የተፈገፀም. The /-i/ in ስሚዕ sämiፍ 'listen (you.f)!' is a feminine agreement marker which appears as a suffix in the imperative verb form, as in ስበሪ sibär-i 'break-2sfs' 'break (you.f)!' ፈልጊ fällig-i search-2sfs 'search (you.f)!' etc. The final /-u/ in የተፈገፀም yä-tä-fägguፍ-u-m is a suffix agreement for third person plural subject. The /u/ found inside the stem is an allophone of /ä/ caused by feature spreading where the base form is \*yä-tä-fäggäፍ-u-m. Cowley's other examples do not support the assumption that the vowel found following the penultimate consonant in the above examples is retracted from the final position. We do not have any evidence for the existence of such or any other vowel in the final position.

20 ሄት could be a complex form; the preposition element /x-/ plus yät. More data is needed to confirm this.

21 Cowley (ibid.) gave for the former ስሚዕ, ያበራህ, ያረታዕ and ያገጸሕ, and for the latter የተፈገፀም.

The verbs that Cowley gave are in the perfective aspect with a third person masculine singular subject. If Cowley's explanation is right, such forms would be assumed as having /a/ as a third person masculine singular subject agreement marker.<sup>22</sup> However, this does not seem to be the case. First, we do not have any evidence of such usage in its history. Second, as we will see in the next section, it is difficult to assume that the form /a/ is a Proto-form of Transversal or even the Central Transversal group that comprises only Amharic and Argobba because, among others, Argobba of the Shonke-Tollaha variety do not have it. Third, Old Amharic has two forms when the subject is 3mss in the perfective verb. One is a zero morpheme as in Shonke-Tollaha and the other is /-ä/ as in MA. This can be observed even from the same clause that Cowley (1983) picked his examples from.

- (5) በእንተ ፍቅረ ሰብእ ዕውር ያበራህ ሐንኳስ ያረታዕ ለምጽ ያነጻሕ መጸገው ያሸጻረ በ፴፰ ዓመቱ ከተሐመመ ሙት ያነሣ የርጎበን ያጸገበ በጤቂት ነገር 'For love of man, who made the blind see, who straightened the lame, who cleansed the leper, who cured the paralytic in his 38<sup>th</sup> year after he became sick, who raised the dead, who satisfied the hungry with a small thing' FP, (Cowley 1983: 8 & 16).

Among the eight verbs found in (5), three of them, ያሸጻረ y-a-šäṣar-ä RM-transitivizer-cure<sub>perf</sub>-3mss 'who cured', ከተሐመመ kä-tä-ḥammäm-ä from-passive-sick<sub>perf</sub>-3mss 'from became sick', and የርጎበን yä-rḥab-ä-n RM-hungry<sub>perf</sub>-3mss 'who were hungry', are marked with /-ä/, whereas ያበራህ y-a-bärrah RM-transitivizer-light<sub>perf</sub>.3mss 'who made (the blind) see', ያረታዕ y-a-rättaṣ RM-transitivizer-straighten<sub>perf</sub>.3mss 'who straightened', ያነጻሕ y-a-näs's'aḥ RM-transitivizer-raise<sub>perf</sub>.3mss 'who raised', and ያጸገበ y-a-s'aggäb RM-

22 In fact, the Shagure, Shoa Robit and Aliyu Amba varieties of Argobba as well as Harari, a language also closely related to Amharic, use /-a/ for such agreement. MA uses the mid central vowel /ä/ for the same purpose.

transitivizer-satisfy<sub>perf.3mss</sub> 'who satisfied' are not. The existence of an overt Agr in ያነሳ y-a-nässa RM-transitivizer-raise<sub>perf.3mss</sub> 'who raised (the dead)' is not clear as it lost the final radical. Hence, the final /a/ in y-a-nässa could be the 3mss Agr or part of the stem. In addition to ያበራህ, ያረታህ and ያነጻሕ, the form ያጸገብ appears without a suffix vowel, i.e. the 3mss agreement, exactly like what we have in Shonke-Tollaha variety of Argobba. As we will see in the following section, this lack of overt 3mss Agr in the perfective is one of the characteristics of OA. The point now is; what is the reason that we find /a/ following the penultimate radical instead of the perfective marker /ä/ in ያበራህ, ያረታህ and ያነጻሕ? When we examine these data closely, it is clear that the vowel /a/ is an allophone of /ä/ caused by the following consonant.<sup>23</sup> This assimilation can be formalized with the following traditional phonological rule.

- (6) /ä/ → /a/ /- pharyngeal  
- glottal

The assimilation proposed in (6) is a well-known phonological process in a number of languages. I assume that it is after this phonological process took place that the loss of such consonants did occur historically as the form in MA is ሰማ sämma, ቦራ bärärra, ረታ rättä and ነጻ näs's'a. The phonological change of /ä/ → /a/ should be seen as a historical one. In Pre-Amharic /ä/ most probably existed. I illustrate this proposal taking all the above examples with the perfective form as follows:

Table 1: Phonological process with pharyngeal and glottal sounds

root	Pre-Amharic	Old Amharic	Modern Amharic	Gloss
√smፍ	sämmäፍ	sämmäፍ	sämmä	'he heard'
√brh	bärräh	bärrah	bärärra	it was lighted'

23 The underlying forms of these verbs are \*y-a-bärräh, \*y-a-rättäፍ and \*y-a-näs's'äh.

√rtʃ	rättäʃ	rättaʃ	rätta	'he won'
√ns'h	näs's'äh	näs's'aḥ	näs's'a	'it was clean'

Supportive evidence to the above claim comes from the varieties of Argobba, Amharic's closest relative. Consider the following, for instance:<sup>24</sup>

Table 2: varieties in Argobba

root	Shoa Robit Argobba	Aliyu Amba Argobba	Shonke-Tollaha Argobba	Modern Amharic	Gloss
√lht'	lähat'-a	lahat'-a	lähat'	lat'-ä	'he peeled'
√lhlh	lähaläh-a	lalah-a	lähaläh	lala-Ø	'it became lose'

As can be seen in Table 2, the Argobba varieties illustrate properties of the different periods of Amharic. The Shonke-Tollaha and the Shoa Robit varieties are more archaic than OA. The Aliyu Amba variety on the other hand corresponds exactly to OA.<sup>25</sup>

The change of /k/ to /x/ is common in modern Ethio-Semitic languages such as Tigrinya and Argobba. Change of k to \*x → h is also attested in MA due to phonological conditioning. However due to the limited data, I could not figure it out what causes the change of k to x. In some cases, it seems that it is changing without any reasonable phonological environment. For instance, the form ከብት käbt 'cattle, wealth' is alternatively written as ኸብት xäbt. In fact, both exist in the same manuscript, sometimes in sequential sentences as

24 For comparison, in Table 2 I give the equivalent form in MA.

25 In a number of cases, in fact, the Shonke-Tollaha Argobba shows more archaic feature than OA and the rest of the Argobba varieties as well.

can be seen from the following FP text ኸብቴን xäbt-e-n wealth-1sposs 'my wealth' and ከብትዋን käbt-wa-n wealth-3fposs-Acc 'her wealth':

(7) ገረድዋን ጸራቸና አስተ ያን ኸብቴን ጎሉን አንጭ አለቸዋት ያለውን ከብትዋን በሙሉ አመጸቸላት, FP

'She called her maid and said to her "So, then, bring all that wealth of mine!" She brought to her, in full, all her wealth that there was' (Cowley 1983: 9&17)

What is interesting from diachronic point of view with particular reference to käbt and xäbt is that both exist in MA having two different meanings as can be seen below:

(8) MA

- a. ከብት käbt 'cattle'
- b. ሀብት habt 'wealth'

The phonological process and semantic shift on käbt which took place historically can be schematized as follows:

Table 3: Semantic and phonological changes of ከብት käbt

Pre-Amharic	OA	MA
käbt 'wealth, cattle' →	1. käbt 'wealth, cattle' →	käbt 'cattle'
	2. xäbt 'wealth, cattle' →	*häbt → habt 'wealth'

From phonological side, it means that there are two processes done sequentially in time: change in manner of articulation and place of articulation. The change of the voiceless velar stop /k/ to its counterpart fricative /x/ is done in OA. This change is neither total nor can be assumed as caused due to assimilation as the retention of the former /k/ still exists. On the other hand, the velar fricative x further changed to the glottal fricative /h/. This latter glottal sound further gave part of its behavior, which is particularly lowering of the tongue, to the following vowel /ä/. Hence, /ä/ is changed to its lower

counterpart /a/ by progressive assimilation. This change is schematized in the rule based theory as follows:

(9)  $x \rightarrow h$  then  $\ddot{a} \rightarrow a/h-$  .

The change of /k/ to /x/ also existed in other contexts, as with the preposition /kä-/. I repeat those examples in (10) below for ease of reference.

(10) a. አዳኒ (Cowley 1983:10)

xī-dañña

to-judge

'to a judge'

b. ሐአባጎህ አገር DL, L8 (Guidi 1889: 58)

x-abbat-ih agär

to-father-2mspos country

'to the land/ country of your father'

As pointed out above x(ä)- is found as an allomorph of the preposition kä- at least until the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see D'Abbadie 1881:3). In some regional dialects, both allomorphs do still exist side by side although standard Amharic uses only kä-.

The loss of the pharyngeal and glottal sounds had already started in the 16<sup>th</sup> and probably earlier centuries. In some cases we find a loss of one sound and retention of another even in a single word. Consider, for instance, ይራራኅ in (11):

(11) ይራራኅ ኤለኅ, FP (Cowley 1983:10&18)

yī-rarraḥ ?ell-ä-n

3mss-be.merciful<sub>impf</sub> Aux-3mss-interrogative.particle

'Will he not be merciful?'

The word in (10) is identical with the Shoa Robit Argobba one as can be seen in (12a), but the most complete form of this word occurs in Shonke-Tollaha Argobba (cf. 12b). Recall that, the latter speech variety has preserved all the pharyngeal and glottal sounds.

- (12) a. ራረሀ (Shoa Robit Argobba)  
 rarräh-a  
 be.merciful, kind, compassionate(perfective)-3mss
- b. ረሀረሀ (Shonke-Tollaha Argobba)  
 räharräh  
 be.merciful, kind, compassionate(perfective).3mss
- Both: 'He was compassionate, merciful, kind'

The OA word in (11) corresponds to the Shoa Robit form in (11a) as both lost the second radical. The Shonke-Tollaha item in (12b) shows more archaic form from both the OA's word in (11) and the Shoa Robit's in (12a). This is true for a number of other cases. This is also a good support for the suggestion that divergence between Amharic and Argobba had taken place much earlier than the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century. According to Demeke (2009) it took place starting from the 9<sup>th</sup> century when most Argobba embraced Islam.

In Amharic some gerunds and infinitives use to have an element -t which is not part of the root as in *bälla* 'he ate' vs. *mäblat* 'to eat, eating', and *bälto* lit. 'after he has eaten'. It was generally believed that it is the loss of pharyngeal and glottal sounds at word final position that triggers the appearance of this -t as it is restricted to words that lost final radicals. It seems that however, the appearance of the element -t existed before the loss of such sounds as can be seen in the following example with the root is  $\sqrt{\text{wǝgʕ}}$  'fight'.

- (13) ወግፍፍ DL, L.11 (Guidi 1889:62)  
 \*wǝgʕit-e → wǝgʕičč-e  
 fight<sub>gerund</sub>-1spos

Although it is difficult to make any conclusion out of it, I found a word in OA - እርግናና ሻገንጎና-na 'and oldness', FP, (Cowley 1983: 7) with /g/ where its current form in MA is እርጅናና ሻገንጎና-na with /ǧ/. It seems that the verb form *arräǧ-* 'become old' is also a latest development in Modern Amharic as many derived forms are also with /g/ as in *aroge* 'old' *arogit* 'an old women' but not with /ǧ/. However, due to the limited data, it is difficult for me to conclude

whether the change of /g/ to /ǧ/ is a wide spread phenomenon in historical Amharic.<sup>26</sup> There are a number of phonological processes which can be addressed here in OA, but due to space, I cannot go further.

### 3. Morphology and Syntax

#### 3.1 Agreement

Most Ethio-Semitic languages use in the perfective aspect /-ä/ as a third person subject agreement. However, the Aliyu Amba, Shoa Robit and Shagura varieties of Argobba as well as Harari - use /-a/ for the same purpose, although their distant relative Ge'ez use /-ä/ like in Amharic. Interesting is the Shonke-Tollaha variety which is similar to OA in terms of its phonological features discussed in the above section and also with regard to 3mss Agr of the perfective verb. This dialect of Argobba does not have a visible morpheme for the identification of the third person masculine singular subject word-finally. This seems also the case with OA. Consider the following:

- (14) a. ጥፋ አል FP, (Cowely 1983:5)  
 mot ?all  
 death exist.3mss  
 'there is death' lit. 'death exists'
- b. የኖሮ YL, L. 51 (Guidi 1889:56)  
 yä-nor  
 RM-live<sub>perf.</sub>3mss  
 'he who lived'
- c. ኃጣፊ (Haile1970: 72)<sup>27</sup>  
 ħat't'aḥ  
 miss<sub>perf.</sub>3mss

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26 As Meyer pointed out to me, velar to palatal is observed in Gunnän Gurage languages. In MA and the other modern Transversal languages this type of palatalization does not occur, however.

27 MA ኣጣ.

- 'He did not find (it), He did not recognize, etc.'
- d. ሬሳቾ በአሳት ሐረር DL, L. 35 (Guidi 1889: 59)  
 resa-ččo bā-ʔisat harrär  
 body-3plposs by-fire burn<sub>perf</sub>3ms<sup>s</sup>  
 'their bodies burned by fire'
- e. ወረወር GL, L. 14 (Guidi 1889: 65)  
 wäräwwär  
 throw<sub>perf</sub>3mss  
 'He threw'

Although the verb of existence in the third person singular cases often appears in FP in its bare form, in few occasions we find it with /-ä/ as in (15).

- (15) a. እንዴኽ ያለ FP, (Cowley 1983: 10)  
 ʔind-eh y-all-ä  
 like-this RM-exist-3mss  
 'like this'
- b. ከኔ የበአሰ ጎጥፅ ማን አለ FP, (Cowley 1983: 11&19)<sup>28</sup>  
 kä-ne yä-bäʔas-ä hat'ʕ man ʔall-ä  
 from-me RM-be.bad<sub>perf</sub>3mss sin who exist-3mss  
 'who is a worse sinner than I?'

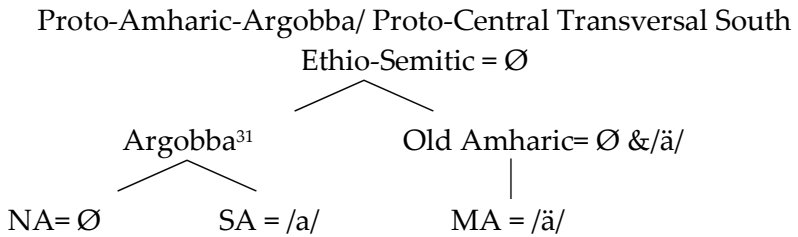
In FP, in few other cases we find also /-ä/ as in ያን የአኸል ከብት ቢሐይ ደገገፀ ya-n yäʔaxil käbt b-i-ḥay dänäggäs'-ä that-Acc much wealth when-3mss-see<sub>impf</sub> startle<sub>perf</sub>3mss 'when he saw that much wealth, he was startled' FP, (Cowley 1983: 9 & 18). In FP, we find not many cases of /-ä/'s occurrence. This is true especially with matrix verbs. In embedded clauses, we often find /-ä/ as in (15b) ከኔ የበአሰ ጎጥፅ and (5) የርጎበን ያጸገብ yä-räxab-ä-n y-a-s'äggäb RM-be.hungry<sub>perf</sub>3mss-Acc RM-satisfy<sub>perf</sub>3mss 'who satisfied the hungry'. However, this cannot be considered as an obligatory case as we find embedded clauses without it as in ይኸን ያልገወቅ እንደሆነ yix-n y-al-sawwäq ʔindä-xon this-Acc RM-neg-know<sub>perf</sub>3mss if-be.3mss 'if he did not know this' FP, (Cowley

28 Interesting here is the form of ጎጥፅ where MA uses መ.ያተኛ.

1983: 10).<sup>29</sup> In TM, however, the form /-ä/ existed in the majority cases. On the other hand, in the Imperial songs almost all perfective verbs agreeing with a 3sm subject do not have /-ä/. In this respect the Imperial Songs are more archaic than TM and FP.<sup>30</sup>

It might be the case that Proto-Amharic-Argobba had a zero morpheme for third person singular subject marker in the perfective aspect as in Shonke-Tollaha. The current use of /-ä/ in Amharic for this purpose might be an innovation after its separation from Argobba. As it is clear from the OA data, the use of /ä/ is very limited in pre-17<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts. Except few optional cases such as *kasa iżih näbbär(-ä) K. here was-3mss* 'Kasa was here' and *kasa iżih indä-hon(-ä) K. here if-was-3mss* 'if Kasa was here' in MA /ä/ is needed. This obligatory occurrence is however definitely a later development. The usage of /a/ in the Shoa Robit-Aliyu Amba dialect of Argobba should also be a later development after the two dialects of Argobba separated. I illustrate this historical fact of the third person masculine singular subject marker in the perfective verb in what Hetzron (1972) calls Central Transversal South Ethio-Semitic group as follows:

(16) 3mss agreement marker in the perfective verb



29 What is important here is that we find both in a single manuscript.

30 I could only manage to find a single case in the song of Dawit which is ተገኘ *tä-gäññ-ä* passive-findperf-3mss 'it was found' DL, L. 27 (Guidi 1889: 60).

31 Note that this applies to word final position. All the Argobba varieties take, like MA /-ä /as 3mss marker when there is, especially an object marker.

The third person object feminine agreement element is also different from the current one. In MA it is -at as in *fälläg-Ø-at want<sub>perf</sub>-3mss-3fso* 'he wanted her'. In OA the form is -wat as it is revealed in all the manuscripts investigated here. Consider the following few examples:

(17) a. አለቸዋት FP (Cowley 1983:5)

ʔalä-äččä-wat

say-3fss-3fso

'she said to her'

b. የተውጠዋት DL, L. 34 (Guidi 1889: 60)

yä-täw-nä-wat

RM-leave-1pls-3fso

Most of the agreement morphemes that are extant from OA are similar with MA. However, we do not have the whole list of such elements as the data is limited. However, the agreement elements given in Ludolf (1698a:12) are almost identical with MA. The only difference is minor phonological change on the second person singular which is /-k/ after a consonant in MA but /x/ in Ludolf's work. On the other hand, Cowley (1974:604) states that "where the 3m.s. Object suffix to verbs is infix, it is -uw-, instead of MA -äw as in ይቀብሩዋል (... for MA ይቀብረዋል)". However, this interpretation does not seem to be the case. The form ይቀብሩዋል is what is known as impersonal construction.<sup>32</sup> This kind of construction still exists although not as common as in the Gurage languages and OA (See Section 3.6 below). Forms such as -ዋቸው, -አቸው and -አኝ is also observed for third person plural object marker. The variation between the latter two seems a standardization problem of spelling.

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32 Cowley in his other work as well, i.e. (Cowley 1983), mistakenly treated this kind of form as agreement with third plural subject and often translates it, as "they...", which is wrong. The subject of such construction is an expletive pro which can be translated in English as 'one'. See section 3.6 below.

### 3.2 Tense

Except the western Gurage languages, that have three tenses, the remaining Ethio-Semitic languages have a two-way distinction of tense; past vs. non-past. In most of these languages past is marked by the bare perfective verb whereas the imperfective verb either in its bare form or with an auxiliary denotes non-past. The latter is commonly referred to in the descriptive literature as compound imperfect.

In MA in affirmative matrix clauses the imperfective form must add the auxiliary /all/ to mark non-past. This is, in fact, also the case with Harari and related languages and considered as one of the innovations of the Transversal group. Interesting is that in OA along with compound imperfective, bare imperfective is found in matrix clauses denoting non-past as in (18).

- (18) a. ይልሐጽ YL, L. 8 (Guidi 1889:54)  
 yī-llīḥas'  
 3mss-passive.peel<sub>impf</sub>  
 'he will peel'
- b. ቢስማሙ ይሻል FP, (Cowley 1983:10)  
 b-i-smam-u yī-š-šal  
 if-3pls<sub>i</sub>-agree<sub>impf</sub>-3pls<sub>i</sub>: 3mss-passive-be.better<sub>impf</sub>  
 'it will be nice if they agree'
- c. አብ ከበቡን ይመስል TM, Plate V, Column 1  
 ʔab kībāb-u-n yī-māsl  
 Father circle-def/poss-Acc 3mss-be.like<sub>impf</sub>  
 'Father is like its circle' (Cowley 1974: 600)<sup>33</sup>
- d. ይነሰንስ AL, L. 4 (Guidi 1889:63)  
 yī-nāsännis  
 3mss-sprinkle<sub>impf</sub>  
 'he will sprinkle'
- e. ማን ይሐይኸ ገጽ በገጽ YL, L. 49 (Guidi 1889:55)  
 man yī-ḥay-ix gäs' bā-gäs'

33 For the contextual meaning of this and all other examples, please consult the respective references.

who mss-see<sub>impf</sub>-2mss face by-face  
 'Who can (dare) look at you face to face?'

All the clauses in (18) are ungrammatical in MA due to the lack of the auxiliary -all. However, we find also the so-called compound imperfective in OA in matrix clauses in the same way that we find in MA as can be seen in (19) where in (19a) the form የአንስለታል and ያመልጣል are with the auxiliary -all and can be understood respectively as follows: yä-?ansī-llät-all 3mss-reduce<sub>impf</sub>-Aux 'it will be reduced' and y-amält'-all 3mss-escape<sub>impf</sub>-Aux 'he will escape'.

(19) a. ነገር ዓዋቂ ተሰው የተጻለ እንደኖን ሕዳና ሳይደርስ ቀድሞ ቢታረቅ እዳውም የአንስለታል ከዳንነትም ያመልጣል

'if a person of experience has quarreled with another, his debt will be reduced for him, and he will escape from judgment, if he is previously reconciled, before he reaches the judge'. FP, (Cowley 1983:10 & 19)

b. ይነሣል TM, Plate VII, Column 2

yī-näss-all  
 3mss-rise<sub>impf</sub>-Aux  
 'it will rise'

Although we find both forms, i.e. bare and compound imperfective forms, in OA the distribution among the manuscripts under investigation is not uniform. The usage of bare imperfective in TM is very rare. The majority in FP are also compound imperfective forms. On the other hand, in none of the imperial lyrics we find compound imperfective, i.e. imperfective + the auxiliary -all in main affirmative clauses.<sup>34</sup> It is hard to reach any conclusion against the suggested Proto-Transversal innovation of the so-called compound imperfective in the main clauses, however. First, the imperial songs

34 There is one questionable case in DL, however. This form is ትለላች which seems having the auxiliary -all with a feminine subject agreement. However, in another version of the same manuscript this word is replaced by ተከለላት and the one with ትለላች does not give sense in its context.

are poems where lots of freedom of usage is allowed. Second, we do not have many imperfective forms in those lyrics. For instance, from the longest lyric of all, i.e. YL, I found only two occurrences of imperfective in matrix clauses both -, in fact, without the auxiliary.

### 3.3 Sentential Negation

Amharic has negative concord where matrix clause negation appears with pre-verbal and post-verbal negative elements. However, the post-verbal negative marker is sensitive to the type of clause and mostly asserts polarity. In old Amharic the post-verbal negative marker seems optional even in main clauses as can be seen in (20).

- (20) a. ከሰባተ ገጠያት ምንም አይጓደለዋት FP, (Cowley 1983: 4)  
 kā-säbʿat-u ḥat'iyat mīnīm ʔay-g<sup>w</sup>addäl-ä-wat  
 from-seven-def sin nothing neg-miss<sub>perf-3mss-3fso</sub>  
 'She lacked nothing from (all) the seven sins'
- b. አለማረከው ልጅ ምሽቱን AL, L. 24 (Guidi 1889: 62)  
 ʔal-as-marräx-ä-w liǧǧä müšt-u-n  
 neg-caustaivizer-surrender<sub>perf-3mss-3mso</sub> child wife-3mssposs-Acc  
 'You did not make surrender his children and wife'
- c. አልጻፈጠው DL. 19 (Guidi 1889: 58)  
 ʔal-s'affät'-ä-w  
 neg-taste<sub>perf-3mss-3mso</sub>  
 'He did not like (it)'

In most cases, we find the post-verbal negative marker in OA in a similar way that we find in current Amharic. Consider the following:

- (21) a. አይከተልም FP, (Cowley 1983:8)  
 ʔay-yi-kättäl-m  
 neg-3mss-follow<sub>perf-neg</sub>
- b. አልጎነም DL, L. 43 (Guidi 1889:61)  
 ʔal-ḥ<sup>w</sup>än-ä-m  
 neg-be/become-3mss-neg
- c. አልገዛዋችም, YL, L. 96 (Guidi 1889:57)

?al-gäzz-a-wacco-m  
 neg-rule<sub>perf</sub>-3mss-3plo-neg  
 d. አይኖረውም, TM, Plate v, column 1  
 ?a-y-nor-äw-im  
 neg-3mss-have-3mso-neg

Note that, most Ethio-Semitic languages have pre- and post-verbal negative markers in matrix clauses in MA. However, there are few languages from both northern and southern language groups that do not have at all post verbal negative markers (cf. Demeke 2003: chapter five). OA shows both forms in matrix clauses. However, the usage of the post-verbal negative marker is attested in the Transversal group to which Amharic belongs and could be an innovation in this group. If this is the case, the existence of a negative verb in the matrix clause in OA without the post-verbal negative marker is a retention in a similar way with the bare imperfective in main clauses discussed above.

For the negation of the verb all- exist<sub>perf</sub>- 'to exist' we found in FP ኤለው ?elläw 'he did not have' FP (Cowely 1983: 7) where MA has የለውም yälläwim. In FP we find also ኤለ? ?ellä-n with the question marker -n where again in MA it is የለም yälläm 'there is not' with a rising intonation, if it is an interrogative clause. However, in Haile we find the post-verbal negative marker -m as well in this irregular verb as in ኤለም ?elläm 'there is (are) not' ኤለኝም ?ellänñim 'I do not have' (1970: 72). The negation of the present tense copula is also somewhat different from what we have in MA and can appear with or without the post-verbal negative marker -m.

- (22) a. ምግባራችን አይደል FP (Cowely 1983:10)  
 mīgbar-accī-n ?aydol  
 moral-1plposs-Acc is.not  
 'it is not our deed/ character'
- b. አይደለውም TM, Pate II, Column 4, & Plate III, column 4  
 ?aydoläwim  
 'it is not'

The form አይደል or አይደለም 'is not' existed as recent as the 20<sup>th</sup> century and even heard currently in some dialects.<sup>35</sup> However, the form አይደለውም found in TM still exists in MA but with different meaning - 'it did not concern him'.

### 3.4 Relative clause constructions

In MA the relative clause is marked by *yä-* in the case of perfective and *yämm-/imm-* in the case of imperfective.<sup>36</sup> In this regard, there is some difference between MA and related languages. In most Gurage languages, RM is found only with perfective verbs. In Argobba the situation is a little bit complicated where imperfective may or may not appear with RM. In OA although the relative markers appear in the same way like MA, bare imperfective is also found in relative clauses. Consider the following:

(23) a. በኔኸ ብታ ያመልጡዋል አይምሰልኝ ነፍሴ FP, (Cowley 1983: 6)

bä-zeh bīta y-amält'-uw-all a-yī-msäl-iš

by-this alone 3pl<sub>i</sub>-escape<sub>impf</sub>-3pl<sub>i</sub>-Aux neg-3mss-think<sub>impf</sub>-3fso  
nīfs-e

soul-1sposs

'My soul, by this alone does not think that one can escape'<sup>37</sup>

b. ያነዱ አይኝሉ FP (Cowley 1983: 5)

y-anädd-u ጎa-yī-ša?

3pl<sub>i</sub>-ignite<sub>impf</sub>-3pl<sub>i</sub> neg-3mss-need<sub>impf</sub>

'It does not need one who ignites (it)'

Note that (23a&b) are an internally headed RCs. Although not the preferred one, in MA we have also bare imperfective in internally headed RC as in [RC *käne tamälč'i*] *aymsäliš* 'do not think that you can escape from me'. In some cases, probably dialectal, the bare

35 See Haile (1970: 74) for some discussion about this form.

36 In both cases the relative marker (RM) is prefixed to the relativized verb.

37 The form ያመልጡዋል is an impersonal construction and the translation here is slightly modified from Cowley (1983: 13).

imperfective may also be used in other type of RC as in the popular saying *tīläbsäw yälat tīkänanäbäw amarat* 'one who does not have (a basic dress) to wear wished (for a shawl) to wrap up with'. In this case, though the head noun is not overt, it can be assumed as external one as in *tīläbsäw [N] yälat ikänanäbäw [N] amarat* where the phonologically null N can be overtly filled by *libīs* 'clothes, dress' and 'shawl, cloak' as the translation shows. This kind of structures in MA are however very rare. This seems also the case in OA as we do not find much of this type of RC, i.e. bare imperfective relativized verb. In this regard, it seems that both MA and OA have no difference.

In the case of negative RC in OA, besides the bare imperfective form that we saw in (23b), it has *yä-* as in (24).

- (24) a. *ዛቢያው ያይታወቅ ዕቅ* YL, L. 48 (Guidi 1889:55)  
*zabiya-w y-a-y-t-awäq*  
 ax.handle/spear.shaft-3mssposs RM-neg-3mss-know<sub>wimpf</sub>  
*ፍስ'*  
 wood/ tree/plant
- b. *ረብሳ ያይኖረው ሐዘን* TM, Plate VIII, Column 1  
*räbxa y-a-y-nor-äw ḥazän*  
 benefit RM-neg-3mss-have-3mso sorrow  
 'a pointless sorrow', lit. 'a sorrow that does not have benefit'

As can be seen in (24), RM in the imperfective is the same as the one which we find it in the perfective. This type of construction is very common in OA and probably existed through the 19<sup>th</sup> century as it is reported in Praetorius (1878). See also Haile (1970: 79-80). However, in MA (be it in the negative or affirmative) either *yämm-* or *immä-* should appear but not *yä-* in the imperfective RC. There is controversy from where the *-mm-* part that we find uniformly in MA relativized imperfective came from. Praetorius (1878:274) suggests its source to be a complementizer in subordinating clauses. Hetzron (1973) suggests it to be originated from the negative post-verbal element *-m* which he also claims to be identical with the contrastive focus marker *-m* not only in terms of phonetic shape but also in terms

of function. For him -mm is needed in the imperfective relative but not in the perfective because there is a need to be specific in time for the latter. According to Hetzron (1973:9) /-mm-/ might be first used in restrictive relative clauses but extended later to all imperfective RCs. It later trapped under *yä-* hence became part of the relative marker. Hudson (1983) raises the possibility of *mm-* in the imperfective relativized verb as a nominalizer and the perfective verb form being claimed to have a nominal origin. If we assume relativization as a sort of nominalization, and if the assumption that perfective has a nominal origin is right, the consideration of -m as a nominalizer can be justified. This however raises lots of questions which are difficult to answer. However, Hudson did not pursue with this assumption. He rather suggests that this element might be originated from the indefinite/interrogative pronoun.

In modern Amharic RC precedes its head noun. We find similar structure in Old Amharic as we can see from the example in (25) where the head noun ሞት 'death' follows its qualifier RC ዕረፍት የሌለው 'that does not have rest'.

(25) ዕረፍት የሌለው ሞት ቢለምኑ አይገኝ, FP (Cowley 1983: 6 & 13)

ፍጥረት ሃይለሌው ሞት ቢለምኑ አይገኝ

rest that.doesn't.have death if-3pls<sub>i</sub>-know<sub>impf</sub>-3pls<sub>i</sub> neg-3mss-find<sub>impf</sub>

'which has no rest, in which if one plead for death, it will not

be found'<sup>38</sup>

In MA having the head noun at phrase initial position is totally out. In OA beside the above alternative structure, we find also the head preceding RC. Consider (26) for instance:

(26) a. አለ አኹንም ብርድ አስሐትያ ገላ የሚቆረጥም፣ ጥርስ የሚያንቀጠቅጥ, FP (Cowley 1983: 6 & 13)

?all-ä ?axun-<sub>im</sub> bīrd ?ashatya gāla yāmm-i-qorāt't'im t'irs

38 The translation is a little bit modified here.

there.is-3mss now-too cold ice body RM- 3mss-shrivel<sub>impf</sub> tooth  
yämm-iy-aniqät'äqqit'

RM-3mss-tremble<sub>impf</sub>

'there is cold (and) ice, which shrivels the body, which makes  
the teeth tremble'

b. ያን ነጋዴ ዕፍረት ያለውን, FP (Cowley 1983:9&18)

ya-n nägade fīfrät y-all-ä-w-īn

that-Acc trader unguent RM-exist-3mss-3mso-Acc

'that trader who has unguent'

The head initial pattern that we have seen in this section is not restricted to complex noun phrases. Genitive phrases, simple and complex clauses also show this pattern in OA. I discuss this issue further in the following section.

### 3.5 Word Order

Except Ge'ez all Ethio-Semitic languages are SOV languages like the other Afroasiatic languages of Ethiopia. Proto-Semitic on the other hand is assumed to have VSO order. It is not clear when the modern languages of Ethio-Semitic had shifted to SOV. The complexity is also because Tigre and Tigrinya that forms the northern group along with Ge'ez, North Ethio-Semitic, have SOV order like the southern group but unlike Ge'ez. Although it is possible to assume that SOV order is an innovation of the southern group but not the northern group and that Tigre and Tigrinya shifted on individual basis, this does not seem to be the case when we examine OA. Little (1974) pointed out that Amharic could probably had a VSO order. Based on the examination of relative clauses and genitive constructions from the then prominent transformational grammar theory point of view, Bach (1970) claims that Amharic is a VSO language. Demeke (2003) suggests that Amharic sentence structure can easily be derived by applying the same kind of technique that applies to derive VSO languages. According to Demeke (2003) although MA is an SOV language, its derivation does not follow the derivation of the well-

known SOV languages such as Japanese. Amharic clearly shows a VSO pattern in its intermediate derivation.

Although most of the aforementioned works are done from theoretical perspective and based on synchronic data, the manuscripts investigated here exhibit VSO order. This may indicate that SOV in Modern Ethio-Semitic is a recent innovation which took place on individual languages.<sup>39</sup> As we have seen above in OA, RC follows its head as in VO languages, which is totally impossible in MA. In this section, we will see some more examples of ordering difference between MA and OA in simple and complex clauses. Consider first the following complex clause from FP.

- (27) ነበረች ሐንድ ሴት ፅኑዕ መልካም ሐንድ አይጓደለዋት FP,  
 näbbär-äčč ḥand set s'īnuṯ mälkiṯam ḥand  
 was-3fss one woman determined comely one  
 a-yī-g<sup>w</sup>ädäl-ä-wat  
 neg-3mssi-lack<sub>impt</sub>-3mssi -3fso  
 'There was a woman, determined, comely, from whom nothing  
 was lacking' (Cowley 1983: 4&11)

If we examine the example in (26) piece by piece we have first VSO matrix clause ነበረች ሐንድ ሴት 'there was a woman' lit. 'A woman was there/ existed'. The adjective also follows the head noun ሐንድ ሴት ፅኑዕ መልካም 'A beautiful courageous woman' as does RC: ሐንድ ሴት ፅኑዕ መልካም ሐንድ አይጓደለዋት 'a beautiful courageous woman who has everything (lit. complete in everything)'.<sup>40</sup> This type of VO pattern is

39 If this is the case, the current pattern should be considered as an areal feature which has no relevance for genetic sub-grouping.

40 Note that, (10) does not contain the entire clause as it appeared in the manuscript. The complex noun phrase has two more RCs which all follow the head noun ሴት 'woman' as can be seen in (i).

(i) ነበረች ሐንድ ሴት ፅኑዕ መልካም ሐንድ አይጓደለዋት ከጥርስ ከዓይን ከከፍፍር ከአነጋገር ከእጅ ጻት ከአግር ጻት የጸጋዋ ነገር ብዙኅ ያይጓደል ወርቁ ብሩ ቁማሱ ያን ኅሉ በዝሙት የገዛች 'There was a woman, determined, comely, from whom nothing was lacking, from tooth, from eye, from lips, from speech, from finger, from toe, the

common in OA. Consider also (27) where the verb comes at the initial position in all the three examples:

(27) a. ንጽሕፋለን በጥቂቱ ቸርነቱን የእግዚአብሔርን ለእኗ ያደረገልን, FP (Cowley 1983: 4&11)

nä-s'ihf-all-än bā-t'qit-u čärnät-u-n yä-ʔigzi?abiher-n  
 1pls-write<sub>impf</sub>-Aux -1pls by-small-def goodness-his-Acc of-God-Acc  
 lä-ʔiñña y-adärräg-ä-llin  
 to-us RM-3mss<sub>i</sub>-do<sub>perf</sub>-3mss-1plo

'We write in brief the goodness of God, which he did for us'

b. ኅዩ ርሩኅነቱን, FP (Cowley 1983 4&11)

hüy-u rüruhnät-u-n  
 see<sub>perf</sub>-3pls mercy-his-Acc

'See his mercy!'

c. ነእምናለን እስከ ለኅላም TM, P. III, C. 4

nä-ʔamün-all-än ʔiskä lä-šaläm  
 1pls-believe<sub>impf</sub>-Aux -1pls until to-world

'We believe for ever'

In (27a) besides VO order of the matrix clause, the relative clause follows the head noun and the “possessum” ቸርነቱን precedes the “possessor” የእግዚአብሔርን and the verb precedes all of the sentential constituents. This pattern is totally out in MA. In (27b&c) as the subject is a pro we cannot be sure about its position. However, in both clauses the object follows the verb which is not the case in MA. Besides VSO in OA manuscripts, we have SVO as in (28):

(28) a. እንዳገን የሚናገር ይኩነናል በደይን, FP

ʔind-agäññ yämm-i-naggär yī-k<sup>w</sup>änän-all bädäyn  
 as-find<sub>perf</sub>.3mss RM-3mss-talk 3mss-condemn<sub>perf</sub>-3Aux judgment

'The one who speaks improperly will be condemned by judgment' (Cowely 1983:5&13)

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matter of whose wealth was abundant, from whom gold, silver, clothing was not lacking, who purchased all that by fornication' (Cowley 1983: 4&11)

- b. በዓርብ ዕለት ፈጠረ ሰውን የኅሉን አባት TM, P. III, C. 1  
 bä-ፍarb ፍilät säw-n yä-xulu-n ገabbat  
 by-Friday day man-Acc/focus genitive-all-Acc/focus father  
 'On the day of Friday, He created man, the father of all'  
 (Cowley 1974:599)

Beside (28), we have a number of other structures where the verb takes medial position as in (29).

- (29) a. ርዥኑ ጌታችንስ (Cowley 1983: 4)  
 rīruḥ-nāw geta-ččīnī-s  
 mercy-is Lord-his-Acc-topicalizer  
 'As for our Lord, He is merciful!'
- b. ያን የአኸል ጽፍጥ መብልዕ ይረብሐሽና ጽዋግ ሞት ሳለ መሪር, FP (Cowley 1983:6&14)  
 ya-n yä-ገaxil č'iffit' māblīs yī-rābḥa-š-inna s'iwaፍa  
 that-Acc RM-equal tasty food 3mss-profit<sub>impf</sub>-2fso-and coup  
 mot s-all-ä märir  
 death while-exist-3mss bitter  
 'Shall so much tasty food indeed profit you, while the coup of death is bitter?'
- c. እንዴት ተቀጠፊው [sic. ትቀጠፊው] ይኾን በሞት, FP (Cowley 1983:7&14)  
 ገīndet tī-qāt'āf-i-w yī-hon bā-mot  
 how 2fss-cut<sub>impf</sub>-2fss-focus/3mso 3mss-be by-death  
 'How shall you be spoiled in death?'
- d. እንዴት ትኾነው ይኾን እራቁትሽን ያቆሙሽ  
 ገīndet tī-hon-āw yī-hon ገīraqut-š-in  
 how 2fss-be-2fss-focus 3mss-be naked-2fssposs-Acc  
 y-aqom-u-š  
 RM-stnad<sub>perf</sub>-3pls-2fso  
 ጊዜ በአልፍ አላላፋት መላእክት ፊት, FP (Cowley 1983:7&14)  
 gize bā-ገīlf ገaገīlafat mālገīkt fit  
 time by-thousands angels face  
 'How shall you be at the time when they stand you naked in front of myriads of angels?'

In (29a) what we have is Adjective-Copula-Subject. We do not know in fact whether this order is the unmarked one or a focus structure. In current Amharic we have also similar structure, but for pragmatic purpose. However, in the other examples (cf. 29b-d), the verb is not final. In (29b) the adjective መሪር follows the verb ይረብሐሽና. Note that, this adjective is part of the subject ጽዋዓ ሞት which is in construct state.<sup>41</sup> In (29c) the prepositional phrase በሞት follows the “compound” verb ተቀጠፊው ይኾን and (29d) the RC follows the compound-like verb ትኾነው ይኾን. In this same example, the prepositional phrase በአልፍ አላላፋት መላእክት ፊት also follows the relativized verb.

Putting the embedded clause after the main clause is possible in MA but for emphasis. We find a similar structure in OA although it is not clear whether it is the marked or unmarked order. For instance, (29b) above has the matrix clause preceding the subordinate clause.

The usage of VSO and SVO orders and the general order pattern of VO languages that we just saw in this section in OA clearly indicate that the complete shift to OV is a recent development in Amharic. It is most probably the case that the change of VO to OV in the other South Ethio-Semitic languages also occurred on individual bases recently. For this claim however, we need to examine the properties of each language in the group.

### 3.6 Impersonal construction

Besides the so-called impersonal verbs that take impersonal object as a grammatical subject and the logical subject, often the experiencer, being ending up as a grammatical object as in *ine-n wiha t'ammaññ* I-Acc water thirst<sub>perf-3mss-1so</sub> lit. 'water made me thirsty', 'I am thirsty (of water)', almost every verb in the so-called Gurage languages has impersonal construction where the grammatical subject is often an expletive *pro*. This form is rare in modern Amharic, however. What

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41 It can be considered as modifying ጽዋዓ alone.

is interesting is that this impersonal construction is common in Old Amharic.<sup>42</sup> Consider the following:

(30) a. ከተአሰረም ያመልጡዋል

kä-tä-ʔassär-u-m y-amält'-uw-all

from-passive-be.bound<sub>perf</sub>-3ps-foc 3pls-escape<sub>impf</sub>-3pls-Aux

ተሸሽጎም ይተገጡዋል አይምሰልኸ, FP (Cowley 1983: 7&14-15)

tä-šäšig-o yī-t'hat'-uw-all

passive-be.hidden<sub>gerund</sub>-3mss 3pls-not.be.find<sub>impf</sub>-3pls-Aux

ʔa-yī-msäl-ix

neg-3mss-seem<sub>impf</sub>-2mso

'Do not think that one will escape if he is bound, or being hidden, will fail to be found'

b. እዳ በእዳ ሲጨምሩ ይኖሩዋል, FP (Cowley 1983: 5)

ʔida bā-ʔida s-i-č'ä-mir-u yī-nor-uw-all

debt upon-debt while-3pls-add<sub>impf</sub>-3pls 3pls-live<sub>impf</sub>-3pls-Aux

'One will remain spending his time adding debt upon debt'

c. ሐርሶ ይቀብሩዋል TM, Plate VI, Column 4

ħars-o yī-qäbr-uw-all

plough<sub>gerund</sub>-3mss 3pls-bury<sub>impf</sub>-3pls-Aux

'After ploughing, one buries it' (Cowley 1974: 601)

The constructions in (30) are different from impersonal verb constructions. First, these constructions as pointed out above are constructed from any verb. Second, their subject cannot be other than an expletive pro hence the term impersonal.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, the so-called impersonal verbs are called so because they often take an impersonal object as a grammatical subject where the logical subject becomes a grammatical object. These verbs, which include

42 This is true especially to FP. In the other manuscripts investigated in this work, I found very few cases of impersonal construction. This, however most probably is because of the nature of the texts.

43 Note that Cowley (1983) does not seem aware of it. He did not mention such construction at all. In most cases he also translated such structures with third person plural subject pronoun, i.e. they.

psychological verbs, however, like any transitive verb, mark their direct object for accusative Case and the verb can also be passivized as in *tä-t'ämma-hu* passive-thirsty<sub>perf-1ss</sub> 'I am thirsty'. Note that, in impersonal constructions the expletive subject is identified by a third person plural agreement and always attached to the main verb. However, in the “regular” verb construction, if there is the auxiliary -all, the third plural suffix Agr attaches to it; not to the main verb. Consider (31) from MA:

(31) a. ይሮጡዋል እንደ ሀይሌ (Impersonal)

yï-rot'<sub>impf-uw</sub><sup>44</sup>-all ïndä hayle  
3pls-ran-3pls-aux like Haile  
'One should run like Haile'

b. እንደ ሀይሌ ይሮጡ

ïndä hayle yï-rot'<sub>impf-all-u</sub>  
like Haile 3pls-ran-3pls-aux  
'They run like Haile'

As can be seen in the above data beside the position of the suffix Agr difference between the impersonal and its counterpart regular verb constructions, there is a difference in the order of constituents. In the impersonal construction in (31a) the verb comes first. Although MA is a head final language, in impersonal construction in general a head initial pattern is preferred.<sup>45</sup>

### 3.7 Copular constructions

The present tense copular constructions, i.e. equative and similar nominal clauses, in current Amharic are constructed by the present tense copula n- 'be'. An examination of ancient manuscripts on this issue results in a number of constructions - a similar one as in MA (cf.

44 Note that w in -uw is inserted due to hiatus.

45 This can be an indication of Amharic's VSO past and hence a retention. However, it could be for pragmatic reasons. Further research is needed to claim beyond doubt.

32), without any visible copula as in Ge'ez (cf. 33),<sup>46</sup> or with the element -t as in Highland East Cushitic (cf. 34).<sup>47</sup>

(32) a. ለጅነቱም ዕፁብ ነው TM Plate III, Column 4

liǧǧinät-u-m fīs'ub näw

sonship-3sposs wonderful is

'His sonship is wonderful' (Cowley 1974: 599)

b. ርሩኅነው ጌታችንስ (Cowley 1983: 4)

rīruḥ-nāw geta-ččini-s

mercy-is Lord-his-Acc-topicalizer

'As for our Lord, He is merciful!'

(33) a. ክፍ ምግባርሽን ሲሰሙልሽ በዚያ ዱለት የሚያሳፍር (Cowley 1983: 7)

kīfu miǧbarr-iš-n s-i-sām-u-lliš dulät

evil deed-3fssposs-Acc when-3lss-hear<sub>impf</sub>-3pls assembly

yämm-iy-asafr

RM-be.shameful<sub>impf</sub>

'When they hear concerning your evil deeds in that assembly,

it causes (you) shame (lit. it is a shame (for you))'

b. ወይ ሲጋዩ በላሽ ጠጣሽ አምሐርሽ ሰብሐሽ

wäy siǧa-ye bäla-š t'ät't'a-š ?amḥar-š

alas flesh-1sposs eat<sub>perf</sub>-2fss drink<sub>perf</sub>-2fss become.beautiful<sub>perf</sub>-2fss

ለመለምሽ ለምስጥ ሌላስ ሙአያ ኤለው (Cowley 1983: 7&14)

lämalläm-š lä-müst' lelas mu?aya ?elläw

thrive<sub>perf</sub>-2fss to-terminate other function has.not

'Alas, my flesh, you ate, you drank, you became beautiful, you

became plump, you thrived – for the terminates; it has no

other function'

(34) a. ኩነኔ ዘለዓለም በርሳችት TM, Plate III, Column 2

k<sup>w</sup>unäne zäläsaläm bä-rīsaččo-t

condemnation for.ever by-they-t

'Everlasting condemnation is upon them' (Cowley 1974:599)

b. የጥሐሉዋት የመነቱዋት ነፍስ ይኸት ቦታዋ (Cowley 1983: 6&13)

46 Note that, Ge'ez has a pronoun copula.

47 Highland East Cushitic languages have the element -t in copular construction but used for focusing purpose (see Crass et al 2005).

yä-t'hal-u-wat yä-männän-u-wat näfs yih-t  
 RM-throw<sub>perf-3pls-3fso</sub> 'RM-reject<sub>perf-3pls-3fso</sub> soul this-t  
 bota-wa  
 place-3f spos  
 'For the soul which they threw out, which they rejected, this is  
 her place'  
 c. የሰይጣንንም ቸብቸቦውን ደግሜ እቆርጸው አኑን ጊዜውት (Cowley 1983:  
 11&19)  
 yä-säyt'an-nä-m čäbčäbo-w-in dägimm-e  
 of-Satan-Acc-focus neck-3m sposs-Acc again-1s poss  
 Yi-qors'-äw ?axun gize-w-t  
 1ss-cut<sub>impf-3mso</sub> now time-3m poss-t  
 'And now it is the time that I should again cut the neck of  
 Satan'

In a number of South Ethio-Semitic languages the current copula is similar with the one that we have today in Amharic, i.e. n-. However, in Harari it is t-. Interesting enough, however, in both cases the agreement element identifying the semantic subject is the one that is used to identify objects in regular verb constructions. There is always a question when really the copula n- is developed. The general assumption is that it is an innovation of Proto-South Ethio-Semitic (with some questionable explanation left for the Harari case just mentioned). The case we have seen above puts such assumption into big question. What we have seen so far indicates that although the use of n- as a copula may well go back to Pre-Amharic, even old Amharic has not developed it yet to use in all copular construction as what we have in MA.

There is a controversy with regard to the status of the element -t found in copular clauses of the sort in (34). While Goldenberg (1976) considers it as a copula, Haile (1979) does not. In support of its copular status, Cowley (1983) presents some more examples. According to Goldenberg it is always found post nominal in OA and a "similar t-copulas are widespread among the South-Ethiopian languages: in Gafat, Gurage (Kəstanəñña, Muxer, Goggot, Chaxa, Zway) and Sidamo" (1976: 136). A closer examination of the element

in the suggested languages does not support Goldenberg's claim, however (cf. Crass et al 2005). For instance the usage of -t in Zay is not a common/ a wide spread phenomenon and what we have in copular constructions in this language is rather the element n-. Even the element -n which is most commonly found in copular construction in Zay is considered as a focus marker (cf. Meyer 2002). Goldenberg's treatment of the element t as a copula in Soddo, i.e. Kəstanəñña, is also questionable (cf. Crass et al 2005). The case with Sidama is the same. The element -t is, in fact, found in all Highland East Cushitic languages but with a function of focus although some considers it like Goldenberg as a copula. This is not to deny the usage of the element /t/ as a copula in any of the Ethiopian languages, however. The usage of this element as a copula is, in fact, attested in Harari. However, the Harari -t is used to appear with AgrS but not in OA.

Haile (1970) suggests that the element -t could be a redundant element as in the one found in honorific form näwo(t) 'you(polite) are'. However in his later work, i.e. Haile (1979), he has indicated that the element -t can be a definite marker: "The possibility that it marks a certain degree of definiteness of the possessed noun phrase can not be excluded" (Haile 1979 :120-121). In a later work he also suggests the same thing: "After spending so much time in defining the role of this particle [ት], I am inclined to believe that it is a certain type of a definite article, the same article that appears with a relative verb in the plural, e.g. የሄዱት "the ones who left" (Haile 1983: 168). Haile also brings some more examples from the 18<sup>th</sup> century manuscript where its existence may not be directly interpreted as a copula. Among his examples, it appears along with the copula näw as in ይህት ነው yih-t n-äw this-t be<sub>pres</sub>-3mss 'this is' (Haile 1983:167).

The form of the negative copula in OA is slightly different from MA. In OA it is aydoll. Currently, this form is used in the case of statements as aydälläm 'it is not' and in the case of interrogatives aydäll 'is it not?'. The source of this suppletive negative form is mysterious. However, it might be developed from dollä 'concern' as in ግን ይለህ mīn dolläh 'what concerns you?' which still exists in regional dialect. See also Cowley (1983:25).

## 4. Conclusion

We have seen in this paper that OA had preserved all the laryngeal and glottal sounds which are assumed to be typical features of Semitic languages. These glottal sounds did also exist in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries Amharic. Perfective verbs may appear with a zero morpheme in the case of third person singular subject like the Shonke-Tollaha variety of Argobba. Impersonal constructions were also common like the Gurage languages. Imperfective matrix clauses may appear without an auxiliary. The post-verbal negative marker was not always found in matrix clauses. Copular construction may or may not appear with a copula. Nominal heads may or may not precede their qualifiers. VSO, SVO and SOV pattern were also attested. OA in general had a mixed word order. Although such mixed order does not favor a treatment of OA as a VO language, it is a strong indication that Pre-Amharic might be a VO language. All these unique features of OA indicate that most of the un-Semitic features that Amharic show at present are recent developments. (This might be also the case with the other modern Semitic languages of Ethiopia.) This puts the doubt of Amharic's Semitic origin once again aside.

Although recent works challenge the most advocated idea that Ethiopian Semitic languages are results of pidgin-induced process, works are still continuing within the traditional notion. The crucial Semitic features found in OA will give more questions to answer to those who still stick to the traditional assumption and the propagation of a Semitic language migration from South Arabia some time in the middle of the first millennium BCE as a source of Ethio-Semitic. The Semitic features that we have seen in OA are difficult to explain with a pidgin-induced and "migration" theory. On the other hand, although it is just from one language these facts make the recent advocated idea that Ethio-Semitic is an autochthonous group (among other by Hudson 1977, 1978 and Murtonen 1967) more plausible.

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### *Abbreviations*

- 1= 1<sup>st</sup> person  
 2=2<sup>nd</sup> person  
 3= 3<sup>rd</sup> person  
 Acc= Accusative  
 Agr= Agreement  
 AL= A lyric for Amdetsion  
 Aux= Auxiliary  
 DL = A lyric for Dawit  
 EC= Ethiopian calendar  
 f= feminine  
 FP= Fragmentum Piquesii  
 GL= A lyric for Gelawdios  
 Impf= imperfective  
 L.= line  
 m= masculine  
 MA=Modern/current Amharic  
 neg= negative marker  
 o= object

OA= Old Amharic

OV= SOV

Perf= perfective

pl = plural

poss= possessive marker

RC= Relative clause

RM= Relative clause marker

s= singular, or subject

SOV=Subject-Object-Verb

SVO=Subject-Verb-Object

TM= Timhirte Haymanot "Teaching of the Faith"

VO=SVO, VSO

VSO=Verb-Subject-Object

YL= A lyric for Yishaq

ZYL= A lyric for Zere Yaqob

### ***Notes on transcriptions***

Ethiopic writing can be categorized as phonetic writing. However, it marks neither gemination of consonants nor vowel lengthening. The Amharic letters are syllabograms. Each letter has seven orders also called forms that correspond to the seven vowels that Amharic and a number of the other Ethiopian Semitic languages have. Except those symbols that represent pharyngeal and glottal sounds, the first order of each letter contains the vowel /ä/. In this paper however, for an independent consonant representation I used the first order. In the transcription of an OA word I tried to be as accurate as possible with inferring its possible pronunciation from current usages and from the pattern in sisterly languages. Transcription is made using IPA. However, the mid and high central vowels are represented with /ä/ and /i/ following the Ethiopian linguistic tradition.

# A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF PERSONAL NAMES IN SIDAAMA

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper addresses the linguistic structure of Sidaama personal names. Although the main part of the paper deals with the semantics of personal names, morphological properties of names and phonological processes involved during the derivation of names are discussed. In addition, various social factors behind naming are also examined. The process of bestowing a name to a child is related to the various factors which accompany his birth. This includes the economic, social and political status of his/her immediate family or his/her surroundings. It can also include the status of health, prevailing climate and the situation of peace with neighboring ethnic groups. Names are bestowed usually by parents or close relatives and they express the desires and aspirations of those who bestow the name. Most Sidaama names end in one of the three non-high vowels i.e. e, a and o. Usually, names are derived from verbal stems by suffixing various grammatical formatives.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts to do a rigorous semantic, morphological and phonological analysis of Sidaama personal names.<sup>1</sup> The paper is based on a number of data sources. The first is a list of 700 students'

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1 See the appendix for general information about the language and its speakers.

names taken from the Registrar Office of Hawassa College of Teacher Education. To this are added 564 names collected by Anbessa in the 1980s and 200 names collected by Tafesse. Then all the names were transcribed into IPA based on broad phonetic system. Since both authors are native speakers of Sidaama, introspection has played an important role. In addition, Tafesse interviewed several elders because they have a rich cultural experience (Mandende 2009: 13). Furthermore, several speakers from the three geographical areas of Sidaama (*ḡaliččo* ‘highland’, *woriččo* ‘midland’ and *gammoojje* ‘lowland’) were also interviewed. The questions raised to the interviewees includes by whom, when and how a person is given a name; what are the meanings of the names and the initial reasons to bestow a particular name.

The transcription adopted in this paper differs from the standard IPA one in the following two points. Instead of *ɣ*, *ɣ'*, *ɖ*, *ɖ'*, and *ɲ* we have adopted *č*, *č'*, *ǰ*, *ǰ'*, and *ñ*. Instead of the IPA V: and C:, long vowels and geminates are represented by doubling the vowel or consonant.

There are two works which deal with Sidaama names. The first publication is Mulusew (2006). He assessed the shift process in the choice of proper names in terms of three generations. After comparing the names of students, their fathers and grandfathers, he concluded that there is an increasing preference of students (the first generation) to bear Amharic names. However, Mulusew’s work is simply a name survey without a rudimentary linguistic analysis. Even he does not provide reasons why students prefer Amharic names instead of indigenous Sidaama names. The second is Tafesse’s (2016) unpublished MA thesis which extensively deals with Sidaama personal names. It provides sociocultural reasons for bestowing certain names and some basic linguistic analysis is attempted.

The current paper differs from Mulusew (2006) as it attempts to do linguistic analysis. It differs from Tafesse (2016) in certain respects. It concentrates on salient features of Sidaama names. Furthermore, the name categorization adopted in this paper is

somewhat different from that adopted by Tafesse (2016). Finally, only relevant few names were selected as illustrative examples.

## 2. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON SIDAAMA PERSONAL NAMES

The study of names is an important one in the field of humanities. According to Baye, (2008: 40) names are not simply references to name bearers but also embody various features which characterize the social organization in to which a new person is born. Names are not only meaningful but can also serve as a mirror to glimpse into the name bearer's culture, beliefs, way of life, social practices (Zelalem 2005, Agyekum 2006, Mphande 2006 and Wahed 2009).

The father, mother or close relatives can bestow a name for the new born baby immediately after birth or in the first four days after birth. Sometimes village elders could be consulted because of their rich life experience. However, the name that is most accepted and used will be the one that is bestowed by the parents. In some families, the name bestowed by a father is more respected. Names are given without any formal ceremony. However, there are two exceptions whereby a minor ceremony is observed and this could be accompanied by an optional bestowing of a name to the new born. The first is known *waa kadd-a-te barra* (lit. water step on-INF-GEN day)<sup>2</sup> 'bath day' on which the mother takes her first bath after giving birth. The ceremony takes place on the third day (if it is a baby-girl) or the fourth day (if it is a baby-boy). The other occasion is if the mother gives birth to a first child after a long period of marriage. During this ceremony, parents or elders can bestow a name related with the event.

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2 The following abbreviations are used in glosses:

CAUS1= causatative1, F= feminine, JUSS= jussive, PERF=perfective, CAUS2-causatative2, GEN=genitive, M=masculine, PROG=progressive, CONV=converb, IMPERF=imperfective, NOM=nominative, SG=singular, COP=copula, INF=infinitive, Or.=Oromiffaa, TRA=transitive, EP=epenthesis, INTRA=intransitive, PASS=passive

People acquire personal names when not only they are small children, but also after, they have grown up. Close relatives or friends can give names to one another. For instance, the day-to-day behavior or physical appearance of a person can determine the additional name that he will be bestowed. One respondent for the interview, mentioned that a girl can be renamed *k'amuč'e* if she becomes more beautiful than before. In Sidaama society even though a person can be called with a single name in formal contexts, s/he can be called with various names by various relatives and colleagues.<sup>3</sup>

As is the case in Ethiopian languages, there are no family names in Sidaama. In addition, the order of the name is that of a child followed by his father's name. However, in *wi?lišša* 'lamenting dirges' (from *wi?l-* 'weep, cry' and the nominalizer *-šša*) and *geerarša* 'war songs' the order of the names can be reversed (father's name + child's name). In some cases, name order reversal can be accompanied by shortening of names. Amongst languages, poems do not obey the regular grammatical rules and enjoy what is known as 'poetic license'. Hence, the reversal in the order of names can be explained accordingly. Two examples below illustrate this fact.

- (1) *faranje-te*<sup>4</sup>                      *faayya*  
 light-skinned-COP.F    beautiful  
*faayya*                      *gor-te*                      *ba?-?ú*  
 beautiful                      pass away-3F.SG.CONV    be lost-3F.SG.PERF  
*Fayyis-i*                      *?idaayya*  
 Fayyisa-GEN    ?idaayya  
 ' ?idaayya, a light-skinned and beautiful daughter of Fayyisa passed away.'

3 Although my official name is Anbessa, my mother calls me *Jomba* because I was silent and timid as a kid. According to Tafesse his sister's formal (school) name is Worknesh. However, she is named *Ikkale* by his mother while his father calls her *Chure*.

4 The word *faranje* is a loan from Amharic *fārānj* 'European, white Westerner' which Amharic itself took it from the Arabic *al-ifranj* (Kane 1990: 2282-2283). In this context the term is used to mean light-skinned.

In regular usages, the names would have been ordered as *ʔidaayya Fayyisa*, i.e. name of the deceased daughter followed by the name of her father.

(2)	<i>hunša</i>	<i>Fet-i</i>	<i>Gose</i> <sup>5</sup>
	Alas!	Feta- GEN	Gose
	<i>Fet-i</i>	<i>Gose</i>	<i>gor-ro</i>
	Feta- GEN	Gose	pass away- 3M.SG.PRES PERF
	<i>ʔol-am-anni</i>		<i>hos-e</i>
	fight-PASS-PROG		spend the day-3M.SG.CONV

‘Alas to Gosooma, son of Feta. He passed away after fighting for the whole day.’

In example (2) the order of the full name *Gosooma Feta* is not only reversed, but the names were also shortened.

One feature of Sidaama naming involves *ʔaan-ča* ‘rhyming, make to be similar’ (from *ʔaan-* ‘come next’), albeit a less common practice.<sup>6</sup> It is whereby the son’s name first syllable rhymes with that of the father and the daughter’s with that of the mother without consideration for the meaning. For example, if the father’s name is *tumaato* ‘closer’, the son might be named *tummičča* ‘who kicks’; and if the mother’s name is *laalo* ‘fruit’, the daughter’s name can be *laan-tu* ‘she comes nearer’.

### 3. CATEGORIZATION OF PERSONAL NAMES

In this section, the Sidaama names are classified into 13 categories such as aspirational names, temporal names, and *ballišša* names. This categorization is mostly based on semantics and socio-cultural contexts. Some of the categories contain a large number of names and

<sup>5</sup> *Gose* is shortened form of a name *Gosooma*.

<sup>6</sup> It appears that name rhyming of a son’s and father’s name is widespread among Omotic languages such as Wolaitta, Dorze, Gamo, etc.

have their own sub-classes while others may contain very few members.

### 3.1 Aspirational Names

Among the Sidaama, parental aspiration is one of the main factors involved when bestowing a name to a child. The source of the names can vary although flora-based names predominate. This includes *haddeessa/o* (M) ‘a very hard tree (*Teclea nobilis*)’ and *suʔn-areʔ* (F) ‘good-scented herb’. These names serve as a mirror of the ethnic group that is highly patriarchal. Hence, the prevalence of names based on big trees for boys and small nice-smelling herbs for girls. A big tree signifies the wish of parents for their son to be strong while a sweet smelling herb signifies parents’ wish for their daughter to be cute and sweet. In addition, well-wishing names can also serve as aspirational names. This includes:

*laal-imo* ‘plant’, *leenjiš-o*<sup>8</sup> ‘one who trains’, *ʔeeyyam-o* ‘positive’, *tʔaw-i-s-o*<sup>9</sup> ‘one who shines’, *danč-umma* ‘fineness’, *gašš-a* ‘to administer’, etc.

Although they are rare, two fauna-based names serve as aspirational names. These are *doobba* ‘lion’<sup>10</sup> and *ʔilkamo* ‘ivory’. In the preceding examples and elsewhere *-o* marks ‘3<sup>rd</sup> masculine jussive’, *-a* ‘infinitive’, *-i* ‘epenthetic suffix’, *-am* ‘passive’ and *-s* ‘causative’<sup>1</sup>. In these and subsequent examples an attempt is

7 The herb *sunʔare* (likely from the verb *suʔn-* ‘smell sweet’) which is used when clarifying a butter to give it a nice smell and taste.

8 This verb probably originated from the stem *lenj-* with suffixation of the causative *-s* which has undergone palatalization. However, synchronically there is no a lexeme solely based on the stem *lenj-*.

This is based on analogy with forms such as *waajjiš-* ‘frighten’ which is derived from *waajj-* ‘be afraid’ and the single causative *-s*.

9 *tʔaw-i-s-o* can also be given as physique-based name if a child smiles a lot.

10 The proper form for lion is *doobb-i-čč-o* while *doobba* ‘dear/Mr. lion’ is a form which is usually used in folktales.

made to give a generalized meaning of a name and not its literal translation.

### 3.2 Nicknames

A nickname is a shortened version of a first (given) name and is known as *hypocorism*. Nicknames usually express love and endearment and are used either by parents (to call their children) or by close friends. Nicknames are common in Sidaama and they usually involve a reduction of tri-syllabic name to a bi-syllabic one as the following example illustrate.

**Table 1. Nicknames**

Given Name	Nickname	
<i>dur-eette</i> (F)	<i>dure</i>	‘rich’
<i>gaar-s-am-o</i> (M)	<i>gaarse</i>	‘black and white colored’
<i>hagiir-s-o</i> (M)	<i>hage</i>	‘cause to be happy’
<i>haʔr-is-o</i> <sup>11</sup> (M)	<i>haʔre</i>	‘cause to go’

There is another environment whereby a given name and a father’s name can be contracted and then their orders reversed as can be seen in § 2 under example (2). Although the reduced name is not a nickname per se, it can be viewed as such because the lamentation poems are composed usually for figures loved by the population at large.

### 3.3 Pseudo Names

Before the quite recent advent of vaccinations and basic health care, infant mortality was higher in Ethiopia. This was due to diseases which were transmitted easily, lack of basic hygiene and occasional bout of epidemics. However, the community associate deaths and illness mostly to supernatural power. To avert potential danger,

11 Here and elsewhere the epenthetic –i is glossed together with the suffix which follows it in accordance with the Leipzig Glossing Convention which states that an epenthetic vowel should be glossed either with the stem or the affix.

children were given repulsive or undesirable names. This was done in the belief that death or an evil spirit will overlook children with negative-sounding names. Some of such names are *ʔišine* or *garjaafa* (M) ‘garbage’, *bočče* (M) ‘of bad physical feature’, *borojje* (M) ‘slave’,<sup>12</sup> *taraarale* (M/F) ‘left-over’, *bušura/buše* ‘bad’, *nuše* (M) ‘a simple material’ and *č’ila* ‘rust’. They also bestowed a name such as *galfato* ‘calm/stop’ (M) as if begging bad fortune not to befall on a child.

### 3.4 Physique-Based Names

These names can be given based on the individual physique. This includes the size, shape, height, facial features, gait, walking style, etc. of the child. For instance, a stunted toddler is named *č’ena* ‘little’ (M) while a baby assumed to be bigger than normal is named *dōosa* ‘huge’. Since some of the biological features are apparent only after some years, some physique-based names are given in later years.

**Table 2. Physique-Based Names**

<i>bat’-is-o</i> (M)	‘cause to be liked’	<i>kano</i> (M)	‘bright’
<i>biifat-o</i> (M)	‘beutify oneself’	<i>kaarr-o</i> <sup>13</sup> (F) <i>kaarr-ičča</i> (M)	‘space between upper incisors’
<i>bokko</i> (M)	‘with elliptic head’	<i>leemmo</i> <sup>14</sup> (M)	‘slender’
<i>danč-am-o</i> (M)	‘be good’	<i>k’uč’uʔmo</i> (F)	‘with good waistline’
<i>dančile</i> (F)	‘fine’	<i>neššo</i> <sup>15</sup> (F)	‘small statured’

12 Actually, *borojje* ‘slaves’ is a plural form while the singular form is *borojj-ičč-o* ‘slave’.

13 A space between the two upper incisors is considered to be a sign of beauty among girls and one with such kind of teeth is labelled *kaarr-aam-e*.

14 The literal translation of this word is ‘bamboo’. The feminine form of this name is *leem-ite* (F).

15 This name has also a variant *neta* ‘small statured’.

<i>daraar-o</i> (M)	‘flower’	<i>sees-o</i> (F)	‘elegant beauty’
<i>doogga</i> (M)	‘huge’	<i>šerb-o</i> (F)	‘with curly long hair’
<i>duum-o</i> (M)	‘red/light colored’	<i>tongola</i> (M)	‘huge’
<i>faayy-a/-o</i> (M/F)	‘beautiful’	<i>t’aw-is-o</i> (M)	‘let him shine’
<i>henk’eemo</i> (M)	‘very thin’	<i>t’u?m-itu</i> (F)	‘became beautiful’

One additional name which can be included into the above category is *faranje* (F) ‘a white person’ a name given to a baby girl who has a very light complexion.

### 3.5. Behavior-based Personal Names

Personal behavior of a child is also one of the factors involved in bestowing personal names among the Sidaama. For instance, if a baby-boy displays some sort of temper, he could be named *ʔamalo* ‘of a challenging behavior’. If a baby-girl shows good behavior or conduct, she could be named as *ʔaršo* ‘orderly’. Behavior-based names are given not only during infancy but also during the other stages of development. Many of the personal names in this category are masculine although there are some feminine ones. More illustrative examples of behavior-based names are presented below.

**Table 3. Behavior-based Personal Names**

<i>ʔalaakalo</i> (M)	‘to shout loudly’	<i>hark’a</i> (M)	‘roar (lion)’
<i>ʔarsičča</i> <sup>16</sup> (M)	‘good charactered’	<i>hiifamo</i> <sup>17</sup> (M)	‘impatient’
<i>ʔaršime</i> <sup>18</sup> (F)	‘good charactered’	<i>jomba</i> (M)	‘silent and timid’
<i>daafur-s-a</i> (M)	‘one who tires’ (TR.)	<i>naadamo/me</i> (M/F)	‘let him boast’

16 This name has also a variant *ʔaršičča* which resulted in a regressive palatalization of /s/.

17 This name has also a variant *hiifato*.

18 This name has also a variant *ʔarš-i-tu*.

<i>burraak'o</i> (M)	'one who prances'	<i>naat't'-itu</i> <sup>19</sup> (F)	'she boasted'
<i>dammak'a</i> (M)	'to be startled'	<i>namaro</i> (M)	'clever'
<i>buwanole</i> (M/F)	'flame'	<i>k'arooyye</i> (F)	'active'
<i>fiiga</i> (M)	'run away fast'	<i>k'arr-is-a</i> (M)	'cause a trouble'
<i>geegga</i> (M)	'stubborn'	<i>siida</i> (M)	'listen silently'
<i>hančaačča</i> (M)	'restless'	<i>taššite</i> (M)	'pleasant'
<i>hank'a</i> (M)	'be furious'	<i>waač'ifo</i> (M)	'arrogant'

### 3.6. Circumstance-based Personal Names

Naming in Sidaama, among other factors, is intertwined with the circumstances accompanying the birth of a child. For instance, it can be connected with the condition of the family, the village and even the country. The circumstances, contexts of societal values during the birth of a child could influence the choice of the name. The circumstantial context can be the social or economic situation of the parents, the period in which the birth took place, their social links with other people, unexpected events before or during the birth, etc. In addition, names are bestowed not only based on the current situation but also can be related either to past experiences or even may reflect the future. Hence, such names can reflect economic and social success, overcoming of challenges, negative episodes, etc.

In any society, people experience either a good or a bad fortune, or both of them in their life. The trend to associate the things that eventually happened as the omen (good or bad) is well known among many societies. Similarly, among the Sidaama, people bestow a name for a child in light of the fortune (either positive or negative) that materializes before, during or after the birth. Hence, personal names either with good omen or bad omen can be given. Those names which fall under good-omen are predominant ones while those connected to bad-omen are very few.

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19 The masculine form of this name is *naat't'-a* 'to boast'.

### 3.6.1 Good Omen Personal Names (Names Based on Desirable Circumstances)

The good omen which has materialized with the delivery of a child can determine the naming. Mulugeta (2012: 30) categorized such kind of names in Tigrinya as “satisfaction names”. There are a number of events that are considered to be good luck for an individual or a community. For instance, if a birth is accompanied by a celebrated ceremony then the name *jil-o* ‘let him celebrate’ (M) will be given. If the baby was born at a time when the parents were wealthy or when they were showing economic success, the names *dur-eessa* (M) or *dur-eette* (F) ‘wealthy’, *ጎashile* (F) ‘plenty, comfort’, *duuwe* (M) ‘satiety, replete’, *woጎma* ‘full’, etc. will be bestowed. Some additional names are listed below.

**Table 4. Good Omen Personal Names**

<i>ጎaf-iጎr-a</i> (M)	‘to acquire’ (particularly wealth)
<i>ጎayyaan-o/-e<sup>20</sup></i> (M/F)	‘let him have a feast, holiday’
<i>ጎayyaan-tu</i> (F)	‘she had a feast’
<i>ጎel-to</i> (M)	‘gift, favour’
<i>baraa’r-a</i> (M)	‘to rejoice’ (because of unexpected fortune)
<i>baraa-s-a/o</i> (M)	‘give a joy, cause happiness’
<i>bat-is-a/-e</i> (M/F)	‘to cause to multiply’
<i>gabb-is-a/o</i> (M)	‘to quench’
<i>hagiir-s-o</i> (M)	‘one who causes happiness’
<i>k’awaatt’-o</i> (M/F)	‘comfortable life’
<i>kaayy-am-o</i> (M)	‘to be lucky’
<i>kaayy-itu</i> (F)	‘she became lucky’
<i>maass-am-o</i> (M)	‘a blessed one’ (M)
<i>maass-am-e</i> (F)	‘a blessed one’ (F)

20 The basic form is *ጎayyaana* ‘hoilday or feast’. According to Gasparini (1983: 22) it can also carry the meaning of spirit which can be either good or bad.

### 3.6.2 Pacifier Names

A family may face difficult circumstances before the birth of a baby. These can be economic, social or political. It can also be a health-related issue whereby the life of the mother was threatened during either pregnancy or childbirth. Thus, such type of experiences may influence the parents' choice of the name. Accordingly, a name such as *hobbaas-al-o*<sup>21</sup> 'make one to be successful' ('peaceful') or *gat-is-o* 'savior' (*gat-is-e* is a feminine form) is bestowed to a child if the birth was an easier one.

Moreover, if there was no peace between two clans, between the parents and another family, or the parents for short or long period of time, and if peace has been restored during the time of child birth, then names such as *ɔaraar-s-o* (M) 'mediator' or *fayy-is-al-e* (M/F) 'healer' can be given. Additional names are listed below.

**Table 5. Pacifier Names**

<i>ɔegg-o</i> (M)	'entrust'
<i>ɔitt-is-a</i> (M)	'to impede, block'
<i>daañña</i> (M)	'judge'
<i>halaala</i> (M)	'truth'
<i>hay-eess-o</i> (M)	'peace maker'
<i>hay-y-itu</i> (F)	'she made peace'
<i>k'eelle</i> (M/F)	'victory'
<i>say-s-o</i> (M)	'one who passes'
<i>wolas-s-a</i> (M)	'redeemer, to liberate'
<i>suɔnaado</i>	'good smelling'

### 3.6.3 Bad Omen Personal Names (Names Based on Undesirable Circumstances)

Names are not bestowed always for positive or desirable situations. They can be given also in relation with negative circumstance such as illness, death, economic hardship, natural calamities (such as

21 The basic verb stem is *hobbaak-* 'to deliver a baby with ease'.

drought, flood, fire, etc.), war, external or internal conflict, etc. The undesirable situations are taken as the omen of newly born baby. Above all, if a family brings an infant from any particular place to another village for the first time and if bad things happen, people name that infant as a precursor of the bad omen.

Names such as *bulbul-a* ‘one who stirs, makes murky’, *galč-o* ‘one who overturns’, *tuns-siis-a* ‘one who darkens’, etc. can be cited as bad-omen names. If a child was born when there was a conflict within a family and there were divisions, then the child can be bestowed the name *gosoom-a* (M) ‘one who causes factions or divisions’. If a child was born during a period when the family or the village was worried because of drought, disease or other calamities then he may be named *yaačč-i-š-o*<sup>22</sup> ‘one who caused to worry/to be sad’. Other additional names are listed below.

**Table 6. Bad Omen Personal Names**

<i>ʔugg-am-o</i> (M)	‘to be confronted’
<i>diig-a</i> (M)	‘to destroy’
<i>gaaddisale</i> (M/F)	‘cause to be brigand’
<i>harfato</i> (M)	‘venom’
<i>heew-is-o</i> (M)	‘cause to argue’
<i>heew-itu</i> (F)	‘she argued’
<i>hos-iis-a/o</i> (M)	‘cause to be absent’
<i>mork-a</i> (M)	‘to oppose, compete with’
<i>mork-itu</i> (F)	‘she competed with’
<i>mork-is-o</i> (M)	‘cause to compete’
<i>siʔ-am-o</i> (M)	‘to be attacked’

### 3.7 Temporal Personal Names

One of the factors involved when bestowing a name to a child is related to time. It can be a name related to a month, one of the

22 In its underlying form this word is composed of *yaađ-* ‘be sad’ plus the single causative *-s* and the 3rd m.sg. jussive *-o*.

Sidaama week days or a certain portion of the day at which the birth took place. It can be also related to a period at which certain Sidaama festivals take place. For instance, a male infant, who was born during the time of the Sidaama New year celebration known as *fiččee*,<sup>23</sup> can be named as *fiččoola*. There are also names related to the period of *luwa* ceremony which will be discussed under §3.7.4. If a baby was born during a festive period or an important event that happened to his family, he will be bestowed the name *ɣayyaano* ‘holiday’.

A temporal name can be related to a certain historical event which took place. For instance, when Fascist Italy occupied Ethiopia Sidaama males went to an area known as Doolo that borders Oromia region and the event was known as *Doolo Gaado* ‘the Doolo Campaign’. Hence, a child who was born during that period might be named *Doolo*. In addition, a child born early in the morning can be named *doolo* as will be explained under §3.7.3 The various categories of temporal names are discussed below.

### 3.7.1 Month-Based Personal Names

The Sidaama lunar calendar contains 12 months and each month on average has 28 days. Among the months of a year, four of them can serve as personal names and most of them are given to males.<sup>24</sup> These months are selected because they are perceived to be beneficial for farmers.

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23 The Sidaama celebrate their New Year holiday which is known as *fiččee-č’ambalaalla*. Since the Sidaama traditional calendar is lunar, there no fixed day in a year for the holiday. Hence, elders known as *ɣayaanto* ‘wise men/sages’ (*ɣayantičča* m. or *ɣayantitte* f. is its singular form) who have a rich astronomical knowledge will fix the day for the celebration of *fiččee-č’ambalaalla* which was used to be celebrated for a minimum of two weeks. This colorful New Year festival was inscribed in 2015 by UNESCO on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

24 This contrasts with the Amharic nomenclature whereby only *mäskäräm* ‘September’ is given as a name and this name is restricted only to females.

**Table 7. Month-Based Personal Names**

Sidaama Month	European Equivalent	Main Feature of the Month
<i>ʔarfaasa</i> <sup>25</sup> (M)	January	‘the blooming season’
<i>ʔammajje</i> (M)	February	‘season for harvesting’
<i>baddēessa</i> (M)	March	‘beginning of the rainy season’
<i>maaja</i> <sup>26</sup> (M)	July	‘wet and rainy season’

As can be seen from the table almost all the months are related either to the harvesting seasons or the rainy periods. This is related to the culture of the Sidaama whereby rain, verdant pasture and greenery are desirable. In addition, a dry month can be part of the naming system as far as it is important for harvesting.

### 3.7.2 Days of the Week as Personal Names

The traditional Sidaama week has four days and each day is a market day in different places. The day of the market is known as *Dikko*.<sup>27</sup> The next day is known as *K’awaado*, the day which follows it is known as *K’awaallanka* and the next day is known as *Deela*. After *Deela* the cycle begins again and it will be again the turn of *Dikko*. Some of the week/market days can be used as personal names. Amongst them *Dikko*, *Deela* and *K’awaade* (the masculine form is *K’awaado*) are used as female personal names. In addition, the modified form *Dikkaaše* is also used as a feminine personal name. The only masculine name is *Dikk-a* ‘forming a market’ which is derived from *Dikko*.

25 The term *ʔarfaasa* also refers to a red flower that blossoms during this period (Gasparini: 1983: 18). This name has also a feminine form *ʔarfaaso* which is given to females.

26 The word *maaj-a* is infinitival in its form and has the meaning ‘to last a long time’.

27 The literal meaning of *dikko* is ‘market’.

### 3.7.3 Parts of a Day as Personal Names

A naming of a child can be associated with a particular portion of the day. For instance, an infant born early in the morning may be named *Doolo* ‘dawn’. According to the Sidaama tradition *Doolo* was the “name of the first man, who was living with God on earth” (Gasparini 1983: 79). This gave rise to the following expression:

- (3) *doolo lukk-ičč-i borod-anno wote*  
 Doolo crow-SGV-NOM crow- 3M.SG.IMPERF time  
 ‘When the Doolo cock crows (i.e. early in the morning)’

A child born in the morning hours, i.e. from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. is named *soodo* ‘morning’.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, a child born in evening hours can be named *waare*. In the traditional Sidaama society men gathered in the evening to chat with each other and this practice is known as *waare* (from the verb stem *waar-* ‘converse in the evening’). Another variant of this name is *waar-is-a* ‘one who causes to converse in the evening’. If a child is born in a moon-less dark night he may be named *tuns-iis-a* ‘cause to be dark’ (from *tuns-* ‘be dark’).

### 3.7.4 Personal Names Related to Luwa

The traditional Sidama used to practice a rite of passage and age grading system known as *luwa* which is similar to the Gada system of Oromo. It is a traditional administration system whereby the *luwa* class which holds power rules for 8 years and in turn passes its power to the next class. There are five *luwa* classes and according to their order from the first to the last are: *Fullaasa*, *Waawwaasa*, *Daraara*, *Hirbora* and *Moggisa*.<sup>29</sup> Children who are born during the reign of a

28 According to the Ethiopian hour counting system, a day begins not at mid-night but rather after 6 a.m. when one begins to see the twilight. Hence, what is 9 a.m. in the western system is +3 hours in the Ethiopian system.

29 Members who participate in the rite of passage of a certain *luwa* will be members of that *luwa*. For instance, members of *Fullaasa* will be known as *Fullaas-u luwa* ‘*luwa* of *Fullaasa*’).

particular class will be given the name of that *luwa*. For instance, a certain child born during the *hirbora luwa* can be named *Hirbora*. Sometimes the name simply can be amongst one of the five *luwa* classes without relation to a class which is in power. The names are exclusively given to males because the rite of passage is performed only by males.

In addition to the names of the *luwa*, the naming can be based on various authorities and terminologies related to the *luwa* which are listed below.

**Table 8. Personal Names Related to *Luwa***

<i>gadaanna</i>	‘chief of the <i>luwa</i> ’ (composed of <i>gada</i> ‘Gada’ + <i>?anna</i> ‘father’)
<i>ja?laawwa</i>	‘vice chief of <i>luwa</i> ’
<i>baalle</i>	‘group of people who hold a stick known as <i>lollok’a</i> during <i>luwa</i> ritual’

### 3.8. Flora- and Fauna-Based Personal Names

As in many languages, flora and fauna can serve as sources of personal names in Sidaama. The selection of one or the other depends on parents and others who participate in the process of bestowing of names.

#### 3.8.1 Flora-Based Personal Names

Some plants and herbs can serve as personal names among the Sidaama. However, there is a clear division in the names given to males and females. Trees, in particular the strong ones, such as *haddeesso* (‘*Teclea nobilis*’) are used as personal names for men only. The main reason has to do with the social structure of Sidaama which is highly patriarchal. Females on the other hand accorded names of shrubs or smaller plants. Moreover, many of these shrubs emit sweet smell and some of them were traditionally used as perfumes or were added to a milk or butter in order to give it a pleasant flavor. Furthermore, these plants are exclusively used by females. For

instance, a shrub known as *suʔnare*<sup>30</sup> has a very sweet scent and it can be used as a name for females only. The only exception is a good-smelling herb known as *haʔnaššo* which can be a name both for males and females. Flora-based names can be sub-categorized under *aspirational names* because they reflect the wishes of those who bestow the name.

Some flora terms are gender-neutral and hence can be used as male or female names. This includes *buna* ‘coffee’, *bašank’a* ‘sorghum’ and *dumaara* ‘reed, long grass’. Additional examples of flora-based names are listed below.

**Table 9. Flora-Based Personal Names**

<i>daanniso</i> (M)	‘multi-purpose straight tree’,
<i>maatte</i> (M)	‘a very hard tree’ ( <i>Albizia schimperiana</i> )
<i>ʔinnaare</i> (F)	‘herb used as perfume’
<i>dikito</i> (F)	‘plant used as perfume’ ( <i>Ferula communis</i> )
<i>laalo</i> (F)	‘fruit/plant’
<i>sunkurta</i>	‘a medicinal plant’ ( <i>Ruta chalenpensis</i> )
<i>ʔargiis-o</i>	‘cause to be bitter’ (from <i>ʔargiisa</i> ‘aloe’)

### 3.8.2 Fauna-Based Personal Names

Animal-based names too can be bestowed to children. For instance, in the traditional Sidaama culture hunters who have killed ferocious wild animals such as a lion, leopard, buffalo, etc. are highly praised. They are the only ones who have the privilege to wear earrings. Among wild animals, only two of them are given as personal names. Among the big cats only *dobba* ‘Mr. lion’ (from *doobb-iiččo* ‘lion’) is given to a child if his family has a big aspiration for him in the future. On the other hand, *dagunčo* ‘leopard’ is not bestowed as a personal name. On the contrary people are so afraid of a leopard they do not mention its name. Instead they have labelled a euphemistic expression *ʔaabbo-ʔo* ‘a respected person and his companions’ (from

30 Its nominal form is derived from the verb stem *suʔn-* ‘to smell good’. Interestingly Sidaama has also a verb *bob-* which denotes a bad smell.

*ʔaabbo* ‘father/repected person’ and *-ʔo* ‘associative marker’). The only other name from the category of wild animals which is bestowed as a nickname rather infrequently is *got-iille* ‘hyenas’ or *gotta* ‘dear hyena’ (from *got-iiččo* ‘hyena’).

Among the fauna, the second category that is used as a personal name is that of birds. One of this is *lemboola* ‘dove’. The other frequent name is *kuukki-s-a* (from *kukki* which is the stem of the compound verb *kuukki y-a* ‘to make the sound *kuu*’, *-s* ‘causative1’ and *-a* ‘infinitive’). This bird is auspicious in Sidaama culture and people pay attention from which side it chirps. If it is from a right side of a traveler that signals a positive outcome while if it chirps from the left side, it signals negative consequences. In such instances, a traveler may go back home fearing worst outcomes. A child who cries a lot he may be labelled *lukk-ičča* ‘cock’. If a child is relatively tall, he may be bestowed the name *balguda* ‘ostrich’ a bird whose metaphorical similarity is not lost. All the above four names of fowls are bestowed to males. The only fowl name bestowed to females is *heeyyakko* ‘partridge’.<sup>31</sup>

Words which designate domestic animals or activities related to them can be also given as personal names. For instance, a strong child may be bestowed the name *booto* ‘bull’. Other names include *gočč’a* (M) ‘little sheep/goat’ (*gočč’a* is a plural form while its singular counterpart is *goč’o*). Others include *gobbo* (M) ‘tail of a sheep/goat’, *basu* (F) ‘cat’ and *hurr-is-o* (M) ‘make a flock’.

Sometimes names which designate part of an animal can function as personal names. For instance, one can bestow a child the name *gunfaaro* ‘mane of lion’.<sup>32</sup> A thin child may be named *baall-ičča* ‘feather’. All fauna-based names (irrespective of the size of an animal or a bird) are bestowed to males.

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31 It appears that the name *heeyyako* ‘partridge’ is given to males, too. For instance, the administrator of the Yanaase clan during the regime of Emperor Menelik II was known as Baalličča Worawo Heeyyakko.

32 It is also a label for a long hair of men (Gasparini 1983: 134).

### 3.9 Toponyms as Personal Names

Traditional Sidaama names include place names. This includes names of neighborhoods, various localities in Sidaama zone, names of rivers, etc.

#### 3.9.1 Place Names

Under this category fall locality names known as *ɖollaa* ‘neighbor’ which can be bestowed as personal names. The meaning of the neighborhood names cannot be traced. Some of Sidaama localities which can serve as personal names are *Bonoyya*<sup>33</sup>, *Dagaara*, *Siraarao*, *Šaammanna*, etc.

#### 3.9.2 River Names

There are a number of rivers which originate in the Sidaama zone. However, only two of them can serve as a source for personal names. These are *boɖnora* and *Loggita*. As is the case with fauna names, toponyms too are bestowed to males only.

### 3.10 Number-Based Names

Under this category fall a small set of names. For instance, the name *tokkičča* (M) ‘the only one’ (a loan from Oromiffaa *tokko* ‘one’) may be given to a child if he is the only child for his family. Other numeral-based personal names are *šoole* (M/f) ‘four’, *honse* (M) ‘nine’ and *tonne* (M) ‘ten’.

### 3.11 Ethnic and Clan-Based Names

There are a number of names which are based either on the name of other ethnic groups or clans within the ethnic groups. Most of these names are related to the Oromo ethnic group because the Sidaamas are mostly surrounded by Oromiffa speakers save for the Wolaytas in the west and Gede’os in the south. In addition, there was a long historical interaction between Sidaamas and Oromos. The two ethnic-based names prevalent are *ɖoromo* (M) and *Kambaata* (M). There are only two clan-based names and these are *ɖarusa* (M) and

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33 It is also a name of a sub-clan.

*Gujo* (M). Both are Oromo clans which border Sidaama speakers. The name *ɖarusa* refers to Arsi Oromos which border the Sidaama in the north and *Gujo* refers to Guji Oromos who are neighbors of Sidaama in the eastern and south eastern direction.

The names *ɖoromo*, *ɖarusa* and *Gujo* are prevalent in border areas with Oromia while *Kambaata* is given around all areas of Sidaama. This is because Kambaata is a related HEC language and in addition Sidaama elders narrate that Sidaama and Kambaata were brothers or from the same ancestral family. All of the ethnic and clan-based names are masculine and hence are given to males only.

### 3.12 Color-Based Names

Color-based names in Sidaama are very rare. Such kind of names are given in reference to the color of the infant, one of his/her close relatives or even the color of a cow or an ox the family possesses. These names are *daalačča* ‘gray’, *daama* ‘brown’ and *duumo* ‘red’.

### 3.13 Ballišša Names

In the traditional Sidaama society, a married woman pays a greatest respect to her in-laws in particular to her father-in-law. First of all, she does not mention his name. However, the more severe restriction is that she does not mention any word in the language whose initial syllable is identical to the initial syllable of the name of her father-in-law. This practice is known as *ball-išš-a* ‘make one an in-law’ (from the verb stem *ball-* ‘in-law’, *šš-* ‘causative’ and *-a* ‘nominalizer’). In order to avoid such words Sidaama women developed four strategies. These are circumlocution, use of synonyms, use of *ballišša* words and substitution of an initial syllable or a phoneme. The Sidaama *ballišša* is discussed in Anbessa (1987 and 2016). The same practice in a related HEC language of Kambaata is analyzed by Treis (2007).

As has been mentioned above, one of the avoidance strategies involves the use of *ballišša* words. These are special lexemes created by married women as one of the avoidance strategies. Hence, some personal names are amenable to *ballišša* and will be substituted. For instance, the *ballišša* equivalent of *buuro* ‘butter’ is *ɖešeečče*. Thus if a

woman has a father-in-law named *buuro* she cannot call another person who has an identical name. Instead, she bestows him a personal name *ʔeʂeečče*. This illustrates that *balliŕša* terms are not substitutes only for common nouns but also for personal names. Below are listed some representative examples.

**Table 12. Balliŕša-Based Personal Names**

Personal Name	Gloss	Balliŕša Word Which Substitutes the Name
<i>mačč'o</i> (M)	'ear'	<i>k'onto</i>
<i>buuro</i> (M)	'butter'	<i>ʔeʂeečče</i>
<i>mat'ine</i> (F)	'salt'	<i>t'eʔaame</i>
<i>saante</i> (F)	'coin'	<i>taamune</i>
<i>saasamo</i> (M)	'equal'	<i>taalamo</i>
<i>hiramo</i> (M)	'sold'	<i>geet'amo</i>
<i>lukkičča</i> <sup>34</sup> (M)	'cock'	<i>hindak'ičča</i>
<i>magane</i> <sup>35</sup> (M)	'God'	<i>ʔereno</i>

The other avoidance strategy involves either replacing the initial phoneme of the personal name which has to be avoided or replacing the initial syllable by *som* and the onset of the second syllable by *m*. Most of the personal names below involve initial phoneme substitution while there is only a single case of initial syllable substitution.

**Table 13. Personal Names with Phoneme or Syllable Substitution**

Names	Gloss	Balliŕša Word with Phoneme or Syllable Substitution
<i>t'uʔnaayye</i> (F)	'cabbage-like vegetable'	<i>suʔnaayye</i>

34 The correct word for 'cock' is *lukk-iččo*.

35 The correct word for 'God' is *magano*.

<i>ganoolee</i> (M)	‘structured’	<i>sanoole</i>
<i>boorago</i> (M)	‘anger’	<i>soorago</i>
<i>daa?rimo</i> (M)	‘reproductive’	<i>soo?rimo</i>
<i>loggita</i> (M)	‘Loggita’ (name of river)	<i>soommita</i>

As can be seen above four of the examples involve initial phoneme substitution while there is only a single case of initial syllable substitution.

A married Sidaama woman also does not mention the name of her husband. Such women usually use circumlocution, that is the third avoidance strategy. This applies only if the couple have at least one child. In such instances, a wife will take the name of the child and will add to it the word *?anna* ‘father’. For instance, if the name of the only son of a married couple is *Wolassa* (M), then the mother will call her husband *Wolass-i ?anna* ‘Wolassa’s father’. If they have a daughter named *šemba* (F) then she will call her husband *šemba ?anna* ‘Shemba’s father’. Youngsters who want to avoid calling their elders by their personal (given) names also use this avoidance strategy. They add to the name of the child either *?anna* ‘father’ or *?ama* ‘mother’. Thus, a youngster who wants to call ‘Wolassa’s mother’ may use the circumlocution *Wolass-i ?ama*.

### 3.14 Non-Sidaama Names

Non-Sidaama names are widespread in the language. There are two categories of such names: names from other languages and religious names. The adoption of non-Sidaama names is affected by a number of factors. This includes the age of the speaker, level of education, interaction with other ethnic groups, residence area (urban or rural), etc. For instance, if place of residence is taken into account, those born in towns have greater potential to adopt Amharic names than those born in rural areas. One of the factors is a wider interaction with Amharic speakers.

### 3.14.1 Names from Other Languages

Sidaama speakers in their history have adopted names from other ethnic groups. However, the vast majority of the names are from Amharic while there are few ones from Oromiffa. Amharic names are prevalent among the young and adult generations and it is highly pronounced in particular among urban dwellers who are attending schools. A similar phenomenon is observed in sister HEC languages such as Hadiyya (Zelalem 2017) and Kambaata (Treis 2008: 109) and other Ethiopian languages. Baye (2008: 63) too notes a noticeable diffusion of Amharic names almost into every ethnic group with various degrees of intensity.

Indigenous Sidaama names were frowned upon and hence in order to avoid mockery and bullying of their peers at school, work or any social environment, individuals changed their names. Education also played a major role in adoption of Amharic names. It was believed that a name change enables one to be part of the mainstream and integrate into it. In addition to the name change if one spoke relatively fluent Amharic, he/she had better chance of success (Keller 1991: 275-276, Markos et. al 2011: 72). The researchers maintain that this was true until 1991. Several of those interviewed indicated that school principals replaced their indigenous names with Amharic ones. In other cases, the students came to be registered in a school with newly minted Amharic names which their parents bestowed them just for this purpose.<sup>36</sup> Sometimes adult speakers simply replaced their names with Amharic ones which sounded similar but with a different meaning.<sup>37</sup> Here are some illustrative examples.

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36 When Tafesse (one of the co-authors) went to be registered in a school, his elder sister has chosen for him the name taddäs-ä ‘was renewed’. However, he forgot the name and told the teacher that his name was taffäs-ä ‘was collected’ and this became his permanent name. His indigenous Sidaama name was hagiir-s-o ‘one who brings joy’.

37 While I was studying at Addis Ababa University, I had a Sidaama friend named t’alahun whose father’s name was furso. Then probably in order to conform to the mainstream, he changed his father’s name to Paris. It must be noted that not all students changed their names. During the

**Table 14. Sidaama Names Substituted with Similar Sounding Amharic Names**

<u>Sidaama Name</u>	<u>Gloss</u>	<u>Amharic Name</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
<i>daafur-s-a</i>	‘to tire’ (TR.)	<i>däfar säw</i>	‘courageous’
<i>dang-is-o</i>	‘cause to come’	<i>dägg säw</i>	‘kind person’
<i>gaar-am-o</i>	‘who struggles’	<i>gärrämäw</i>	‘surprised him’
<i>naad-o</i>	‘appreciation’	<i>nadäw</i>	‘destroy it!’

Since 1991 there were numerous changes regarding the right of ethnic groups. They are educated in their mother tongues and their culture is respected. However, even today most people are still bestowing Amharic and biblical names to their children. For instance, among the names collected by the co-author Taffese more than 90% of the names of students was Amharic. Among the fathers’ generation 58% are Sidaama names, 28% are Amharic and 14% were biblical. Among grandfathers more than 91% of the names were indigenous.

There are some noticeable changes. For instance, there is neither a pressure to adopt Amharic names nor to change one’s name from Sidaama into Amharic. In addition, those who already have Amharic names prefer to use their Sidaama names amongst colleagues. For instance, friends of the co-author Tafesse call him *hagiirso* (his indigenous name).<sup>38</sup>

When Amharic names are adopted into Sidaama they are modified to fit the phonological structure of Sidaama and are pronounced as such. In addition, they are written in the same way in

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same period, another friend named Daniel Dangiso did not change his father’s name.

38 Tafesse mentions that his colleagues *Samuel*, *Abayneh* and *Abraham* are referred to by their indigenous names *gaacheeno*, *baasango* and *atooma*, respectively in their small inner circle.

a Latin script which was adopted in 1993. For instance, names such as *Käbbädä* and *Almaz* are written as *Kabbada* and *Almaase*. Here are some Amharic names for illustrative purpose.

**Table 15. List of Amharic Names Adapted to Sidaama Phonology**

	Amharic Male Names	Sidaama Equivalents		Amharic Female Names	Sidaama Equivalents
1	<i>Bäqqälä</i>	<i>Baqqala</i>	5	<i>Almaz</i>	<i>Almaase</i>
2	<i>Taddäsä</i>	<i>Taaddasa</i>	6	<i>Gännät</i>	<i>Gannatile</i>
3	<i>Səntayyāhu</i>	<i>Sintaayyo</i>	7	<i>Adanäčč</i>	<i>Adaanäčči</i>
4	<i>Täšomä</i>	<i>Tašooma</i>	8	<i>Aräggaš</i>	<i>Araggaäši</i>

There are some phonological adjustments when Amharic names are integrated into the naming system of Sidaama. The adjustment is in the area of the vocalic system since the consonant inventory of both languages is very similar. Regarding vowels, Sidaama lacks the mid high vowel /ə/ and the mid central vowel /ä/ of Amharic. Hence, /ə/ is replaced by /i/ as example (3) demonstrates while /ä/ is substituted by /a/ as in examples (1) – (4). The other interesting aspect is Amharic /a/ is constantly replaced by /aa/ as (2), (3), (5), (7) and (8) demonstrate.<sup>39</sup> In addition, Amharic /o/ is substituted by /oo/ as in example (4). In Sidaama, every word must end in a vowel. When Amharic names ending in a consonant are integrated into Sidaama they mostly end in /i/ as can be seen under examples (6) – (8) while only one of them ends in /e/ as demonstrated by example (5).

There are some names which appear to be loans from Oromiffa. This includes names such *Waaqayyo* (M) ‘God’ (Tilahun 1989: 587), *Nageesso* (M) ‘cause to be peaceful’ from Or. *nagaa* ‘peace’ (Tilahun 1989: 477), *sooreessa* ‘first born’ (in Oromiffaa its meaning is ‘affluent/rich male’, Tilahun 1989: 537). There are a number of explanations for a presence of such names in Sidaama. The main

39 The vowels /ä/ and /a/ of synchronic Amharic are derived historically from /a/ and /ā/, respectively.

reason is that continuous interaction of the two groups. Sidaama speakers are mostly surrounded by Oromiffa speakers with a long history of interaction. Furthermore, there are still small pockets of Oromiffa speakers living among the Sidaama.<sup>40</sup> Oromiffa names could have been borrowed because of these factors.

### 3.14.2 Religious Names

Christianity was introduced into Sidaama area with the establishment of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahed Church (EOTC) in 1989. However, EOTC did not have an impact because the EOTC did not proselytize actively. Hence, changes began to take place after 1930s when Sudan Interior Mission was established. Later on, various denominations were established such as Catholics in 1960 (for a detailed discussion of Christianity among the Sidaama please refer to Egeland 2016 and Tolo 1998).

One of the ways in which people converted to Christianity show their new identity is by abandoning a given name and adopting Christian names. The name change depended on the type of church. It was prevalent among the Catholics. When people were baptized and adopted Christianity, they were bestowed Christian names. The author of this paper is aware of such name changes in his primary school when the students were baptized as Catholics. Illustrative examples of such names are provided below.<sup>41</sup>

**Table 16. Sample List of Students Who Adopted Biblical Names**

	Given/First Name	Christian Name
1.	<i>Alemayehu (M)</i>	<i>P'et'ros</i>
2.	<i>Arso (M)</i>	<i>Thomas</i>
3.	<i>Billiso (M)</i>	<i>Gebre Yohannes</i>
4.	<i>č'aqe (M)</i>	<i>Samuel</i>

40 There are also hundreds of Sidaama living in the Oromia region.

41 I would like to thank Tesfaye Deneqe for providing me an accurate list of given names and names adopted after baptism. The author (Anbessa), Tesfaye and the listed students studied at Saint Joseph Catholic Primary School located in Fullaasa (Sidaama Zone).

5.	<i>Pilma</i> (M)	<i>Yohannes</i>
6.	<i>Kito</i> (F)	<i>Veronica</i>
7.	<i>Mu?itte</i> (M)	<i>Haile Mariam</i>
8.	<i>K'it'eessa</i> (M)	<i>Yosef</i>
9.	<i>Tariku</i> (M)	<i>Tesfa Mariam</i>

As can be shown above the name change did not affect only Sidaama names but also Amharic ones given to Sidaama speakers as the names *Alemayehu* and *Tariku* demonstrate.

Other Christian denominations also bestowed biblical names to few newly converted people. For instance, the author knows a Sidaama elder whose name was *muluk'a* but took the name *P'et'ros* upon conversion while one of his sons is bestowed the name *Ermias*. The same applied to those who converted to Islam although the name changes were less prevalent in previous times. Tafesse claims that he knows several men who changed their indigenous names after adopting Islam. Thus, *burriso*, *galfato*, *kalo* and *duguna* became *Mohamad*, *Jemal*, *Ali* and *Ahmed*, respectively. According to the co-author Tafesse, currently those who live in rural areas and those who adopt Islam are under greater pressure to adopt Islamic names.

Regarding major factors that influence people to change their names, religion was one of them. During the interview, for the question "what is the reason for changing an indigenous name by another name?" a respondent retorted, "One cannot be a Christian or Muslim holding an indigenous name that he previously had. If a person becomes Christian s/he must have Biblical name and a Muslim must have a new name from Koran".

#### 4. GRAMMATICAL PROCESSES ASSOCIATED WITH NAMING

In this section, derivational and inflectional processes involved in the formation of personal names will be discussed. Three lexical categories are involved in the formation of personal names. These are verbs, predicative ideophones and adjectives. Amongst the three, verbs serve as a basis for formation of most of the personal names.

Both ideophones and adjectives serve as a source only for a handful of personal names. Nouns are not counted as sources for personal names per se because they do not involve neither inflection nor derivation. In the subsequent sections, names formed based on each lexical category will be discussed by providing relevant examples. In addition, peculiar phonological processes will be noted.

#### 4.1 Personal Names Based on the Nominal System

There are personal names derived from other nouns which do not involve any type of change. Examples of such names are *ḡagana* ‘moon’ (M), *dikko* ‘market’ (M), *jajja* ‘money, resource’ (M), etc. On the other hand, there are some personal names which distinguish between masculine and feminine forms. Such names mark masculine mostly by suffixing *-a* and in rare instances by suffixing *-o*. Feminine forms are invariably marked by *-e*.

**Table 17. Gender-Distinguishing Personal Names**

	Masculine	Feminine	Gloss
a.	<i>dikkool-a</i>	<i>dikkoole</i>	‘market-related’
b.	<i>nassool-a</i>	<i>nassoole</i>	‘soulmate’
c.	<i>bašank'-a</i>	<i>bašank'e</i>	‘sorghum’
d.	<i>baall-ičč-a</i>	<i>baall-itt-e</i>	‘feathered one’
e	<i>burk-o</i>	<i>burk-e</i>	‘little corn’

#### 4.2 Names Based on the Verbal System

As has been mentioned above, verbs serve as a source for many Sidaama personal names. For most of the names, the process involves suffixation of two formatives while a limited number of them require only one suffix. If two grammatical suffixes are involved, the first one is mostly one of the causative morphemes while the second and final suffix is mostly */-o/*, a 3<sup>rd</sup> masculine, singular, jussive and in very limited cases it is */-a/*, the infinitive marker.

### 4.2.1 Names with a Verb Stem Plus a 3<sup>rd</sup> M.SG.JUSS /-o/

Only two such names are identified so far.

- (4) a. *ʔayyaan-o* ‘who celebrates a holiday’ (*ʔayyaana* ‘holiday, spirit’)  
 b. *burraak’-o* ‘one who prances’ (from *burraak* ‘prance’)

### 4.2.2 Names with a Verb Stem Plus an infinitive /-a/

There are several names formed by suffixing the infinitive marker /-a/ to a verb stem. Illustrative examples are provided below.

**Table 18. Names with a Verb Stem Plus an infinitive /-a/**

	Verb Stem	INFINITIVE	Gloss
a.	<i>hordof-</i> ‘chase’	<i>hordof-a</i> (M)	‘to chase’
b.	<i>šal-</i> ‘dislike’	<i>šal-a</i> (M)	‘to dislike’
c.	<i>ʔafiʔr-</i> ‘get’	<i>ʔafiʔr-a</i> (M)	‘to get’

### 4.2.3 Names with Single Causative /-s/ Plus an infinitive /-a/

If a single causative (CAUS1) i.e. –s is added to an intransitive verb, it will acquire a complement and becomes transitive. Hence, a single causative can be viewed as a sort of transitivizer. Consider the two examples below that involve *huf-* ‘boil’ (INTRA) and *huf-is-* ‘boil’ (TRA).

- (5) a. *ʔado*            *huf-fú*  
 milk                boil-3F.SG.PERF  
 ‘The milk boiled.’  
 b. *beett-u*        *ʔado*    *huf-is-í*  
 boy-NOM milk    boil-CAUS1-3M.SG.PERF  
 ‘The boy boiled the milk.’

There are very few names which are formed by suffixing a single causative and infinitive successively.

**Table 19. Names with Single Causative /-s/ Plus an infinitive /-a/**

	Verb Stem	CAUS1 + INFINITIVE	Gloss
a.	<i>ribb-</i> ‘like’	<i>ribb-is-a</i> (M)	‘cause to pulsate’
b.	<i>buub-</i> ‘fly’	<i>buuw-is-a</i> (M)	‘cause to fly’

#### 4.2.4 Names with Single Causative /-s/ Plus a 3<sup>rd</sup>

##### M.SG.JUSS /-o/

This pattern is productive in Sidaama. In this pattern names are formed first by suffixing the simple causative /-s/ which is followed by /-o/, the 3M.SG.JUSS marker. Below are presented some illustrative examples.

**Table 20. Names with Single Causative /-s/ Plus a 3<sup>rd</sup> M.SG.JUSS /-o/**

	Verb Stem	CAUS1 + 3M.SG.JUSS	Gloss
a.	<i>bat’-</i> ‘like’	<i>bat’-is-o</i>	‘cause to be liked’
b.	<i>gat-</i> ‘remain’	<i>gat-is-o</i>	‘let him save’
c.	<i>hos-</i> ‘remain’	<i>hos-iis-o</i>	‘cause to remain’
d.	<i>ʔarar-</i> ‘make peace’	<i>ʔarar-s-o</i>	‘let him pacify’
e.	<i>saʔ-</i> ‘pass’	<i>say-s-o</i>	‘let him transfer’

There are some personal names whereby the causativized verb serves as a base and to which is attached the 3M.SG.JUSS /-o/. Hence, such names do not have an independent verb stem. For instance, *ʔittis-o* ‘cause to be blocked’ (from *ʔittis-* ‘block’) does not have a verb stem \**ʔitt-* at least synchronically. The same holds true for *duččiš-o* ‘challenge gradually’.

### 4.2.5 Names with Passive /-am/ Plus a 3<sup>rd</sup> M.SG.JUSS /-o/

Among all patterns, names with passive verb with a 3<sup>rd</sup> m.sg marker in a jussive form appear to be the most productive in Sidaama. Such names are formed by suffixing /-am/ the passive marker which is followed by /-o/, the 3M.SG.JUSS suffix. The examples below illustrate this. All the personal names are given to males.

**Table 21. Names with Passive /-am/ Plus a 3<sup>rd</sup> M.SG.JUSS /-o/**

	Verb Stem	PASS + 3M.SG.JUSS	Gloss
a.	<i>gan-</i> ‘hit’	<i>gan-am-o</i>	‘to be hit’
b.	<i>hank’-</i> ‘be angry’	<i>hank’-am-o</i>	‘to be rebuked’
c.	<i>k’olč-</i> ‘outrance’	<i>k’olč-am-o</i>	‘to be outraced’
d.	<i>led-</i> ‘add’	<i>led-am-o</i>	‘to be added’
e.	<i>sirb-</i> ‘sing’	<i>sirb-am-o</i>	‘to be sung’
f.	<i>šal-</i> ‘despise’	<i>šal-am-o</i>	‘a despised one’
g.	<i>kaayy-aab-</i> ‘be lucky’	<i>kaayy-am-o</i>	‘a lucky one’

### 4.2.6 Names with a 3<sup>rd</sup> F.SG.PERF /-tu/

These names are formed by suffixing *-tú* a 3<sup>rd</sup> SG.F.PERF marker to a verbal stem. Although the inflectional suffix contains the stressed vowel *ú*, the vowel is distressed, i.e. becomes *u* when it serves as a marker of personal name. Thus, instead of *woʔm-itú* ‘she became full’ (*woʔm-* ‘be full’) what we will get in the nominal system is *woʔm-itu*.

**Table 22. Names with a 3<sup>rd</sup> F.SG.PERF /-tu/**

	Verb Stem	+ 3F.SG.PERF	Gloss
a.	<i>daraar-</i> ‘blossom’	<i>daraar-tu</i>	‘she blossomed’
b.	<i>t’uʔm-</i> beautify oneself	<i>t’uʔm-itu</i>	‘she became beautiful’
c.	<i>laʔm-</i> ‘to be pampered’	<i>laʔm-itu</i>	‘she became pampered’
d.	<i>ʔug-</i> ‘to challenge’	<i>ʔug-itu</i>	‘she challenged’

e.	<i>šam-</i>	‘wet’ (v.)	<i>šan-š-itu</i>	‘she wetted’
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### 4.3 Names Based on Predicative Ideophones

Predicative ideophones were previously known in the literature as “compound verbs”. In predicative ideophones the first part is a frozen element while a second part is the head which can carry inflectional and derivational affixes. Like verbs, predicative ideophones take similar inflectional suffixes.

(i) There are a pair of predicative ideophones based on *-tú* a 3<sup>rd</sup> F.SG.PERF suffix. When names are formed based on this suffix, the vocalic element *ú* loses its accent.

- (6) a. *šarbi y-itú* → *šärbitu* ‘she shook her body’  
 b. *hayi y-itú* → *hayyitu* ‘she made peace’

(ii) There are a pair of predicative ideophones based on *-te* which is a.

3<sup>rd</sup> F.SG.CONV and a 2<sup>nd</sup> M.SG.CONV marker.

- (7) a. *gabbi y-ite* → *gabbite* ‘you/she becoming relaxed’  
 b. *tašši y-ite* → *taššite* ‘you/she becoming pleasant’

(iii) There are instances where the head of the predicative ideophone i.e. *y-* ‘say’ is lacking and hence whereby grammatical suffixes are directly attached to the frozen form as illustrated below.

- (8) *gabbi + -s + -o* → *gabbiso* ‘may he quench’

### 4.4 Names Based on Adjectives

Personal names based on adjectives are very few. In addition, such names do not involve any derivation at all. Nevertheless, there are two groups of personal names based on adjectives.

The first group consists of personal names based on simple adjectives. These include personal names such as *jawaat-a* (M)

‘strong, presevering’, *worb-a* (M) ‘brave’, *k’arooyye* (M/F), ‘wise/clever’ etc. Note that in the first two words *jawaat-* ‘be strong’ and *worb-* ‘be brave’ are basic verb stems while the final *-a* is an adjectivizer. The second group of names consists of adjectives which make a masculine vs. feminine distinction as illustrated below.

**Table 23. Names with Gender Distinguishing Adjectives**

	Masculine	Feminine	Gloss
a.	<i>dur-eessa</i>	<i>dur-eette</i>	‘rich’
b.	<i>soor-eessa</i>	<i>sor-eette</i>	‘first born’
c.	<i>faayy-a</i>	<i>faayy-o</i>	‘beautiful’
d.	<i>ʔaan-eessa</i>	<i>ʔaan-eette</i>	‘next/following’

#### 4.5 Morphological Properties of Personal Names

Sidaama has five short (*i e a u o*) and five corresponding long vowels (*ii ee aa uu oo*). No personal name ends in a long vowel. Out of the five short vowels most of the personal names of Sidaama end in one of the following three vowels: *e*, *a* or *o*. This is also true in related HEC languages (Crass 2005, Schneider Blum 2007 and Treis 2008). This is because *e*, *a* and *o* are the terminal vowels in citation forms of HEC languages. The terminal vowels of citation forms mark the accusative. In all the other HEC languages, names do not end either in *i* or *u* because these two vowels mark various cases. Sidaama appears to violate this restriction. For instance, unlike other related languages there are names in Sidaama that end in *u*. These names are exclusively feminine because they are based on *-tú* a 3<sup>rd</sup> F.SG.PERF marker as in *t’uʔm-i-tu* ‘she became beautiful.’<sup>42</sup> In addition, until quite recently, Sidaama names did not end in *-i* while they do end in *-i* synchronically. These names are marked by *-ì* a ‘2<sup>nd</sup> SG. IMPER’ marker and can be used for males or females.

**Table 24. Names with Final *ì***

42 Although verbal suffix is *-tú*, the final vowel loses its stress and hence the suffix becomes *-tu* when it is used in the naming system.

	Verb Stem	2SG.Imperative	
a.	<i>laal-</i>	<i>laal-ì</i>	‘grow!’
b.	<i>roor-</i>	<i>roor-ì</i>	‘exceed!’
c.	<i>t’ook’-</i>	<i>t’ook’-ì</i>	‘flee!’
d.	<i>tees-</i>	<i>tees-ì</i>	‘be wise!’

Feminine personal names end either in *e* or *o* and never in *a*. Nevertheless, the preponderant vowel ending in female names is *e*.

**Table 25. Female Names with Final e**

<i>ʔarfane</i>	‘well of’	<i>ʔarfaso</i>	‘January’
<i>ʔaršime</i>	‘well behaved’	<i>faayyo</i>	‘beautiful’
<i>dančile</i>	‘good/fine’	<i>k’uč’uʔmo</i>	‘with fine waistline’

On the other hand, masculine names do not have restrictions and can end in one of the three non-high vowels, i.e. *e*, *a* or *o*. However, masculine names with final *e* are very few.

**Table 26. Male Names with Final e, a and o**

<i>č’ena</i>	‘little’	<i>ʔeeyyamo</i>	‘positive’
<i>tongola</i>	‘huge’	<i>t’awiso</i>	‘one who shines’
<i>taššite</i>	‘became pleasant’	<i>bočče</i>	‘of bad physical feature’

## 4.6 Syllable Structure and Phonological Processes in Name Formation

In this section, the syllable structure of names and the main phonological processes involved in name formation will be discussed.

### 4.6.1 Syllable Structure of Names

There are no personal names in Sidaama which are mono-syllabic. Hence, names can be either bi-syllabic or tri-syllabic and when compared the two, tri-syllabics dominate. Sometimes tri-syllabic names are generated when various grammatical suffixes are

encliticized to a verb stem. This includes *-a* ‘INF’, *-o* ‘3<sup>rd</sup> M.SG.JUSS’, *-am* ‘PASS’ and *-tu* ‘3<sup>rd</sup> F.SG.PERF’. Bi-syllabic names have limited permutations of consonants and vowels while tri-syllabics allow for greater combinations. Within both syllable types, names with a certain CV structure are very few. For instance, among bi-syllabics, names with CVCV pattern are very few while among tri-syllabics the pattern CVCCVCCV so far yielded only a single name *hančaačča* ‘restless’. Below are provided sample names for both syllable types.

**Table 24. Bi-syllabic Personal Names**

CV Structure	Name	Gloss
CVCV	<i>kano</i>	‘bright’
CVVCV	<i>buuro</i>	‘butter’
CVCCV	<i>šerbo</i>	‘with long curly hair’
CVVCCV	<i>faayyo</i>	‘beautiful’

**Table 25. Tri-syllabic Personal Names**

CV Structure	Name	Gloss
CVCVCV	<i>bat’iso</i>	‘cause to be liked’
CVVCVCV	<i>biifato</i>	‘to beautify’
CVCCVCV	<i>dančile</i>	‘good’
CVCVVCV	<i>daraaro</i>	‘blossom’
CVCVCCV	<i>k’uč’u?mo</i>	‘with fine waistline’
CVCCVVCV	<i>burraak’o</i>	‘one who he prances’

#### 4.6.2 Phonological Processes

Name formation in Sidaama adheres to the general phonological rules observed in the language. These rules emanate from the need to preserve the syllable structure of the language. The most common phonological process observed is *-i* epenthesis which operates to break either a sequence of three consonants or a sequence of two distinct obstruents. For instance, in the name *mork-is-o* (M) ‘cause to compete’ the epenthetic vowel *-i* is inserted to break the impermissible sequence *\*rks*. Epenthesis usually operates when

inflectional suffixes such as *-tu* a 3<sup>rd</sup> F.SG.PERF or derivational suffixes such as CAUS1 *-s* or CAUS2 *-siis* are attached to verb stems.

- (9) a. *hos-* ‘be absent’ + *-s* + *-o* → *hos-iis-o* ‘cause to remain’  
 b. *laʔm-* ‘be pampered’ + *-tu* → *laʔm-itu* ‘she became pampered’

If a verb stem ends in *s-* (as in *hos-* ‘be absent’) and if the CAUS 1 suffix *-s* is attached to it, then a long epenthetic vowel i.e. *-ii* is inserted as example (11a) illustrates. In addition to epenthesis, some assimilatory processes operate. However, such processes are very few and it includes lenition, homorganic place assimilation and palatalization. Lenition occurs when the segments *b*, *k* and *d* occur intervocally. After the lenition, the output segments will be *w*, *h* and *ʔr*, respectively. Here are some illustrative examples:

- (10) /*buub-s-a*/ ‘cause to fly’  
 /*buub-is-a*/ *-i* epenthesis (because the sequence *bs* is not allowed)  
 [*buuw-is-a*] lenition of *b* to *w*

- (11) /*šam-s-tu*/ ‘she wetted’  
 /*šan-s-tu*/ homorganic place assimilation of *m* to *n* before *s*  
 /*šan-š-tu*/ palatalization of *s* to *š* (long distance harmony)  
 /*šan-š-itu*/ *-i* epenthesis

## CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

This paper addressed the structure of personal names in Sidaama, a Cushitic language spoken in south-central Ethiopia. Personal names are bestowed to children usually by their parents without any ceremony. A person can have several names in his life because after he is grown up, he can be given a name by his relative or close friends. There are no family names and the default order of names is a child’s name which is followed by his father’s name.

Indigenous Sidaama names are categorized into 13 classes based on semantic and pragmatic grounds. Some of the categories contain

numerous names while others contain very few. For instance, circumstance-based names are quite large and they are intertwined with a number of factors which accompany the birth of a child. This includes the social or economic situation of the parents, social links with other people, unexpected events, etc.

The patriarchal nature of the Sidaama society is also reflected in the names. Hence, fauna-based names are exclusively given to males. Among flora-based ones, names for big trees are bestowed to males while good-smelling herbs are reserved for females. It was also shown that many of the current generation of children have adopted Amharic names. One of the reasons to adopt such names was in order to be integrated into the mainstream society and to avoid derision by peers. On the other hand, the generation of grand-fathers mostly have indigenous names and few Amharic ones. Biblical names were bestowed mostly to Catholic converts and few Protestants. Those converted to Islam adopted Muslim names but with less frequency compared to Christians.

Most personal names were formed from verbal stems by attaching various grammatical suffixes. On the other hand, names based on adjectives were very few. Feminine personal names have the terminal vowels *-i*, *-e*, *-o* or *-u* but never *-a*. Masculine personal nouns, on the other hand, end in *-i*, *-e*, *-a* or *-o* while those which end in *-e* were very few. The most prevalent phonological process which was observed during name formation was *-i* epenthesis which is necessitated to preserve the syllable structure of the language.

## **APPENDIX: General Information about the Language and its Speakers**

Sidaama is one of a Highland East Cushitic (HEC) languages which also comprises Hadiyya, Kambaata, Alaaba, K'abeena, Gedeo and Burji. The self-name of Sidaama is *Sidaam-u ʔafoo* (lit. 'Sidaama-of mouth) 'the Sidaama language' or *Sidaam-u k'aale* (lit. 'Sidaama-of word').<sup>43</sup>

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43 The Sidaama language was previously known in the literature as Sidamo. However, the name Sidaama was adopted for two reasons.

According to Hudson (1976: 233) although Sidaama is spoken in a larger area than other related HEC languages, it does not exhibit substantial dialect differences among speakers of different areas. Nevertheless, there are two varieties of Sidaama: the *ʔaliččo* (“highland”) dialect as opposed to the *gammoojje* (“lowland”) dialect. The difference between these two dialects is very minimal and it involves a minor phonological difference and a few lexical ones. For instance, in the *ʔaliččo* dialect there is a tendency to use /d/ whereas the *gammoojje* dialect prefers /t/ as in: *dagge* vs. *t’agge* ‘legend, story’. Regarding lexical differences the word ‘finish’ is *koša* in *ʔaliččo* dialect and *guda* in the *gammoojje* dialect.

Most Sidaama speakers live in the Sidaama Zone which is found in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s State (SNNPR). Nonetheless, there are small enclaves of Sidaama populations among the neighboring Arsi Oromo, Guji Oromo and Gedeo. Some of them even settled in the distant Bench-Maji zone in one of the governmental programs to move people away from densely populated areas. There are also other ethnic groups such as the Amhara, Wolaytta, Kamabaata, Hadiyya, Soddo Gurage, Silte, etc. who live among the Sidaama mostly in towns. The capital Hawaasa is a microcosm of various ethnic groups and hence is known as ‘little Ethiopia’. The Sidaama zone is subdivided into 36 districts with *Hawaasa* (known as *Adaare* in *Sidaamu Afoo* before the establishment of Hawaasa) as its capital and that of SNNPR.

According to the 2007 national census of Ethiopia, the number of Sidaama mother tongue speakers was 2,925,171 (Central Statistical Authority 2010: 200). Hence, Sidaama is the fifth largest language in Ethiopia after Oromiffaa, Amharic, Tigrinya and Somali. In bigger towns Amharic is spoken as a second language by many Sidaamas.

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First of all Sidaama is both a glottonym and also an ethnonym. In addition, up to 1992, the term Sidamo was misleading because it was also the name of the province where Sidaama and other languages were spoken.

Moreover, Amharic serves as a *lingua franca* for speakers of various languages.

Except for Omotic speaking Wolayttas in the west, the Sidaama are bounded by speakers of Cushitic languages: Guji Oromo in the east, Arsi Oromo in the north and Gede'uffa speakers in the south. Sidaama is an ever-green area with varied and wonderful topographical features such as hills, valleys and plains. The area is also fed by big rivers such as Gidaawo, Loggita, Bo?noora, Gannale, etc. Hawaasa, the smallest lake of the Great Rift Valley is also located in this zone. Topographically Sidaama is divided into three zones: the highlands *ʔaliččo*, midlands *woriččo* and lowlands *gammoojje*.

Most of the Sidaama are subsistence farmers, while quite few of them are pastoralists. Several of them are engaged in trade and government jobs. They cultivate *enset* (*Ensete ventricosum*) also known as 'false banana' (*weese* in Sidaama), wheat, maize, sugar cane, coffee, *qat* (*Catha edulis*), etc. The last two are important cash crops. The Sidaama represent an *enset* culture (Shack 1966). This is because the derivatives of the *enset* plant form the main staple food that is supplemented occasionally by dairy products. According to the 2007 Ethiopian National Census, more than 90% of the Sidaama are Christians while Muslims are less than 5%. Among the Christian group, Protestants are the vast majority accounting for more than 84%.<sup>44</sup>

Sidaama was used for teaching for the first time in the 80s during the Adult Literacy Campaign initiated by the communist regime of Ethiopia. Since August 1991 it is being used as a medium of instruction for primary education and has adopted a Latin orthography. It is also used for administrative and judicial matters.

Among HEC languages, Sidaama is a fairly studied one. Published grammatical works include Cerulli (1938), Moreno

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44 The term "Protestant" is a cover term and subsumes all denominations outside Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and Catholics. It includes various Evangelical-Pentecostal communities and a myriad of new churches which were established after 1991.

(1940), Hudson (1976), Gasparini (1978), Abebe *et.al* (1985), Wedekind (1990), Kawachi (2007), Anbessa (2012) and Anbessa (2016). Regarding dictionaries Gasparini (1983), Hudson (1989) and Indrias *et.al.* (2007) can be cited. In addition, there are several unpublished B.A. and M.A. theses written by students of Addis Ababa and Hawassa University and numerous articles by various linguists.

Sidaama has 24 consonant phonemes and gemination is phonemic as in *ɣada* ‘paternal aunt’ vs. *ɣadda* ‘truth’. Like other HEC languages, it has five short vowels and five long counterparts. Vowel length is contrastive as in *mala* ‘strategy’ vs. *maala* ‘meat’. Sidaama has a rich morphological system. Nouns and adjectives may be marked morphologically for number, gender and case. Verbs are sentence-final and are inflected for tense/aspect, mood, person, number, and gender. Sidaama has also an extensive nominal and verbal derivations. The language is canonically head-final with an SOV word order. Adjectives, demonstratives and relative clauses precede head nouns while embedded clauses precede main clauses.

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