

Human Cultural Names In Gugage: Roles, Patterns and Dynamics of Change

Fekede Menuta Gewta

School of Language and Communication Studies, Hawassa University

E-mail:mnutafekede2012@gmail.com

Abstract

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This article reports a descriptive account of naming practices in Gurage society. It specifically aims to investigate the socio- cultural roles of names; if the names have formal and semantic patterns; and the extent to which the cultural naming practices are maintained through time. Qualitative research methodology was followed in the study. Socio-cultural and linguistic data were collected using key informants. The collected data were analyzed thematically; they were grouped based on gender differences, formal patterns, and meanings. Trend analysis was used to show degree of maintenance or endangerment of cultural name giving practices. The results of the study showed that names, which are often given by grandparents, parents, or neighbors express the name givers aspirations, fears, beliefs, gender roles and power relations. The naming patterns largely changed from cultural or ethnic personal names into Amharic and religious names. The causes for such changes were found to be denigration, religion, and Amharic hegemony. It was further found that giving cultural personal names to newborn babies were revitalized in the last two decades.

Key Words: endangerment, Gurage, names, patterns, roles

INTRODUCTION

The People and the Language

The Gurage¹ people live in the Southern Nations Nationalities and People's Regional state, in the Gurage Zone. The Gurage people are farmers; mainly growing Ensete plant (Needham, 1969), cereals, and vegetables. They also rear animals, such as cow, horse, mule, sheep and goat. The staple food in many parts of the Gurage is Wusa 'bread of Ensete plant'. The Gurage people are also renowned traders who have scattered across Ethiopia (Henry, 2006). The total population of Gurage is 1,867, 377 (CSA, 2007). Though Gurage people differ in language and religion, their culture, economic and social organization is basically the same Shack (1966).

The languages of Gurage are collectively called *Guragina*, which has twelve varieties (Gabreyesus, 1991; Fekede, 2013). They are grouped into *North Guragina* (Kistane and Dobi), *West Guragina* [(Central: Muher, Mesqan, Ezha, Cheha, Gumer, Gura), Peripheral: Geto, Inor, Indegegn, Ener)], and *East Guragina* (Welene)². The present study is based on the Gumer variety of Guragina.

Names have been studied in different fields of study. Historians study toponyms, animal names, throne names (Mehari, 2007) to construct historical past; philologist study names to establish the etymologies of words, and anthropologists study names to

uncover human relations, such as their genealogies. This study falls under the ethnography of communication, how names communicate circumstances, wishes, aspirations, wisdom, power relationships, identity, which is reflected at different periods and social systems of the Gurage ethnic groups. To my knowledge ethnic personal naming pattern in Gurage was not studied so far. The naming practice has been endangered largely. This study would enable to fill in the existing research gap. The finding will help to create awareness thereby to preserve the culture of giving ethnic personal names.

Objective

The main objective of the study is to find out the extent cultural personal names in Gurage are preserved or endangered. The specific objectives are:

1. To find of formal patterns in cultural personal names.
2. To uncover literal and social or pragmatic meanings encoded in personal names.
3. To find out the dynamics of change in naming practices.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Interview guide and linguistic questionnaire were used to collect sociolinguistic data. Five key informants who lived for several years in the village called Deweshe of the Gumer district were used. Three of them were males whereas two of them were

¹ Gurage refers to a geographical name (Hetzron and Bender, 1976); it is a combination of Gura 'left' and -ge 'land or village' (Tenkir, 1991; Fekede, 2002;).

² Silte and Zay, which are spoken in Silte Zone in Oromiya region, respectively are not considered.

females³. The sociolinguistic data were audio recorded and phonemically transcribed. As the data collected was textual, qualitative method was used to analyze it. Socio-linguistic data were thematically grouped based on gender, formal similarity and meaning associations. The data regarding change of personal names over time were analyzed using trend analysis (cf. Kumar 2002).

Roles of Human Names

Construction of Identity: Names in any culture have the role of identifying an individual, group, race, ethnicity, etc. Names have referential role in one side, and are markers of social identity on the other (cf. Baye, 2006). The question asked, however, is if there is any relationship between social identity and naming in particular and language in general. Thus, it is worth to examine what has been said by different scholars regarding the relationships between language and identity.

To begin with, let us see what an identity is and how people identify themselves and then look at how it links with language. Identity refers to who someone or somebody is. According Wardhaugh (2006:6) identity is "...constructed from interaction with others and it is the sense of self each of us has achieved, the result of our socialization, i.e., our experience with the outside world as we have dealt with that world in all its complexity."

There are different means of expressing a sense of self. We may identify ourselves or be identified by others by: physical appearance (morphology, color), psychological identity (how one includes to

or excludes from a group), geographical identity (from where someone is), social identity (kinship, tribe, class, cast; race, ethnicity, religion). We may also identify ourselves contextually, that is, identity ourselves as it is suited to a situation and setting (cf. Fought, 2006:21-23).

It is also possible for an individual to identify himself or be identified by others by combination of factors: physical, psychological, geographical, sociological and linguistic at the same time. For instance, *zəbərɡa* 'looks Gurage' morphologically, as people from certain localities have identifiable physical make up due to genetic and environmental factors. Psychologically, he may identify himself as Gurage and others can identify him by associating his name with Gurage cultural name. As geography is the area socio-cultural groups live in, there is no question that *zəbərɡa* is again identified with Gurage. Linguistically, it is easy for one to identify himself with his language or is identified by others linguistic features, such as accent and/or using a single phoneme. Finally, it is possible for *zəbərɡa*, for example, to contextualize his identity: change his social identities based on his tribe, religion, etc. when he finds it relevant.

Though people may identify themselves by different means, many scholars agree that the strongest of the identifying factors is a language. Wardhaugh (2006:6) affirms this when he says: "...language is a profound indicator of identity, more potent by far than cultural artifacts such as dress, food choices, and table manners".

Language by its nature has two functions in terms of expressing identity. It shows that an individual belongs to one group and at the same time he doesn't belong to another

³ Males: Amerga Nida (age 62), Akmel Surir (age 60) and Gazu Minuta (age 57); Females: Yibker Zerga (age 57) and Tamechet Megwe (age 58).

group. This has succinctly been explained by Fasold (1984:3) as follow:

“Role language plays in nationalism is what Fishman (1972c:52) calls ‘contrastive self identification’ and Garvin and Mathiot (1956) call the ‘unifying and separatist functions’. Simply stated, these terms refer to the feeling of the members of a nationality that they are united and identified with others who speak the same language, and contrast with and are separated from those who do not”.

Language is social entity that doesn’t exist outside its speakers. Speakers of a language identify themselves and are identified by others with their language. There is argument, however, that there is no strict relationship between language and identity. Language can potentially be acquired by anyone irrespective of blood ties. So, there may be relationship between the two but that relationship is weak. This later view has been objected by many as in a multilingual country, an individual who is speaking many different languages is still identified with people speaking his first language than with people he speaks their language as a second language. What is more, in a multilingual country where language is important for claiming national identity, there is no question that language and identity are inseparably related. When people want an ethnic or a national power, they usually emphasize the use of their language and identify themselves with it.

A strong evidence of language and identity relationship comes from the Holy Bible when a survivor from Ephremites asked the Gileads to allow him to cross the Jordan passage denying his identity and claiming

that he belonging to Gileads. What the Gileads did to know the survivor’s identity was to order him to pronounce the word: *jibbolez*. Unfortunately, but as it was expected by Gileads, the Ephraimite failed to pronounce the first sound’s of the word: /j/ correctly, and he pronounced it: /s/, hence: *sibbolez*. Consequently, the Gileads seized the man and killed him at the passage way of Jordan (Judges 12: 5–6). This shows that language and identity are inseparably related. Naming, which is embedded in socio-culture of a society, undeniably reflects identity.

Degeneration of Identity: It is possible a constructed identity is degenerated due to socio-cultural and political factors. For instance, people from low class, poor economic status are looked down and stigmatized by others; and the same is done to their language. Such people may deny their identity; abandon using their language, and shift into another prestigious language to escape the stigma associated with their ethnic group and language. In addition, political power, economic advantages, and prestige certain ethnic groups have as opposed to the stigma associated with the other ethnic groups, and the wrong assumption that language “A” is less complete than a language “B” may cause someone to deny his linguistic and social identity. Abandoning bestowing ethnic names to children due to social, political and economic reasons implies shifting into the naming practice of prestigious language speaking group.

RESULTS

Role of Gurage Cultural Names

Gurage names, such as *Zəbarga*, designate an individual as distinguish from other

individuals, say *Teni*. Mark, John, and Stone in European cultures may have only referential roles. In Gurage and in many Ethiopian languages (cf. Baye, 2006; Zelealem, 2003), names are more than references. They express wishes, success, failure, sorrow, happiness, sickness, health, peace, war, death, birth and many more. They express circumstances, aspirations, and relationships of the society. Gurage names also show the way people think about realities and imaginaries. Individual, group and ethnic Identities are reflected in names. Gurage names also reveal power relations reflected in politeness and intimacy language use.

Gurage names are classified formally and semantically. It is important to reveal that the lists of Gurage names given are only scenario. They are also based on names only from West Gurage. Other possible

patterns might be found if a comparative study of naming in various Guragina speaking groups is made.

Classification

Personal names in Gurage can be grouped into four: honorific, intimacy, proper, and common names. Each of these is discussed below.

Title Names: are given by the community for individuals for doing something extraordinary: bravery, charity, negotiating, etc. The name giving process usually entails a feast, which includes slaughtering of a sheep or an ox depending on the social and economic status of the named. Though such naming is mainly practiced for men, women also deserve honor names. Examples of honorific names of men:

Title	Gloss	Meaning
abə-gaz	father-war	‘war-leader’
e-sih ¹ -arib	NEG ⁴ -leave-war	‘warier’
wənʒət-arib	vulture-war	‘fast/ active’
bər-dəfər	door-courage	‘courageous’
wijo	honey	‘sweetie’
bər-kəfət	door-open	‘donor’
ti-ʃən sarə	3SM-come happy	‘kind’
ʃakatʃ	negotiator	‘reconciler’
azmatʃ	leader	‘leader’

⁴ The abbreviations used are NEG= negative, F=female, N=nominalizer, CO=copula and GEN=genitive.

The titles *abə-gaz*, *esihⁱ-arib*, *wənʒət-arib* and *bər-dəfər* are given to warriors. The titles differ in rank, the first being the highest and the fourth the lowest, respectively. Title names may be given to those who have different social contributions in the community. For instance, *bər-kəfət* and *tifən-sarə* are given for doing charity; *fakaf* is given to individuals who settle disputes; *wijo* is given for individuals who are exemplary in behavior. Calm and friendly person is given honorific name *ekəf*. The title *azmaff* is used both to war leaders and tribal kings leading the community in various socio-political affairs. The common title offered to women is *adʒijət* 'hand-wise'. It is given for dexterity, being good cook, and donor. The fact that women have only one honorific name, which is associated with cooking and dexterity, shows the social roles such as fighting, negotiating others, governing the community are limited to men. Titles offer individuals a power and respect even after death. Males and females with titles deserve special mourning ceremony called *wərko* and *m^wərə*, which are performed by men and women, respectively.

Intimacy and Respect Names: Names in Gurage can show degree of intimacy and respect. Young boys, who are age mates and close friend use *somme* to call each other. It is used by both the addresser and addressee. Similarly, intimate young girls call each other with, *mere*. A *fedwət* is a used by girls and women who have been possessed by a spirit called *m^wəjət*. Such girls and women have a special language or an argot which is not clearly known to other community members.

A few title names express both intimacy and respect. For instance, *aba*, *adi*, *nik'*-

aba and *nik'-adi* meaning 'papa', 'mama', 'grand papa', 'grand mama', respectively are used to reveal intimacy, endearment and respect. These names are used by children in addressing their parents and grand parents. Titles like *bobo*, *dode*, and *gəfe* are used by younger brothers and sisters in addressing their elder brothers. They are more of respect markers. Elder sitters receive a respect name *awo*.

In Gurage culture, a bride never calls her husband and his relative names until after she gives birth. Thus, she gives them a nick name. After giving birth, she calls the husband "X's father" where X is the child's name. There are no consistent nick naming patterns, but the brides tend to avoid using a name or letters consisting of their husband's given name. In some cases, the name the brides use is just a pronoun. I witnessed the proper names: *dʒəmal* and *tadəmu* substituted by *ahəma* 'you' and *ing^wəd-səb* 'another person', respectively. Brides use pronouns of respect in addressing relatives of the husband even though the addressee is younger than the bride. In this case, it is not age that offers respect but the marriage custom.

Proper Names: Proper names in Gurage can morphologically be grouped as simple or compound. The simple nouns may be free or bound morphemes whereas the compounds nouns are combinations of nouns, noun-verb, noun-adjective or adjective-noun. Proper names also differ by gender; however, there is a less frequent use of gender marker. Gender is marked only in a few female names.

As we have two ways differences: simple-compound and male-female, we use pairs simple-male/female names, and

compound male/female names. These combinations give us: simple women names, compound women names, simple male names, compound male names, and compound female and male names.

Women Names

Most women names have feminine marker $\{-(v)t\}$. It is worth mentioning that names

in Gurage have no gender markers except that they are [+ANIMATE and +HUMAN]. All inanimate nouns and animals are considered masculine grammatically though gender distinction may be made lexically. Below are a few lists of ‘simple’ women names:

Proper name	Gloss	Meaning
taməʃe-t	Sweet-F	‘sweetie’
ʃədu-t	Share-F	‘my part’
wərd-wə-t	Obligation-F	‘the presser’
numd-at	Expensive-F	‘precious’
ərm ^w ədʒ-at	Like-F	‘beloved’

A few examples of women names which are compound and ending with $\{-i\}$ are given below:

Proper name	Gloss	Meaning
mura-e-ʃi	full-NEG-leave	‘full is not let it go’
muan-e-ʃi	who-NEG-leave	‘everyone dies!’
nim-e-ʃi	Pride-NEG-leave	‘pride will not be left’
məl-e-ʃi-t	guess-NEG-leave-F	‘effort shall not abandoned’
zər-məʃ ^o i	race-nice	‘race-clean’

Compounds with *wərk* ‘gold’ as an initial component:

Proper name	Gloss	Meaning
wərk'-wət	gold-of	‘the gold like’
wərk'-e-ʃi	gold-NEG abandon	‘best is not let go’
wərk'-bəsa	gold-over	‘much is gained’

Names with *wərək* ‘gold’ at a final position:

Proper name	Gloss	Meaning
mura-wərək’	full-gold	‘all your part is gold’
dən-wərək’	belly-gold	‘child is gold or property’
nim-wərək’	pride-gold	‘pretty/ having ‘good’ name’
bad-wərək’	country-gold	‘home / country is like a gold’
h’in-wərək’	heart-gold	‘light-hearted’, ‘honest’
ǰim-wərək’	name-gold	‘having good reputation’

Nim ‘pretty’, is further extended in meaning and it is used as ‘having good reputation’.

Male Names

A few male names in Gurage end with a suffix {-ga}. Probably, most Ethiopians know such Gurage names. Such names are limited and their frequency is either diminishing or vanishing currently. The suffix {-ga} has the meaning ‘new day or year’ as in the noun: *Zəbər-ga* ‘year-new’, which mean ‘a better time’. But, the meaning ‘new’ is not maintained in all

nouns with {-ga}. So, it is better to considered it as a nominalizer that changes verbs, adjectives and other nouns to proper names. Some lists of ‘simple’ nouns with {-ga} are given below:

Proper name	Gloss	Meaning
nima-ga	grow-N	‘be grown’
nur-ga	grace-N	‘be graceful’
atra-ga	help-N	‘helper’
bər-ga	happen-N	‘let new day come’
ni-ga	Cool-down	‘settle’
amər-ga	conduct-N	‘be of good conduct’
ker-ga	peace-N	‘let peace come’
zər-ga	summer/race-N	‘let sprig season come’

The *-N* under literal meaning refers to the nominalizer *{-ga}*. The noun *zər-ga* has two possible interpretations: ‘summer’ and ‘race’. One aspect of its meaning is that summer, which associated with cold and food scarcity in Gurage, may pass and a bright season spring may come. In the other

context, it means ‘let bright day come to our race’. The bound morpheme *atra-* does not have clear meaning. It occurs with words such as: *atra-raf* ‘one with less appetite’, *atra-kaf*, ‘one who cause people to quarrel’, *atra-fat*, ‘a tied item that can be pick with *‘matrafə*’, ‘pairs of woods used to pick up a load’.

Some male names ending with *{-ni}* or *{-bi}* show wish and prayer addressed to God as in:

Proper name	Gloss	Meaning
te-ni	leave-me	‘God, don’t kill him ’
niga-ni	settle-me	‘be settled for me’
biza-ni	Plenty-me	‘grow and be multiply’
siba-ni	fat-me	‘let be good, wit person’
an-ʃə-bi	NEG-leave-me	‘God didn’t let me down’
at-se-bi	NEG-search-me	‘please, pardon me’

As can be seen from the examples, names with benefactive form */-ni/* show parents wish to their children (*bizani*, *sibani*), prayers for God to keep their children safe

(*teni*) and prayer for parents themselves (*nigani*) ‘let bright day come for me’. Words with malefactive form *{-bi}* can be used as prayer (*atsebi*) or thank giving (*anfəbi*).

Nouns ending with *{-əta}*:

Proper name	Gloss	Meaning
amd-əta	thank-his	‘his thanks’
ank’-əta	truth-his’	‘his truth’
bad-əta	territory-his	‘his territory’
giw-əta	Glory-his	‘his glory’
ker-əta	Peace-his	‘his peace’
ʃi-kəta	1000-worry’	‘many has worried’

Here, ‘his’ refers God. Such names either thank God for giving them a child, health, property as in *amdəta*; or to look for truth and peace from God: *ank’əta* and *kerəta*; to grant their property as if it belongs to God: *badəta*; and to offer glory to God and other

super powers: *giwəta*. The name *fikəta* is compound of: *fi* “1000” and *kifə* ‘worry’. It is also worth mentioning that *fi* is borrowed from Amharic and the actual form in West Guragina is *hum*.

Nouns ending with –u

Proper nouns in this category are derived from common nouns. The morpheme {-u} functions as a copula: ‘is’.

Proper name	Gloss	Meaning
zər-u	race-CO	‘he’s bloodline’
bar-u	lake-CO	‘he’s patient’
k ^w ər-u	saddle-CO	‘he’s my power’
kibr-u	honor-CO	‘he is honor’
tizaz-u	order-CO	‘It is order from God’
murad-u	wish-CO	‘he is my wish’
t-adəm-u	with-people-CO	‘It is with people’
halət-u	knowledge-CO	‘It is knowledge’

Names with –jə suffixes

Human names that end with {-jə} have agent roles:

Proper name	Gloss	Meaning
məndɔ̃-jə	help-GEN	‘the helper’
ʃikur-jə	thank-GEN	‘the thanks giver’
zəpɪr-jə	return-GEN	‘the return causer’
amd-jə	glory-GEN	‘the glorifier’
gəkɪr-jə	shape(v)-GEN	‘the shaper’
an-k’af-jə	NEG-lay-GEN	‘Who doesn’t let one down’
nund-jə	expensive-GE’	‘the precious’
ank’-jə	truth-GEN	‘the truthful’

The name *zəpir-jə* is often given for boys if the mother was divorced and fortunately she is re-married to the same person. *Məndɔ̃-jə* is given to a child with an expectation that he will help his parents; *ʃikur-jə* and *amd-jə* have nearly similar

meanings; they refer to glorifying God. *Ank'af-jə* is given when God listened to parents in giving them a child or for fulfilling parents' wishes. *Ank'-jə* is given when parents were looking for a justice and have got one.

i. 'Compound' Male Names

Many names are formed with *səb* 'man'/'person' as initial constituent of the compound name:

Proper name	Gloss	Meaning
<i>səb-huari</i>	man-know	'a person is evaluated'
<i>səb-muari</i>	man-mercy	'a person is excused'
<i>səb-məka</i>	man-shortage	'be helpless'
<i>səb-ʃɪza</i>	man-medicine	'human beings are medicine'
<i>səb-gaze</i>	man-shiver	'many frightened'
<i>səb-e-ʃɪ</i>	man-NEG-abandon	'a man is not let down'
<i>səb-tawi</i>	man-left	'a beloved is dead'
<i>səb-tagə</i>	man-turn'	'people changes with the haves'

A child gets name *səbhuari* when his parents had faced a problem, and checked who their real relative or friend is. Similarly the name, *səbtawi* is given to a new born

child when some member of the family was dead before the child's birth.

Names with a **kor** 'saddle' as a constituent are related to power. Some examples of such names are the following:

kor as initial constituent:

Proper name	Gloss	Meaning
<i>kor-abza</i>	saddle-plenty	'add power'
<i>kor-gazə</i>	saddle-shivered	'power is troubled'
<i>kor-tawi</i>	saddle-left	'power is lost'
<i>kor-nima</i>	saddle-grow	'increase power'
<i>kor-nisa.</i>	saddle-pick	'take power'
<i>kor-sawi</i>	saddle-search	'seek power'

Kor ‘saddle’ is used in the same extension as ‘chair’ in English. *kor* in Gurage is associated with power because leaders used to travel with horse or mule to various places for administrative purposes, and during war to fight against enemy.

Many names are formed with **ker** ‘peace’. Below are a few examples of compound nouns with **ker** as initial components:

Proper name	Gloss	Meaning
ker-sima	peace-listen	‘I wish you listen a peace’
ker-aga	peace-turn	‘Everyone has peaceful time’
ker-əta	peace-his	‘God’s peace’
ker-abza	peace-plenty	‘God, multiply peace!’
ker-wari	peace-spent.day	‘Let the day be peaceful’
ker-alla	peace-Allah	‘Allah is peace’
ker-tina	peace-us	‘let peace be with us’

A few names have *səma* ‘listened’ as final component of compound nouns as in the examples below:

Proper name	Gloss	Meaning
dar-səma	boundary-listened	‘everyone heard of’
ker-səma	peace-listened	‘peace listened of’
nur-səma	grace-listened	‘glory is heard’

A few compound names are formed with *gazə* ‘shivered’ as their second constituent:

Proper name	Gloss	Meaning
dar-gazə	border-shiver	‘all people shivered with fear’
kor-gazə	saddle-shiver	‘power is troubled’
səb-gazə	man-shiver	‘exodus’

Names with *gazə* are often given during times of trouble. It could be during death of an important person often a house hold, a king, mother, father, or during a war.

A line of descent and race are also expressed with proper names; hence, the role of names as identity marker is tripled: referring to an individual, the race, and line of descent. For instance, *ker-o* ‘peace-N’ and *azmandjə*, which is a blend of title name *azmatf* ‘leader’ and *amd-jə* ‘the glory,’ were names for two brothers. Now, they became tribal names, and individuals from this tribes are called: *jə-kero-dən* ‘of

Kero’s line’ and *jə-azmandjə-dən* ‘of Azmandye’s line’. The word *dən* refers to ‘belly’ and it is metaphorically extended to ‘born’.

‘Compound’ Female and Male Names

Compounds with *zər* ‘race’ or ‘blood tie’ can be used for giving names to men or women. A few examples of such names with *zər* as initial constituent are shown below:

Proper name	Gloss	Meaning
<i>zər-məʃʃi</i>	race-clean	‘from decent family’
<i>zər-e-ʃʃi</i>	race-NEG-leave	‘one never abandons his race’
<i>zər-abza</i>	race-multiply	‘multiply your race!’
<i>zər-huari</i>	race-know	‘known race’
<i>zər-sawi</i>	race-search	‘baby/race wanted’

Some compound nouns referring to both genders are also formed with *ʃʃiza*, ‘medicine’ as a final constituent as in the following examples:

Proper name	Gloss	Meaning
<i>dən-ʃʃiza</i>	belly-medicine	‘child is medicine’
<i>səb-ʃʃiza</i>	man-medicine	‘man is important’
<i>hʲin-ʃʃiza</i>	heart-medicine	‘wisdom or thinking is medicine’

Here medicine is used metaphorically ‘important as medicine’. For instance, a child is medicine as it helps his parents; people are important during bad times. Gurage people conceptualize that a person

thinks with his heart; hence, a ‘wise heart’ is as good as a medicine.

Now we proceed to common names showing jobs, attributes, physical appearance and birth.

Common Names Showing a Profession:

ak ^ˈ jaŋ	‘butcher’
ʃəwaŋ	‘farmer’
nəfurə	‘smith’
buda	‘tanner’
gazənə	‘warier’
fuga	‘craft person’
ʃəhirwət	‘she-potter’
fak ^ˈ ət	‘she-scraper’.

Common Names Showing Attribute: Names showing human behavior are formed by reduplication and then affixation of a

nominalizer {-tənə} as in the examples below:

Common name	Gloss	Meaning
nəgræg-tənə	wishing-N	‘wishing someone’s food’
dībubur-tənə	borrower-N	‘someone who tends to borrow’
kærkær-tənə	pretend-N	‘Someone who pretends’
watwat-tənə	worry-N	‘some one who easily worries’
zəgzæg-tənə	be.needy-N	‘one who worries for others and his needs’.
walwal-tənə	Coma-N	‘someone in coma’
ɖəɖɖəɖəɖ-tənə	wander-N	‘wanderer’

Names showing size/height and handicaps:

dunir	‘sb. without hands and legs’
funir	‘sb. without fingers and/or lips’
aŋ ^ˈ ir	‘short’
k ^ˈ imuŋ ^ˈ ir	‘dwarf’
bunir	‘toothless’

Dirədīg ‘mercy!’ and **bərtʃə** ‘let transcend!’

In Gurage, *dirədīg* and *bərṯə* are used to avoid and transcend, respectively by the power of a spirit an instance or state of any thing bad. For instance, if one gives birth to a *dunir*, ‘a child without hands and/or legs’, the interlocutor who tells the instance for the others first has to say: *dirədīg* ‘God’s mercy’ and begins to narrate; the listener

who hears the instance also says repeatedly *dirədīg* to seek mercy. If the interlocutors do not say that and try to mock or laugh at the instance, the person who gave birth to *dunir*, in this case, or someone who faced any sort of problem says *bərṯə*, ‘let the same evil happen to you’ to those who laughed or mocked.

Common Names Related to Birth:

jəmarṯə	‘last born’
jəbəhir	‘first born’
jəsamirjə	‘eighth/tenth born’
jərəmṯijə	‘twins’

In Gurage, giving birth to twins was considered evil; hence, families who gave birth to ‘twins’ or ‘triples’ used to prepare a cleansing ceremony, which often requires ‘feast’. A feast was also necessary when a woman gave birth to eighth or tenth children. The feast was meant for blessing the children and their mother.

Trend Analysis

The following names are from four families in three generations (G-1...G-3). They were randomly selected from a Deweshe village of Gumer district. Religious names are not considered ethnic names.

The Dynamics: Changes in Naming

Naming as social phenomena is dynamic and changes through time. This change doesn’t seem random but patterned. Gurage human names have dominantly changed into Amharic at some stages and religious names in the last 50 years.

	Family-1			Family-2			Family-3			Family-4		
G-1	Name	S	A	Name	S	A	Name	S	A	Name	S	A
	minuta	M	65	amərga	M	66	zəbərga	M	70	nikranə	M	72
	taməfjet	F	63	em ^w afji	F	64	adəbsaj	F	65	wərdwət	F	68
G-2	mulunəf	F	43	fik're	M	45	tənkir	M	50	ʃədut	F	45
	jərm ^w ədɟja	F	41	taddəsə	M	41	fətta	M	47	dəmisiss	M	44
	fəkədə	M	39	birk'e	F	33	ləgga	M	45	səbməka	M	42
	kəbədə	M	35	ʃəwa	F	33	bək'əna	M	43	taddəssə	M	40
	tenaje	F	31	tafəsə	M	31	kabtu	M	38	wəgu	M	38
	gizatfəw	M	27	get'e	F	29	fudɟwət	F	35	dula	M	32
	abəbə	M	25	bəjənə	M	27	kələm	F	18	....	...	...
G-3	bərnabas	M	15	rədet	F	13	rut	F	14	adanə	M	12
	nəbju	M	12	hilina	F	10	betel	F	12	kibəbu	M	10
	lidət	F	9	bruk	M	2	hanna	F	8	kabtamu	M	8
	...	...	...	...	...	...	bersabe	F	5	səbsibe	M	5

Table 3. Naming trends in Gurage

Names listed under the generation-3 are the children of the family names in bold in generation -2: *mulunəf*, *taddəsə*, *kabtu* and *wəgu*.

Family-1: In G-1, both the father, *minuta* 'my wish' and the mother, *taməfjet* 'sweetie' whose age was above 60, have Gurage names. When we come to their children's name in generation-2, only one person, *jərm^wədɟja* 'let be loved' whose age was 41, is given Gurage name. The other six out of the seven are given Amharic names. In the third generation, no one has Gurage name as *bərnabas* is biblical and *nəbju* and *lidət* are Amharic names.

Family-2: In G-1, both the father, *amərga* 'of good conduct' and the mother, *em^wafji*

'no anger' have Gurage names, but no Gurage name is found in the second and third generations.

Family-3: In G-1 names *zəbərga* 'new-season' and *adəbsaj* 'look for peace' are Guragina; in the second generation, two male names: *tənkir* and *bək'əna* 'be strong' and 'if God wills', respectively and a female name: *fudɟwət*, 'grace' are Gurage names. In the third generation, all the names are biblical.

Family-4: In G-1, *nikranə* 'let us go up' and *wərdwət* 'the presser' are Gurage names. In G-2, *səbməka*, *wəgu*, *dula* and *ʃədut* referring to 'man lacked', 'it is surprise', 'great surprise', and 'my share', respectively are Gurage names. In G-3, there is no one with Gurage cultural name.

Though the samples taken are a few, they clearly show the trend that the naming practice is changing dominantly into Amharic.

We shall call the tendency to shift from ethnic names into non-native language's a *naming endangerment*. Naming endangerment reflects the general tendency towards a language threat or endangerment. The change of names in the third generations of the four families above is an example of naming endangerment in which the names shifts from typical Gurage names to Amharic or biblical names.

Causes for Naming Endangerment

Denigration: This is a negative stereotyping that involves giving undesirable attribute to an individual or a group. Some names which were popular and prototypical, through time become stereotypical and tend to be stigmatized. As a result, they are not used in the naming practice. As Wardhaugh (2006:145) expounds, the stereotyping is intentional:

“A stereotype is popular and, therefore, conscious characterization of speech of a particular group.... Often such stereotypes are stigmatized. A stereotype need not conform to reality; rather, it offers people a rough and ready categorization with all the attendant problems of such categorizations.”

For instance, *Zəbarga*, *Zərga*, *Atraga* are typical Gurage names. Any one having names like Fekede, Kebede may be nicknamed '*Zəbarga*' when one is referring to the ethnic group of Fekede and Kebede, if they are from Gurage ethnic groups. This is true at least when intimate friends from different ethnic groups are mocking one

another. The fact that the comedian Kibebew Geda, in his Comic: '*Gash folisu*,' uses names '*Zəbarga*' and '*Muṣṣag*' shows how such names are prototypical and at the same time stereotyped. These days, no Gurage parent gives his child names like *Zəbarga*. Parents do not want to give their child a 'cheaper' name that may cause him stigma.

Religion: Many Gurage names are endangered because of religion. Gurage kids tend to take their Christian name when baptized. Christian names in Gurage come from Ge'ez because Ge'ez was the sacred church language. So, names like *wəldə-jəsus*, *gəbrə-jəsus*, are from Ge'ez and it sounds funny if one is given a Gurage equivalent Christian names like: *təṣṣ'ənə-jəsu* and *mena-jəsus*, where the Ge'ez *wəld* and Gurage *təṣṣ'ənə* refers to 'born' and *gəbr* and *mena* to 'work', respectively. This is because languages are empowered for certain function in a society. Such power had been given by Ethiopian Orthodox church only to Ge'ez.

The same is true that children from Muslim religion are given Arabic than Gurage names. Names like: *Mahmud*, *Nəsrū*, *Awəl*, *Sult'an*, *Məhamməd*, *Hussien*, *ḏəmal* and *Tofik* are not Gurage names. Some Gurage names taken from holy books are localized and in some cases morphologized as in *hassən* becoming *assəna*.

Religion is one of the main factors that endanger local names because almost every family belong to either, Muslim, Orthodox or protestant religions; hence, they feel at ease if they bear their child a name from one of the Holy books.

Amharic Hegemony: The prestige Amharic had in the past as a result of being an official language, used in education, court

and everyday communication had caused the Gurage naming practice to shift into Amharic naming patterns.

Identity, Right and Empowerment: Though it is individuals' and ethnic groups' right to identify themselves with their language, the socio-political situations may force people to use non-ethnic names. To the contrary, the rights and powers given to people may encourage ethno-linguistic groups to use their own cultural names. It is, for instance, observed that personal names began to change back to Gurage names in the present government. Names like *sarem* 'I am happy', and *nik'u* 'he is great' have been recorded in recently given names. This might be the result of the rights and the associated powers given to ethnic groups, together with the increase in the feelings of ethnicity in Ethiopia. Trade names reflecting Gurage identity have also flourished in the recent past. A few examples are: Haroni ('know it for me') International Hotel in Hawassa, Adot Tina ('Mother with us'), Aberus Complex ('family complex'), and Wehemeya ('holy-day'), all in Addis Ababa.

When human right in general and language use right in particular is threatened, ethnic groups tend to change their names to escape the waves of politics that threaten them. This threatening may not be stated in constitutions but reflected in many ways

including in the form of stigma, in media (in the form of jokes, entertainment comedies, and in everyday social interactions).

Language attitude: Individuals or groups may have positive attitude towards their language and want to express their loyalty to it through using it in all sorts of language use, where naming is one. To the contrary, linguistic groups may be less loyal to use their language. Loyalty to once ethnic group may, however, be expressed by other means other than language. Thus, it might be difficult to say that a person is not loyal to his language for not identifying himself in naming practice. Of course, names are given by parents depending on the existing social, political, economic and cultural situations. Individuals may be advocates of their tongue though their names are not ethnic names. The individuals might have taken Gurage names if they had the chance to name themselves. This is one of the loose points where names and identity may correlate only weakly. Furthermore, language attitude may be affected by sociopolitical factors. A person from a high economic class and speaking a prestigious language, which is used in media, administration and court, may tend to identify himself with his language and give his ethnic name to his child than a person who is from low class and speaking functionally reduced language.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we have shown that Gurage cultural names are morphologically patterned and have referential and pragmatic meanings. We have argued that sociological and political factors including:

denigration, religion, hegemony, rights, and language attitude have negatively affected the cultural naming practice in particular and the development of Guragina in general. We have also shown that human

names play symbolic roles by expressing ethnic identity including races, gender, and many more. The fact that ethnic naming practice is endangered implies the endangerment of ethnic identity and reflects lack of loyalty by its speaker to the language.

It is recommended that parents from Gurage should consider giving their child

Guragina name. Interventions are needed to revitalize the cultural naming practice and to safeguard Gurage language varieties from endangerment through awareness creation, sensitization and documentation.

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