
Trends in Personal Names of Šāwan Royal Family from *Nəguś Šahlä Šəllase* to *Nəguśä Nəgäst Həylä Šəllase I*, c.1810s-1970s

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Abstract

This article is an attempt to analyse trends in the personal names of “Šāwan royal families” with a particular reference to the seven consecutive generations of *Nəguś Šahlä Šəllase*’s descendants to the period of *Nəguśä Nəgäst Həylä Šəllase I*, as one aspect of sociocultural history. The available literature on the issue gave more emphasis to the meaning, naming practices, classifications, and reasons of personal names and naming among different Ethiopian societies than trends. The data was obtained from both primary and secondary historical sources. The major primary source was “ኑልቱ፡ ትውልድ፡ ዘ ንጉሥ፡ ሣህለ፡ ሥላሴ፡፡”, “the number of *Nəguś Šahlä Šəllase*’s descendants,” collected by Mahtämä Šəllase Wäldä Mäsqäl and published in 1965 EC. He organized the list in a sequential order from the first to the seventh generation. The personal names of about two thousand descendants were taken from the list and classified into five themes: place, religious, economic, hegemony, and “miscellaneous”. The finding reveals that more than sixty percent of the personal names of the descendants were associated with hegemony in the first half of the 19th century and gradually declined to thirty percent in the second half of the 20th century. Similarly, gradual changes took place in the other themes: places from Šāwa to Ethiopia, religion from prefix to direct Biblical, and economic from gold and silver to diamond. Finally, personal names identified as “miscellaneous” are also becoming “modern”.

Keywords: book of genealogy, Šāwan royal families, hegemony, generation, trends

1. Geographical and Historical Background

Geographically, the nineteenth-century historical Šāwa was located in the central part of Ethiopia, roughly north of the area where the present capital of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa is situated, south and southwest of the Abbay (Nile) River and its tributaries, and west of the Afar frontiers. During the period under study, it was inhabited by several ethnic groups speaking different languages: Amhara, Oromo, Gurage, and Argobba. They were practicing

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several religions: Christianity, Islam, and indigenous beliefs. The Šāwan rulers, who became very active in the political power rivalry and cultural dominance of the kingdom, were said to be belonging to the Amhara ethnic group and were followers of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. They have been depicted in Ethiopian historical literature as the founders of the “Šāwan dynasty” by the beginning of the 18th century under the leadership of Nāgaśi Kərstos. It is believed that Nāgaśi’s descendants governed the Šāwan region until the end of the 19th century.² Moreover, they became *nəguś* and *nəguśä nəgāšt* of Ethiopia from 1889 to 1974.³

Šahlä Šəllase was one of the descendants of Nāgaśi and came to the political power of Šāwa around 1813. The personal names of his descendants were known in Amharic, sometimes in combination with Gə‘əz. Unlike what was commonly written in some travellers accounts’ of the 1830s and 1840s who visited his court, Šahlä Šəllase’s officially recognized and known children were only fifteen from around 8 different mothers.⁴

Of these eight women, his official wife was said to be Bəzzabbəš Dägän, the granddaughter of Tədu from Morät.⁵ She gave birth to two sons and two daughters from him. The other mothers from different corners of Šāwa were recognized as not his wives but concubines. Of these women, only two were identified along with the names of their fathers. One of them was Bəzzabbəš as mentioned above, whose descendants gave rise to Emperor Mənilək II, and the other was the concubine Yəmännūšal Bunəññ, whose descendants gave birth to Emperor Ḥaylä Šəllase.⁶

The first son and immediate successor of Šahlä Šəllase, Ḥaylä Mäləkot, could father only one son, Mənilək.⁷ Contrary to that, Yəmännūšal gave birth to several children. The same was true to Darge, whose mother goes by the name Wärräyega (or Wurage), probably the name of her ethnic origin as she was from Hadiyya (since the people of the area were known to us as Wurage by then), not her personal name, also gave birth to several children.⁸ By the way, like his father, Mənilək himself was not lucky enough in bearing many

² Ege 1996.

³ Marcus 1971.

⁴ Mahtämä Šəllase Wäldä Mäsqäl 1965 EC.

⁵ Encyclopaedia Aethiopica vol. 3 2007, 1016-1017.

⁶ Mahtämä Šəllase 1965 EC.

⁷ “መድኃኒት ጥቂት ይበቃል እያለች፣ የምኒልክ እናት አንድ ወልዳ መከነች,” Sərgəw Hablä Šəllase 2000, 2.

⁸ Encyclopaedia Aethiopica vol. 2 2005, 102.

children. His three children were born before his official marriage, from three different concubines, when he was a young man.⁹

2. Statement of the Problem

Names and naming practices among Ethiopian societies have been the subject of studies in several fields of the social sciences, like anthropology, sociology, folklore, and linguistics. It seems that this issue has not been given similar emphasis as a subject of discussion in historical studies that deals with changes and continuities or trend analysis. As part of its social history, different aspects of Ethiopian social activities have been studied. The available literature on the study of personal names in Ethiopia tends to give due emphasis to naming practices and meanings than to trends through generations. In fact, review sections about the matter in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* stand as exceptions. The contributions by Alessandro Bausi, Michael Kleiner, Alessandro Gori, Steven Kaplan, and Wolbert Smidt are informative from a general point of view in relation to the topic under discussion.¹⁰ Thus, the present attempt is to contribute to that aspect of Ethiopian sociocultural history with a special reference to Šäwa from the beginning of the 19th century to the second half of the 20th century. Most Ethiopian societies were accustomed to naming their children depending on the circumstances that were happening at the time of their children's birth. These circumstances also include the aspirations of a particular parent or the individual that parent took as a role model in their lives. So, the trends in personal names were changing depending on the changes in the nature of the circumstances in which a child was born. These changes might be the results of changes in the way of life in societies. For instance, the introduction of new religious beliefs like Christianity or Islam, the introduction or imposition of new socioeconomic or political statuses, and urbanization, including rural-urban migration, resulted in the change of trends of personal names and naming practices.¹¹

Similarly, the personal names among different classes of the Šäwan society were aspiration or achievement-oriented depending on the circumstances they were in. Of these classes of the society, the personal names of the Šäwan rulers and their descendants were given by their parents and grandparents. Their personal names were highly associated with their aspiration for politico-

⁹ Təlahun Bərhanä Šəllase 1996 EC, 12.

¹⁰ *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* 2007, Vol. 3, 1119-1131.

¹¹ Zelalem Leyew 2003, 181-211; Gebre Yntiso 2010, 183-194; Waktole Hailu 2017, 51-58.

military power and sociocultural hegemony. That of the clergy was tended to be associated with their knowledge and level of education.¹² In the same society, the soldiers were given personal names in relation to war, aggressiveness, confrontations, defeats, and subjugations etc.¹³ The peasants also used to give names characterized by more of uncertainties about the future, in which the growing up of the newly borne child left to luck or God as to their respective religions. Finally, slaves, who were at the bottom of the social class, were given personal names that indicated the then lower social status and servitude. Those names were commonly given by their masters¹⁴. Thus, one common characteristic of personal names and naming in the Šāwan tradition during the period under discussion was that they were indicators of social classes in one form or another: *yä-mäsafnt-səm* (names of princes), *yä-mäk^wannənt-səm* (names of commanders), *yä-wättadär-səm* (names of soldiers), *yä-kahən-səm* (names of the clergy), *yä-balagär-səm* (names of peasants), *yä-bariya-səm* (names of slaves), and the like.¹⁵ Of course, under some of these social classes, we have the tradition of dual names, for instance, *yä-nəgšəna-səm* or *yä-zufan-səm* (“reign” or crown names) and *yä-färäs-səm* (horse names) along with their initially given personal names.¹⁶

Of these classes of the society, the focus of this discussion is on the “royal families of Šāwa.” It is probably better to identify them under *mäsafnt* (princes) and *mäk^wannənt* (commanders) from the first decade of the 19th century to the second half of the 20th century. In this case, the right category for the royalty may be the *mäsafnt*. However, the *mäk^wannənt* had also the opportunity to be a *mäsafnt* even after a single generation. The individuals or groups who were assumed as *mäsafnt* in the Ethiopian politico-military career were *mäk^wannənts* even ordinary soldiers before a generation or two. So, the discussion here is about the trends in the personal names of both the *mäsafnt* and *mäk^wannənt* who were said to be descendants of *Nəgus Šahlä Šəllase*. His descendants were in either of the two (*mäsafnt* or *mäk^wannənt*) social classes

¹² Mängəstu Lämna 1959 EC, 59-61; Here and after the present author is forced to indicate the Ethiopian calendar as it appears on the books and “EC” to mean Ethiopian Calendar throughout the text instead of converting them to the Gregorian one simply by adding eight years since the difference between the two varies between seven and eight years; seven from September to January and eight from January to September. Thus, it is difficult to convert it correctly unless the month is exactly known.

¹³ Fəşum Wäldä Maryam, 2009 EC, 290-297; Mängəstu 1959 EC, 60.

¹⁴ Seyfu Mätafärya 1972, 127-193.

¹⁵ Mängəstu 1959 EC, 59-61; Haddis Alämayähu 1996 EC; Seyfu 1972, 127-193.

¹⁶ Encyclopaedia Aethiopica 2007, Vol. 3, 1119-1131; Pankhurst 1989, 197-206; Mahtämä Šəllase 1969, 195-303.

from the first decades of the 19th century to the second half of the 20th century.¹⁷ They were also at the forefront of the politico-military power activities of initially Šäwa, and then Ethiopia during the same period.¹⁸

3. Methods and Materials

In terms of methods, both qualitative and quantitative were employed because of the nature of the topic and the available historical sources. The data was obtained from primary and secondary historical sources. In fact, the major primary historical source was a list of names of Šahlä Šällase's descendants, produced by Mahtämä Šällase and published as "ጥልቁ፣ ትውልድ፣ ንጉሥ፣ ሣህለ፣ ሥላሴ፡፡" in 1965 EC. It is roughly meant to mean "the number of *Nəguś* Šahlä Šällase's descendants." The author identified his publication as the "study of genealogy." He claims that he did the job in order for others to know the role of these descendants in state and nation-building in the political history of Ethiopia. Moreover, he mentioned the specific objectives of authoring his "book of genealogy" as to: preserve their number as national heritage otherwise forgotten after one or two generations; fill some knowledge gaps and correct multiple erroneous genealogical counting regarding their number; encourage that these large family members know each other and help one another, and intended that the people of Ethiopia understand the prestige of the monarch and his family background.

Besides, the author claimed that he had no interest in gaining any personal advantage from producing this list of the numbers and names of the descendants¹⁹. According to his list of numbers and names, the descendants became more than two thousands in number by the end of the 1960s. One can expect that the number of descendants increased from the first layer of generation to the seventh layer of generation. It goes on like that except in the case of the seventh which became less than one-third of the sixth one. The sixth were more than 900 whereas the seventh could not be even 300. This was perhaps, because of lack of information about individuals who claimed that they descended from the family²⁰. However, Mahtämä Šällase did not write any comment, analysis or critics regarding the characteristics or trends of those names and naming in his "book of genealogy". So, the present researcher carefully observed that lists of numbers and names as the major

¹⁷ Mesay Kebede 1999, 179-240; Teshale Tibebe 1995, 21-71.

¹⁸ Marcus 1971, 28, 77-100.

¹⁹ Mahtämä Šällase 1965, 5.

²⁰ Mahtämä Šällase 1965.

source for the trend analysis. The analysis on trends of personal names through generations was supplemented by other secondary historical sources, like journal articles, book chapters and area studies specific encyclopaedias.

The personal names of about two thousand descendants were taken from the list for the present purpose. Then, they were classified into five different themes depending on the meaning of the names. The first four are places, economic, hegemony (political-military- social), and religious. The fifth theme is about personal names out of these four but merged into one and identified as “miscellaneous” for the present purpose. In addition to this, there were some names of descendants, which can be grouped under gender-blind. At the same time, there are also combinations of more than one theme in a personal name: place-politics- religion.

4. Themes in the Personal Names

4.1 Themes in Female Personal Names

To start with, place related, particularly Šāwan-associated personal names were given to the newly born female child depending on the achieved or aspired statuses of the parents. By the way, those personal names throughout all the themes mentioned above, including the present one, were also given by mother-in-laws to female brides after marriage. The following are some of the place related names taken from the list:

List 1: Place – related female personal names

No	Personal names		Equivalent translation ²¹
	Amharic	Transliteration	
1	ሸዋን ግዢው	<i>Šāwan-Gəziw</i>	Rule (govern) Šāwa.
2	ሸዋ አነሰሽ	<i>Šāwa-Anäsäš</i>	Šāwa is small for you.
3	ምንይል ሸዋ	<i>Mənyəl-Šāwa</i>	What will Šāwa say?
4	ሸዋ ረገድ	<i>Šāwa-Rägäd</i>	Šāwa is bowing/for you.
5	ሸዋ ጣይ	<i>Šāwa-Ṭay</i>	The sun/light of Šāwa.
6	ሸዋን ለንቸ	<i>Šāwan-Lanči</i>	Šāwa is for you.
7	ሸዋ ረገ	<i>Šāwa-Räga</i>	Šāwa is settled /pacified.
8	ሸዋነሽ	<i>Šāwa-Näš</i>	You are Šāwa.

²¹ The English translation of the Ge’ez and Amharic could not be as beautiful or as exact as the original, and that is why the present researcher was forced to coin the phrase “equivalent translation” for all the translated names included throughout the text.

Regarding economic issue-related personal names, mainly gold, were given to females. Females were the agents of not only political marriage but also agents to join economically prosperous families. Thus, females were commonly named after this interest, aspiration, and achievement with the prefix or suffix *Wärq* (gold).

List 2: Economy or gold – related female personal names

No	Personal names		Equivalent translation
	Amharic	Transliteration	
1	ዘነበ ወርቅ	<i>Zänäbä-Wärq</i>	It rained gold.
2	ተናኘ ወርቅ	<i>Tänañä –Wärq</i>	Gold is over flowing.
3	መዝለቂያሽ ወርቅ	<i>Mäzläqiyas-Wärq</i>	You are accessed through gold.
4	ጥሩ ወርቅ	<i>Ṭəru-Wärq</i>	The best/fine gold.
5	ሙላተ ወርቅ	<i>Mulatä-Wärq</i>	Full of gold.
6	አምሳሌ ወርቅ	<i>Amsalä-Wärq</i>	You are like gold.
7	ወርቅ ያንጥፍ	<i>Wärq-Yantəfu</i>	They should place/put gold.

There are some hegemony-oriented names for females among the “royal families” of Šäwa in the available list. The following table expresses hegemony without comparison, contrast, or point of reference:

List 3: Hegemony – related female personal names

No	Personal names		Equivalent translation
	Amharic	Transliteration	
1	አቻም የለሽ	<i>Ačam-Yäläs</i>	You don't have peer/equal.
2	አልፍ ነሽ	<i>Elf-Näs</i>	You are thousands.
3	ወሰን የለሽ	<i>Wäsän-Yäläs</i>	You don't have a limit/boundary.
4	በላይ ነሽ	<i>Bäläy-Näs</i>	You are superior.
5	ጥንፍ የለሽ	<i>Ṭənf- Yäläs</i>	You don't have horizon.
6	ዳርም የለሽ	<i>Darm- Yäläs</i>	You don't have margin.
7	ለክም የለሽ	<i>Ləkkəm_ Yäläs</i>	You don't have measurement.
8	አንድ አንቺ የለም	<i>Endä-Anəči-Yälläm</i>	There is no one like you.
9	ማን አለብሽ	<i>Man-Aläbbəs</i>	You don't have any master.
10	ማን ያህልሻል	<i>Man-Yahəšal</i>	No one is equal to you.

There were also personal names for females regarding hegemony with point of reference, comparison or subjugation of others to them as presented in the list:

List 4: Hegemony (comparison or subjugation) – related female personal names

No	Personal names		Equivalent translation
	Amharic	Transliteration	
1	በለጥሻቸው	<i>Bälätšačäw</i>	You excel them.
2	ሁሉ ግርጌሽ	<i>Hulu-Gärgesš</i>	All are under your feet.
3	የሺ ደብብ	<i>Yäši-Däbab</i>	The umbrella of a thousand.
4	ዘርገባቸው	<i>Zärgibbačäw</i>	Stretch against them.
5	ያዩሽ ፀደቁ	<i>Yayuš-šäddäqu</i>	Those who see you are blessed.
6	የቻለ ያንሳሽ	<i>Yäčälä-Yansaš</i>	Who have the capacity will take/marry you.

Regarding the religious theme, for females, there is a prefix or suffix on the name of angels or St. Mary in the case of the second and third generations of descendants. The following are available in the list of descendants as examples:

List 5: Religious – related female personal names

No	Personal names		Equivalent translation
	Amharic	Transliteration	
1	እሁተ ማርያም	<i>Ehätä-Maryam</i>	St. Mary's sister.
2	አስካለ ማርያም	<i>Askalä-Maryam</i>	St. Mary's bunch of grapes.
3	አፀደ ማርያም	<i>Ašädä-Maryam</i>	St. Mary's garden.
4	ተአምረ ማርያም	<i>Tä'ammärä-Maryam</i>	Miracles of St. Mary.

4.2 Male Personal Names

In the same way, place names mainly in Šäwa were given in combination with hegemony and politico-military victories to male children as follows:

List 6: Place – related male personal names

No	Personal names		Equivalent translation
	Amharic/Gə'əz	Transliteration	
1	ሸዋረገድ	<i>Šäwa-Räggäd</i>	Šäwa bows to /for you.
2	ሸዋን ግዛው	<i>Šäwan-Gəzaw</i>	Subjugate/rule Šäwa.
3	ሸዋ ረገ	<i>Šäwa-Rägga</i>	Šäwa is pacified.
4	ሸዋ ቀና	<i>Šäwa-Qänna</i>	Šäwa envied or pacified.
5	ሸዋ አመኑ	<i>Šäwa-Ammänä</i>	Šäwa surrender.

It seems that males were not given economic-related personal names during this period of early generations. Thus, we could not see such names in the list of descendants. When it came to the personal names of male descendants,

political power, military victory, or social hegemony, related personal names were very common during the time of the territorial expansion and consolidation of Šäwa as well as Ethiopia. These are some of the personal names in the list of descendants below:

List 7: Hegemony (politico-military power) – related male personal names

No	Personal names		Equivalent translation
	Amharic	Transliteration	
1	አስፋው ወሰን	<i>Asfaw-Wäsän</i>	Widen the boundary/territory.
2	ወንድ አፍራሽ	<i>Wänd-Afraš</i>	Destroyer of males (enemy's hero).
3	ደምሳው	<i>Dämssäw</i>	Dismiss him.
4	አንድ አርጋቸው	<i>And-Argačäw</i>	Bring them together/make them one.
5	ዘርጋው	<i>Zärgaw</i>	Expand/let down him.
6	አሽብር	<i>Ašäbbär</i>	Terrorize.
7	በላቸው	<i>Bälačäw</i>	Knockout them.
8	ጥሰው	<i>Ṭasäw</i>	Violate him.
9	ግፉ ወሰን	<i>Gəfa-Wäsän</i>	Push the boundary.
10	ክፈተው	<i>Kəfätäw</i>	Open it.
11	ሺ መላሽ	<i>Ši-Mäläs</i>	Defeat/curtail a thousand.
12	አሰግድ	<i>Assäggäd</i>	Makes them bow down.
13	አብርቅ	<i>Abärq</i>	Storm them.
14	አጥፍፍ ሰገድ	<i>Atənaf-Säggäd</i>	Make all (to the horizon) bow down for you.
15	ፊውል ሰገድ	<i>Lul-Säggäd</i>	Make (their) prince bow down for you.
16	ለጥ ይበሉ	<i>Lät-Yəbälu</i>	Make them bow down to the ground.

Other personal names for males in the list are directly related to political or social hegemony.

List 8: Political or social hegemony – related male personal names

No	Personal names		Equivalent translation
	Amharic	Transliteration	
1	ዘውዴ	<i>Zäwude</i>	My crown.
2	መንገሻ	<i>Mängäša</i>	One that makes to enthrone.
3	ሥዩም	<i>Səyüm</i>	The anointed/named.
4	መኮንን	<i>Mäkönnän</i>	Commander/officer.

There were also personal names that are directly identical with the personal names of historical kings in Ethiopian history or Biblical stories given to their male offspring, like Eyasu, Solomon, Dawit (David), and Yohannis (John). Surprisingly, the name Tewodros was not given to Šäwan children from the

“royal families” during the period under discussion, probably because of the political animosity between the Šäwan nobility and Emperor Tewodros.

The earlier religious personal names, which were not directly Biblical but had suffixes or prefixes like *gäbrä* (servant), *Haylä* (power), *Wäldä* (son), *habtä* (property), etc., were given still in combination with political power or social-class hegemony. The following are some of the religious personal names of males in the list of descendants:

List 9: Religion – related male personal names

No	Personal names		Equivalent translation
	Amharic/Gə'əz	Transliteration	
1	ወልደ ማርያም	<i>Wäldä-Maryam</i>	St. Mary's son.
2	ሀብተ ማርያም	<i>Habtä-Maryam</i>	St. Mary's property.
3	ኃይለ ሥላሴ	<i>Haylä-Šällase</i>	Power of Holy Trinity.
4	ሣህለ ሥላሴ	<i>Šahlä-Šällase</i>	Heat of Holy Trinity.
5	ኃይለ ሚካኤል	<i>Haylä-Mika'el</i>	Power of St. Micha'el.
6	ኃይለ ገብርኤል	<i>Haylä-Gabri'el</i>	Power of St. Gabri'el.
7	ሣህለ ማርያም	<i>Šahlä-Maryam</i>	Heat of St. Mary.
8	በኩረ ጳውሎስ	<i>Bäkurä-šəyon</i>	The first son of Zion.

5. Trends in the Personal Names

The trends in the personal names have been changing from the first generation all the way through to the seventh generation of the descendants, along with all the themes mentioned above. They tended to be the personal names of ordinary citizens while moving from the first generation to the seventh generation of descendants. The following personal names of both females and males that can be identified as names of ordinary citizens are examples significantly observed in the sixth and seventh generations of the descendants. In fact, it was not a sudden change but gradual from the second to the third, all through the generations.

5.1. Female Personal Names

To start with, in the case of place names, it seems that Šäwa was almost abandoned in the last generations of descendants, but Ethiopia began to appear in a few cases. Otherwise, the place names available in the Bible began to be used commonly.

Regarding economics, the new personal name brought in was *Almaz* (Diamond), which might not have been known to them during those early periods. There was also a change from the politico-military victory and social hegemony related female personal names to the ordinary ones. The following are some of the females' personal names available in the list of descendants.

List 10: Miscellaneous female personal names

No	Personal names		Equivalent translation
	Amharic	Transliteration	
1	የይይ	<i>Yayne</i>	For my eyes
2	መና	<i>Männa</i>	Mana
3	ምጥን	<i>Mətn</i>	Proportional (size/ spiced).
4	የትና የት	<i>Yättna-yät</i>	Far apart (from expectations).
5	ጉዳይ	<i>Guddaye</i>	Mine or my concern/case/issue.
6	አዛኝ	<i>Azañe</i>	Generous/ Kind for me/ my helper.
7	የሹም ነሽ	<i>Yäšum-näš</i>	You are for the appointed one.

Similarly, religious personal names began to be directly biblical in the last generations. Places' names in Palestine as well as names of rooms in the building of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church began to be given to females. Biblical as well as church-related personal names were not given to male children in the tradition of Ethiopia in general and that of Šäwa in particular. Place names in Palestine (biblical) given for females available in the list are: Eyyärusalem (Jerusalem), *Edän*, *Gännät* (paradise), *Siyon* (Zion), *Gälila* (Galilee), *Yordanos* (Jordan), etc. Moreover, names of persons in the Biblical stories were also given for female descendants. The following are some of the examples available in the list of the last generations: *Hanna*, *Azeb*, *Aster*, *Rahel*, *Yodit*, *Hirut*, *Hewan*, Sara, etc. Personal names after rooms of the building of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church for females available in the list of descendants, like *Qəddəsət* (holy), *Mäqdäs* (temple), *Bätä-lihem*, and *Mahilet*.

5.2. Male Personal Names

Due to the gradual changes in the personal names of male descendants, we could not see place-related personal names among the last generations. Regarding economic-related personal names, those that were commonly given to male descendants in the middle and last generations included *Wärqu* (the gold) and *Bərru* (the silver). Of course, such gold-related personal names were given to female descendants even in the first and second generations of the descendants, as discussed above. Another economic (number)-related new

personal name that came in for male descendants was *Million*. In fact, the number-oriented personal name known to the people in Šäwa in the 19th and early 20th centuries was *Ši* (thousand) and, in a few cases, *Bəzu* (many) in the personal names of males and females. The following are some of the personal names with the prefix *Ši* available in the list of descendants.

List 11: Number- related male personal names

No	Personal names		Equivalent translation
	Amharic	Transliteration	
1	ሺ ፈረው	<i>Ši-Färaw(male)</i>	A thousand afraid of him.
2	ሺ መካት	<i>Ši-Mäkkät(male)</i>	Curtailed/defeat a thousand.
3	ሺ መልስ	<i>Ši-Mäläs(male)</i>	Defeated/turned back a thousand
4	የሺ	<i>Yä- Ši (female)</i>	For a thousand.
5	የሺ ድምበር	<i>Yä-Ši-Dəmbär(both)</i>	Equal to thousand/near to a thousand.
6	የሺ እመቤት	<i>Yä-Ši-Embət (female)</i>	Madam for a thousand.

Of course, *elf* (thousands) was sometimes used in the case of females as *Elfnäš*. Similarly, *Bəzunäh* (you are many) for males and *Bəzunäš* (you are many) for females were used in a few cases by the descendants.

Besides the above number oriented names, hegemony-related names were gradually shifted from political and social hegemony and military victory-oriented names to the personal names of ordinary citizens. The following are some of the examples available in the list of the last generation of descendants.

List 12: Miscellaneous male personal names

No	Personal names		Equivalent translation
	Amharic	Transliteration	
1	ተስፋይ	<i>Täsfaye</i>	My hope.
2	መከረያ	<i>Mäkurya</i>	One's proud.
3	ውድ ጎህ	<i>Wudnäh</i>	You are Sweet/ the most loved or liked.
4	አበባ	<i>Abäbä</i>	Flowering.
5	ማሞ	<i>Mamo</i>	Baby (boy).
6	ተረፈ	<i>Täräfü</i>	Leftover/saved.

In fact, there are also personal names in the list of descendants that could be grouped under the category of aspiration for a middle-class position, descending from hegemony-related personal names like:

List 13: Middle class aspirant male personal names

No	Personal names		Equivalent translation
	Amharic	Transliteration	
1	ተሾመ	<i>Täšomä</i>	Appointed.
2	ዋል ተንገሥ	<i>Wal-Tänäguś</i>	Spend your day with the <i>Näguś</i>
3	የሹም አጥረ	<i>Yä-šum-Aṭər</i>	Fence for the appointed
4	አፈ ንገሥ	<i>Afä- Näguś</i>	Mouthpiece of the <i>Näguś</i>
5	ሰሙ ንገሥ	<i>Sämu- Näguś</i>	The <i>Näguś</i> hear the news(of your birth)

Similarly, from the religious point of view, personal names of male offspring related to the Biblical stories as directly called in the scripture, like personal names of Engels, prophets, disciples, saints, etc., began to be used in the last generations of the descendants. The following are some of the examples available in the list: *Dani'el*, *Samson*, *Samu'el*, *Mika'el*, *Ermiyas*, *Pawulos*, *Yonas*, *Tomas*, etc.

6. Presentation and Discussion

6.1. Results

The classification of one name under either of the themes depends on the present researcher's understanding of the meaning of the names in Amharic. Sometimes, personal names might have meanings that could be categorized under more than one theme. In such a case, double counting might be used, even if it were a very rare case.

Table²² 1: First Generation of Descendants

Sex	N/descendants	Place	Economic	Hegemony	Religions	"Miscellaneous"
Male	6	-	-	4	-	2
Female	9	-	3	5	-	1
Total	15	-	3	9	-	3
Percent	100	-	20	60	-	20

Table 1 indicates that none of Šahlä Šällase's children had personal names after a place or country, either Šäwa or Ethiopia. But 3/15 (20%) of his children were given economic interest-related personal names. Specifically, of the nine daughters, three were given economic (gold) associated personal names. The majority of the children of the *Näguś*, nine out of fifteen (60%) of

²² All the tables presented here were compiled by the present researcher depending on the list produced by Mahtämä Šällase.

them, were given political power, military victory, or social hegemony related personal names. None of the children were given religious names, except for those associated with political power, like *Haylä Mäläkot*, *Seyfä Mika'el*, and *Haylä Mika'el*. So, the main interest of the Šāwan ruling family during this time was political power, military victory against their opponents, or social hegemony over other members of the Šāwan society. Moreover, 3/15 (20%) of the children were given “miscellaneous” names that were merged as one under the fifth theme presented above.

Table 2: Second Generation Descendants

Sex	N/descendants	Place	Economic	Hegemony	Religions	“Miscellaneous”
Male	26	3	-	17	3	3
Female	25	3	-	14	5	3
Total	51	6	-	31	8	6
Percent	100	11.7	-	60.78	15.68	11.7

In table 2, which presented the second generation of descendants (grandchildren of Šahlä Šällase), there were fifty-one in number. Out of these fifty-one, country- or place-related personal names were given to six children, or about 12%. The entire place-related names presented here are Šāwan related personal names. It seems that the economy was not the concern of these grandchildren, and none of them were given personal names after economic aspiration. Rather, thirty-one out of fifty-one (about 61%) of them were given political power, military victory, or social hegemony-related personal names. Unlike the first generation, the second generation took the religious personal names, at least the old version mentioned above. Thus, 16% of them were given such personal names. Of the eight children who were given religious personal names, five (the majority) were female. Still, about 12% of the descendants were given names categorised under the “miscellaneous” theme.

Table 3: Third Generation Descendants

Sex	N/descendants	Place	Economic	Hegemony	Religions	“Miscellaneous”
Male	67	2	4	44	5	12
Female	63	3	10	27	10	13
Total	130	5	14	71	15	25
Percent	100	3.8	10.76	54.6	11.53	19.2

In Table 3 above, the third generation of descendants was about 130. Only 5/130 (4%) of them were given country- or place-related personal names. As

usual, that one was also Šāwan related. Moreover, of this 4%, females were the majority. As it is presented, 14/130 (11%) of this generation of descendants were given economic aspiration-related personal names. Still, of the 14/130 children who were given economic interest related personal names, ten out of fourteen (10/14) of them were females, as usual considering females as a source of wealth from a possible political marriage. In this generation, political power, military victory, or social hegemony related personal names seem to be declining. The personal names related to these issues were 71/130 (55%). About 15/130 (12%) of them were given religious personal names, and about 25/130 (19%) of them were given personal names that were merged as “miscellaneous”.

Table 4: Fourth Generation Descendants

Sex	N/descendants	Place	Economic	Hegemony	Religious	“Miscellaneous”
Male	157	-	3	66	30	58
Female	133	7	20	50	32	24
Total	290	7	23	116	62	82
Percent	100	2.4	7.93	40	21.37	28.27

In Table 4, the number of descendants of the fourth generation was about 290. About 7/290 (2%) of the descendants were given place names. Economic interest-related personal names were also not significant; 23/290 (8%) of them were named after such an issue. Political power, military victory, and social hegemony-related personal names were still declining, from 71/130 (55%) in the third generation to 116/290 (about 40%) in this generation. Religion-based personal names, mainly the biblical or local church building rooms’ related ones, began to be taken significantly. Then, 62/290, or about 21% of them were given such types of religious names. Moreover, 82/290 (28%) of the descendants in this generation were given personal names corresponding to the fifth theme.

Table 5: Fifth Generation Descendants

Sex	N/descendants	Place	Economic	Hegemony	Religious	“Miscellaneous”
Male	360	3	13	168	71	114
Female	350	12	45	79	83	132
Total	710	15	58	247	154	246
Percent	100	2.1	8.1	34.78	21.69	34.64

In table 5, the fifth generation of descendants were about 710. Still 15/710 only (2%) of them were given place or country related personal names and 58/710 (8%) of them were given economic aspiration related personal names. Of these (58/710) economic aspiration related personal names 45 (45/58) were given to females. The political power, military victory and social hegemony related personal names were descending to 247/710 about (35%) and religious personal names mainly the new version became 154/710 about (22%). Names categorized as “miscellaneous” or (that of ordinary citizens) was given to 246/710 (35%) of the descendants; almost equal to the proportion of politico-military and social hegemony related personal names.

Table 6: Sixth Generation descendants

Sex	N/descendants	Place	Economic	Hegemony	Religious	“Miscellaneous”
Male	465	5	13	206	129	121
Female	418	5	39	87	116	162
Total	883	10	52	293	245	283
Percent	100	1.1	5.88	33.1	27.7	32

In Table 6, the sixth generation of the descendants were about 883. Place related personal names began to be rare and given to 10/883, only about 1% of them. Economic issue related personal names were also 52/883, or about 6%. The political power, military victory, and social hegemony-related personal names’ proportion was moving down and became 293/883 (33%), and the religious personal names became 245/88 (28%). The names under the fifth theme were 283/883, or about 32%, still close to the proportion of politico-military and social status related personal names.

Table 7: Seventh Generation Descendants

Sex	N/descendants	Place	Economic	Hegemony	Religious	“Miscellaneous”
Male	118	5	4	50	32	27
Female	126	3	15	27	35	46
Total	244	8	19	77	67	73
Percent	100	3.27	7.78	31.5	27.45	29.9

In Table 7, in the seventh generation of descendants, only 244 individuals were identified. There were only 8/244 (3%) descendants named after a place name. In fact, that place name was not necessarily Šāwan. 19/244 (8%) of the descendants were given economic issue related personal names, probably

because those members who were pushed out of the socio-political centre, a source of economic advantage, named their children after their own aspiration: economic. Now, the political power and social status related names were given to 77/244, or about 32% of the descendants, and the religious personal names were given to 67/244, or 27% of the descendants. The names related to the fifth theme above were given to 73/244, or about 30% of the descendants.

6.2. Discussion

To start with place related personal names, it seems that the political psychology of “Šāwanennes” was not solid in the early generations. This was probably because of the fact that the struggle for power was within Šāwa itself, mostly among districts within the chiefdom or kingdom. They had no significant political contact or confrontations with the regions outside Šāwa. So, Šāwa could not be taken as one solid political entity; Šahlä Šəllase himself was identified officially as Nəgus of Šāwa, Yifat, and [Oromo] or sealed on official letters as such²³.

The areas that were identified as part and parcel of Šāwa after a while were not considered Šāwa by then. Šāwa was an area inhabited by just a few Amharic-speaking districts in the Jäma and Kässäm river basins. Probably, for this reason, the name Šāwa could not be reflected in any of the personal names of Šahlä Šəllase’s children. However, during the time of his successors, Šāwa was facing strong external challenges from the areas north, south, and west of it. Particularly, the reign of Emperor Tewodros was an ideal example. It can be argued that the political psychology of “Šāwanennes” had been strong because of violent attacks against the “royal families” and the clergy. In fact, they were in the process of abandoning district identity, initially “Mänz/Mänze,” then “Yifat/Yifate,” and finally developing a new identity, Šāwa and Šäwe/Šäwaye²⁴. As a result, Šāwan associated personal names began to be seen among the second generation of descendants.

Coming to the third generation of descendants, approximately during the life times of Mənilək, Šāwa began to be the center of political power struggle and aspiration to expand Šāwan territory furthermore. So, Šāwa was no longer considered a large territory but rather a small and poor territory²⁵. Thus, the personal names *Šāwan-Lanči*, *Šāwa-Anäsäš*, and the like came in. In the

²³Hərüy Wäldä Šəllase 1999 EC 79; Sərgəw 2000, 120.

²⁴Sərgəw 2000, 70-120.

²⁵Mänəgsətu 1959 EC, 103-159.

fourth generation and onwards, place names, particularly those associated with Šāwa, were no longer seen frequently in the personal names of descendants. The majority of the descendants were not living in the old Šāwa; they were in Addis Ababa, which was on the southern margin of the Šāwan territory. The others were living in the southern, south-eastern, and south-western regions of the country. So, they could not strongly attach to or associate themselves with the old Šāwa, both physically and psychologically. The old Šāwa became the abode of poor peasants. Then, in very rare cases, these descendants named their children probably as *Yāsma-Šāwa*, *Šāwa-Mənalä*, *Mənyəl-Šāwa* and the like (Mahtämä Šəllase, 1965 EC).

Other place related personal names may be associated with Ethiopia or the provinces in which they were living, like the personal name *Yäkäfa-Wärq* seen in the list of descendants. It seems that it was during the reign of Haylä Šəllase I that these descendants began to take Ethiopia as their personal name (Mahtämä Šəllase, 1965 EC).

The Šāwan nobility, one after the other, since the early 18th century, were known for their persistent raids on the regions south of them. The main objective of those raids during the reign of Šahlä Šəllase and his predecessors was to obtain wealth. Probably that is why about 20% of the personal names of Šahlä Šəllase's children were associated with wealth, mainly gold. The chiefs had a strong thirst for wealth and aggressively expanded their Šāwan territory to neighbouring land. Besides, Šahlä Šəllase used his daughters as agents of political subjugation through marriage. Then, they brought extra political domain or territory but also economic advantage from different regions subjugated to him either by force or peacefully through political marriage or a combination of both. But during the formative years of his grandchildren, economic advantage was not as such their main concern; rather, it was the time of pressure from outside, particularly north of Šāwa, by Tewodros II and his successors. So, the main concern of the descendants was survival. They had no time or psychological make-up to think about wealth. Then, they did not have interest, and they may not remember to name their children after the economic interest.

Moreover, the third generation seems to have lived probably during the time of the Šāwan recovery from the destruction by Emperor Tewodros II and began to think about economic issues or wealth to a certain extent. And perhaps that was why the personal names related to wealth, which was zero in the second generation, ascended to 11%, and after that, moved constantly for the next three-four generations with the slightest decline.

Regarding the third theme, the socio-political psychology of the descendants of the Šāwan nobility that “we are different, powerful, victorious, and superior” was prevailing throughout all the generations, with minor differences in a descending order. It was at its peak during the time of Šahlä Šəllase and his children, although his sons were surrendered to Tewodros II. The years of “disorder” after the death of Šahlä Šəllase and his successor son eight years later were frequented by personal names associated with military mind set or behaviour. Terror-related personal names are said to be predominant among the descendants who were born during those years²⁶. That is why about 61% of the descendants had personal names close to such an issue. Still, during the same years, their aspiration to restore their politico-military and social status must be very strong. So, the personal names of their children and grandchildren were associated with this aspiration.

Besides this, the political power of Šāwa in particular and that of Ethiopia in general fell into the hands of these families after a while. Contrary to that, a significant proportion of their personal names were associated with this issue, which was in descending proportion. The decreasing proportion was probably because of the composition of families’ descendants and the fact that political power should be reserved for the few, and other members becoming very far from that centre even terminated their aspirations. So, they prefer to name their children after their own interests. Moreover, in certain cases, they feared naming their children after such an issue because they might face danger from the possible rivalry of the descendants. As it can be seen from the above data presentations, one important point to be underlined in the trends from the first generation to the seventh generation is that the socio-political (political power, military victory, and social hegemony) personal names were the majority among all the descendants. Of course, there is a near-absolute majority in the first consecutive generations, a simple majority in the middle, and below 50% after a while. In the last two-three generations, they became 30%. However, the trends from the first to the seventh generation in the proportion of those names were significantly in descending order, except for the transition from the first to the second generation. So, the trend was descending from 61% in the early generations to 30% in the seventh generation, which is inversely proportional to some other categories of names that were relatively in an ascending order.

²⁶ Fəsum 2009 EC.

In relation to the fourth theme, religion, initially, the family of Šahlä Šəllase considered themselves warriors or chiefs. They had no interest in naming their children after religious issues. There was thinking about personal names among the society that names influence the behaviour of the named one, saying that such families are after their name, their deeds must be equivalent to their names; “ስምን ሙሉእክ ያወጠዋል”, to mean “name could be given by an Angle!” So, the old versions of religious names were given to the clergy family, not the warrior family. As a result, Šahlä Šəllase did not give such old religious personal names to his children. Of course, *Haylä Mäläkot*, *Seyfä Mika'el*, and *Haylä Mika'el* were on the list of his children, but all of them were associated with power (*Haylä*) to mean Power of Heaven, Sword of *Mika'el*, and Power of *Mika'el*, respectively. Apparently, both powers and the sword were for worldly purposes: political and military power. But, beginning with the fourth generation of the descendants, at least more than 20% of the personal names in each generation were related to religious issues. However, these religious personal names were more of the new versions directly taken from the biblical stories as they are, without customizing them into the Ethiopian context.

Under the theme categorized as “miscellaneous” for this purpose, initially Šahlä Šəllase born children not only from his official wife but also from concubines who were living very far from the domain of his court in many aspects. Such women (concubines) had the possibility or opportunity of naming their children as their own aspiration, probably apart from that of the aspiration of the *Nəguś* or his court. So, 20% of the children from the *Nəguś* had such names. In the second generation, such names decreased, probably because of the strengthening of the “royalty” mind set among his descendants. In fact, some of his grand children were not lucky enough to bear children and continued their generations. But, after that, these types of names were becoming common, particularly among those who were pushed from the centre of that family or had children from a partner who came from a lower social status. Generally, the “miscellaneous” names were constantly repeated or in an ascending trend. A significant number of the descendants tended to use the names of ordinary Šāwans.

Conclusions

Personal names in Ethiopian history in general and Šāwan history in particular were social class related, circumstances at the moment of birth associated, period and place of birth connected, ethnic background-oriented, and religious

affiliation oriented. To a significant extent, one could correctly guess the background of an individual from the point of view of these relative determinants, being informed of his/her personal name in Šäwa during the period under discussion. Such personal names were in a state of continuous change because of the similar continuous changes in those relative determinants. The consecutive seven generations of descendants of *Nəguś Šahlä Šəllase* of Shewa were also passing through such dynamics for about one and a half centuries. Thus, their personal names were in such a continuous state of change from the first to the seventh generations, with minor continuities. The continuities can be observed in some of their sociocultural systems, like pretending to be members of the royal family, adhering to Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, and assuming themselves as Šäwans being born outside of historical Šäwan territory. In fact, a clear departure from royalty had been observed in the lives of the majority of them through generations.

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