

---

## Naming of Some Selected Macro Settlement Places in Gojjam

Walegn Melak<sup>1</sup>, Desalegn Hagos,<sup>2</sup> and Mulugeta Tarkegn<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract

This study aims to investigate the name systems, meanings, and language of place names to contribute to sociolinguistic knowledge for the people. The study employs a descriptive qualitative research design. In-depth interviews and consultation of documents were tools of data collection. The raw data of place names were taken from the Zone and *Woreda* Agriculture Offices. Informants which included experts in the Culture and Tourism Office, elderly people, and clergymen were selected purposively. The data analysis showed that some selected macro settlement place names are bestowed in single, paired, and /ʔnnə-/based personal name systems. These personal name-based place name systems are indexations of acclaimed individuals and founders of the areas to produce their territory in their names. On the other side, the name systems are signs of territorial administrative integration of acclaimed individuals, people's psychology, and human circumstances in life experience. Moreover, some macro settlement place names have water, gender, land features, time, and religion-based name systems. Semantically, these settlement place names have referential and connotative meanings. Against the language of the names, some were bestowed in Amharic and Geez, and others were named in Ge'ez-Amharic hybrid. Moreover, few of the names were in Afaan Oromo and Hebrew. Largely, place names were the manifestations of geospatial identity, human coincidence, religious affiliation, and natural characteristics of landscape in various socio-cultural dimensions.

**Keywords:** places names, macro place names, name systems, meaning

### 1. Introduction

Place naming describes certain properties of natural and cultural circumstances of geographical boundaries (Hall, 1995:181). It further includes all emotional connections between the physical environments and human beings (Tuan, 1974:2). Although this illustration enables people to capture a range of place names meaning in a holistic mood, naming remained a complex notion to address name systems and meanings attached to a community's language use. In the cultural aspect, place names are historical monuments that

---

<sup>1</sup> PhD Candidate of Linguistics at Addis Ababa University: [Walegn67@gmail.com](mailto:Walegn67@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> PhD, Assistant Professor of Linguistics, Addis Ababa University: [dezeseze16@gmail.com](mailto:dezeseze16@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup> PhD, Assistant Professor of Linguistics, Addis Ababa University: [mule-tseg@yahoo.com](mailto:mule-tseg@yahoo.com)

transmit multifaceted pictures of older generations' experiences and insights into the interplay between man and nature (Helleland, 2012:106). This implies that name systems and their meanings are tied together with conscious or unconscious socio-cultural contexts to reflect intrinsic interests or coincidences of human life in terms of how community members wish to protect their universe.

Gume (1998:266) and Feruza (2020:73) note that naming phenomenology interprets sociocultural and historical events since place names are a society's political, social and cultural repositories. However, the historical manifestations of place names have not been found ready-made, and more people do not conceptualize the multidimensional socio-historical nature of place names in the community's language use. For this circumstance, the researchers attempt to examine the name systems and meanings of some macro settlement places for present-day society to contribute sociolinguistic knowledge. Batoma (2006:1) explains that place names can reflect an individual's identity, topographical features, beliefs, human circumstances and other motivations to display communities' traditions. In Batoma's view, place names can offer a bundle of descriptions, and they are generated and transmitted by communities over time. On the other side, Raper (1987b:79) clarifies that place names have "denotative or referential and connotative meaning". Connotatively, names can express the attitude and emotion of people towards place names while denotatively they also express the meaning of words that everybody agrees about.

In general, studies on place name systems, meanings and the language of names advance the sociolinguistic knowledge of place names. First, the study contributes to know the linguistic evolution of place names, and the reason behind the given name to place whether the motive is cultural, historical, or geographical. Second, the study provides testimony to the political, economic, social, religious life of inhabitants and other tangible attributes of a society.

Because place names are assumed as representative of the oldest living part of human cultural heritage in the sense that they have been handed down orally from generations before many years at the place where names were coined. In such a condition, place names play an active role in preserving a region's culture through its name as it ties to the past. The reason is that place names are valuable geographic tools for processing the cultural implications and dissemination of information. However, in the area, there was no document on place names that described the people's history, political and social events, psychology, diversity, and what the area looked like. Because of this, the

present-day people are not aware of the benefits of place names and the right cultural sentiment of naming and are reckless about place renaming. In this reality, there is an encumbrance among people to communicate cognitively, emotionally, ideologically, and socially concerning place names. On the other hand, place names of the province have bestowed in different languages. This phenomenology of naming places in the province is the other problem to conceptualize the language of the names, whether it is from an older language or some other ethnic languages, and possibly hybrid forms from yet other languages.

These states of affairs trigger the researchers to investigate the sociocultural norms of place names in Gojjam to contribute sociolinguistic knowledge about larger settlement place names concerning the naming systems, meanings, and language of place names. In this contribution of knowledge, it is anticipated that people have the perception of the nature of place names name systems, meanings, and names' origin in different cultural dimensions. Beyond this, instead of being reckless, the study helps people to play the role of preserving names in order not to deteriorate the cultural history of the place and the people by renaming them consciously or unconsciously.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

Evans's (1973) Causal Theory of Names and Fillmore's (1982) Frame Semantics and Prototype Theory were employed as theoretical foundations for the study's effective completion. The Causal Theory of Names gives attention to the analysis of naming causality using the dominant causal name systems of places based on community members' information. Moreover, the theory reveals that a certain item X is considered as the intended reference of speakers' use of the name. Thus, the Causal Theory of Names is valuable for grouping place name systems against the dominant causal source of informants' information.

The theory of Frame Semantics offers a particular way of looking at place names meanings against a "particular body of knowledge" or experience (Frame 1982:111). It is advantageous to characterize the concept of new words and phrases of names to add new meanings to the total meaning of a text. Moreover, the theory advances the linguistic and encyclopedic knowledge of language expressions with different social affairs. Therefore, the theory is chosen to analyze place names meaning concerning the communities' language use. Local communities possess extra-linguistic components from folk theories of human experience in diverse subjects in the real world.

Prototype Theory (Theory of Categorization) is also employed to group name expressions into a certain category (Fillmore, 1982:117-8). Scholars state that categorization is the mental process of sorting or arranging things into groups by resemblance or membership among materials in the world (Ungerer and Schmid, 2001:1-3). In cognitive grammar, categorization appears to all strata of linguistic conception to display the phonological, morphological, and phrasal structures of a language (Langacker, 2008:17). In this fact; human beings have the capability to differentiate classes of lexical categories, phrases, and clauses as well as the grammatical relations of phrases or clauses. Therefore, Fillmore's Prototype Theory or Theory of Categorization was employed in this study to group structurally synonymous place names and to break down the syntactic categories of phrasal or clausal constituents of place names.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

A descriptive qualitative research design is applied to describe the name systems and meanings of some selected macro settlement place names. The reason for using this design was to produce non-statistical findings (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:11). On the other side, the design has the advantage of examining the overall sociocultural conditions (feelings, historical events, and interaction between man and nature) of place naming to incorporate multiple realities from lived human experiences. Moreover, the design also helps the researcher to consult documents to determine associations that have not been covered in in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

#### **3.2. Sampling Techniques**

In this qualitative research, informants are chosen through a non-probability sampling strategy to obtain the required data. Thus, the purposive criterion sampling technique is used to select informants (Culture and Tourism Office experts, elderly people, and clergymen) who fulfill a few specific predetermined significant criteria to obtain rich information. Culture and Tourism Office experts are expected sources of place name profiles in various cultural dimensions when senior citizens and clergymen are regarded as possessors of naming legends in their life experiences. In particular, clergymen can describe Ge'ez-based place names. In this predetermined criteria of informant selection, the researchers hope to have genuine information about the co-occurrence of the name system and meaning.

Raw data of some macro settlement place names were selected purposively. First, large settlement place names were free from risks to move freely and collect the required data during the war held between Tigray Regional State and the Central Government of Ethiopia as well as the peace-keeping Campion of the Central Government in Amhara Regional State. Second, large settlement place names (names of weredas, city administrations, and main towns) are compatible with solving problems related to human and material resources, transport accessibility, time and financial restrictions, and shortage of facilities for the researcher. The rationale for choosing settlement place names as raw data for the study was that cultural place names have a higher connection with the community than natural place names to contribute sociolinguistic knowledge for the people.

### **3.3. Data Collecting Tools, Procedures and Analysis**

To obtain authentic data on place names etymological name systems and meaning, in-depth interviews and document consultation were employed. The tool, in-depth interview, is sufficiently flexible to cover topics in the order most suited to interviewees and to allow responses to be fully probed and explored. In addition, the in-depth interview allows the researchers to be responsible for issues raised spontaneously by the interviewees. An in-depth interview permits the researchers to fully explore all the conditions that underpin informants' feelings, opinions, and beliefs (Jane and Lewis, 2003:114). On the other hand, Tichapondwa (2013:132) states that document consultation helps the researchers as complement of interviewees' responses to fill in gaps that may be left open during the interview. For these significant values of the tools, the researcher used them to arrive at a certain conclusion of the study.

In the data collection, contact with Culture and Tourism Office experts was the first procedure. Inquiring Tourism and Culture office experts and local people as informants was the second procedure. Then, after time adjustments with appointed informants, an in-depth interview was conducted in Amharic. Side by side, naming related documents (magazines, theses, books, etc.) found in the library and different districts' administrative offices were consulted.

To analyze the collected data, names were phonemically transcribed and arranged in their name systems. Instantly, the glosses of morphemes' and the meanings of the whole names were given. Later, the qualitative data of names' historical occurrence, meaning and the language of the names obtained from both interviews and documents were analyzed and interpreted in each category of naming convention.

#### 4. Analysis and Discussion

##### 4.1. Single Personal Name-based Place Names

Personal names are not only linguistic elements to identify human beings but also serve as names of places. Observe the examples in (1a-d) below:

- (1) a. *go[gu]zamin*  
       prosperous farmer  
       'prosperous farmer'  
       b. *mo[s']t'a*  
           restitution  
           'restitution'  
       c. *meɸʼɸ'a*  
           fighting machine  
           'fighting-machine'  
       d. *addet*  
           mother  
           'mother'

These entire place names are simple personal name-based place names. The name */go[gu]zamin/* 'prosperous farmer' in (1a) is not known by the informants when and how it was bestowed. In genealogical history, */go[gu]zamin/* was the descendent of Goze and the eldest son of Derebe (Tekle-Iyesus, 2011:42, 47). His name was connected to the term */guzam/* 'prosperous' since the motivation for naming was his parents' strong work in the farm area, but the morpheme */-n/* is an accusative case marker. Therefore, the name system of the place is personal name-based. Because */go[gu]zamin/* was cited as the descendant of Derebe, but the place he inhabited was called in his name as geospatial identity.

The nomenclature of */mo[s']t'a/* in (1b) has two perspectives. Some people connect it with the name of Princess Wolete-Israel and others associate it with the name of a monk, Mos'a. In the first case, Abebaw (2002:8-11) states that Yosedeq of Gojjam rebelled against the Gondarian rulers. Then, he further explains that Mintewab and her son (Iyasu II) had planned to calm dawn Yosedeq. Hence, they had given Wolete-Israel to Dejjazmach Yosedeq Wolde-Habib around 1752-1759. Because of Wolete-Israel's interest in building a tabernacle, Saint George's church was established at */mo[s']t'a/*. Nevertheless, she passed away promptly. Thus, the informants believed that local forefathers named the area */mos'a/* in Ge'ez to mean 'restitution' for the memorial Wolete-Israel.

Contrary to the first case, other informants believed that the place retains its name from the monk's name Mos'a. They argue that there is a place named, Abba Miniyos, found between Goncha Siso Ennese and Ennebse Sarmidir Wereda level administration in east Gojjam Zone. Some monks such as Abba Mos'a, Abba Marqos, Abba Neakutoleab, and Abba Miniyos lived together in the area. Neakutoleab was an Ethiopian governor (r.1205- 1245) and his seat was in the district of Bugna Lasta - Lalibela. On the other side, Mos'a came to the current place named Mot'a. as the first monk before Saint George Church was established. Later on, he was buried at this church. Besides, there is a high school in his name in the town perhaps for commemoration.

The Magazine found in East Gojjam Zone Culture and Tourism Office assured that there were monks in the aforementioned area (Culture and Tourism Office Directorate, 2015). Moreover, Muluken (2018:5) states that the monk or Abba Mos'a who lived in Mot'a before the establishment of St. George church. He was the first monk. Therefore; the researcher conceived that the frame of naming may be associated with the Monk's personal name Mos'a, and the chronology of time also indicates that the denomination of the town goes back to the late 12th century. Nevertheless, the Ge'ez name Mos'a shifts to the Amharic name Mot'a to commemorate him even if Wolete-Israel's contribution to build the church in 1755 could not be denied.

The bestowal of the name /*mefffa* / in (1c) is schismatic by the informants. In document consultation, the meaning of the name /*meff'a* / is traditionally recognized as the name of a cutting tool (Maradin, 2008:38). On the other hand, Bruce (1778) cited by Ayalew (2000:44) in his BA thesis states that the name /*meff'a*/ was derived from Oromo personal name. Similarly, Taye (1960:63) states that /*meff'a*/ lands in Gojjam over the doyen people of the area. Therefore, the name system is connected to the personal name that came to Gojjam in the first half of the sixteenth century. At that time, the central government was getting tired due to the chronic conflict between the Christian Kingdom and Muslim Sultanates.

Informants could not have clear information concerning the name /*?addet*/ in (1d), but documents have some views. The name /*?addet*/ 'mother' is believed to be derived from a woman's name /*?adde*/ in Tigrinya (Melaku, 2014:4). He wrote that a woman came to the place and lived 5kms away in the east direction of the town around Hanna Maryam church. She was the possessor of wide farmland named by her name. Nevertheless, the researchers noticed that /*?addo*/ 'mother' is the first name of the geographical place in Rayya Tigrinya language use. But, now the name /*?addo*/ has changed to /*?addet*/ by the suffixation of the Amharic morpheme /-et/. As a result, the place has product

names like /*niddet*/ 'anger', /*wut'-et*/ 'result' in the Amharic language. In this evidence, the name is retained from Rayya Tigrinya woman's name in her prominence as a strong member of the Ethiopia Orthodox Christianity in the reign of Yeshaq (1413-1430). Since, there was a southward expansion of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity and the incorporation of Gojjam into the Christian kingdom by establishing churches in the area (Abebew, 2002:3).

Beyond identifying a person, personal names are found as place names of some selected broad settlement place names to symbolize founders or prominent occupants. Semantically, most of these place names have referential meanings to refer to events. On the other hand, names, for instance, /*mos'a*/, and /*addet*/ express the intuition of communities' effusive speech and kindness of individuals respectively as connotative meanings.

#### 4. 2. Paired Personal Name-based Place Names

On the other side, macro settlement place names or administrative units in the study area are named with paired personal names. See the examples in (2a and b) below:

- (2) a. *baso libən*  
       wicker evict  
       'place of Evict and wicker'
- b. *dʒabi s'[t] əhn –an*  
       pray (in Hebrew) saddling something on the back of animal -PL  
       'Place of pray s'[t] əhn and other who saddle something on back of animal'
- c. *dəbaj t'ilatgin*  
       Vertisol but the enemy  
       'place of vertisol and but the enemy'

Place names in (2a and b) are paired personal name based. Based on Culture and Tourism Office, the names /*baso*/ and /*libən*/ in (2a) are personal names. The local geographical place has two sub-divisions. The western part of /*baso libən*/ 'place of evict and wicker' wereda around Yeda River is called /*baso*/ while the eastern part of the same river is named /*libən*/. Cork, which retains its name from a type of evergreen cork oak tree, was the town of /*libən*/. *jəḍgube*/ which is the current main town of the /*baso libən*/ district was the town of /*baso*/ in the 13th century of Yekunno Amlak. In document consultation, both /*baso*/ and /*libən*/ are individuals of Karrayu Oromo (Geda, 2013:8; Abraham, 2015:70). They migrated from west Shoa and Ginde beret towards Gojjam with ancient Damot Christian people when the Boren Mulata(1586-1594) invaded ancient Damot in the reign of Sertse Dingle (Habtam, 2020:290). Therefore, the name system first denotes a geospatial



identity marker to mean the place of */baso libən/* in Gojjam. Later on, the name is the symbol of the administration integration of individuals in the reign of Haile Selassie.

The name */dʒabi s'[t']əhnan/at* (2b) is also twosome personal name based. In document consultation, */s' [t']əhnan/* was the younger brother of Machakkel who was buried at the mountain in the west of Amanuel in East Gojjam (Ayalneh et al. 2004:4). On the other side, */dʒabi/* was the son of Garmit and the father of Wamet and other seven guys (Tekle-Iysus, 2011:168-70). However, in the current situation, the personal names */dʒabi/* and */s'[t']əhnan/* are known as place names. Furthermore, senior people confirm that */dʒabi/* and */s'əhn/* were deputy governors in their land disposition. Subsequently, the names display the socio-political conjugation of people in the administrative affair of Haile Selassie.

Based on the data acquired from the Culture and Tourism Office of the Wereda, the place name */dəbaj t'ilatgin/* was divided into four sections (Wudmit, Embrat, Nazareth and Tilatgin). Tilatgin */t'ilatgin/* was the chief of the area, and Debay */dəbaj /* was the son of Tilatgin. Then, in the Gult System of land ownership, Tilatgin gave his son a portion of land. Consequently, the area was called */dəbaj tilatgin/*. In document consultation, Tekle-Iyesus (2011:93 &125) enumerates that Tilatgin was the son of Derebe, and he begot Borebor and Debay during the time. Tekle-Iyesus further displays that the boundary of Debay was from Suha up to Muga river while Borebor's boundary was from Bogena up to Yeda river. In length, both of the empires started from the highland area up to Abbay Gorge. Finally, the geographical boundary of the area was integrated for administrative purposes named by the name supper chief and his descendant.

Largely, these place names do not have only referential meaning of individuals over doyen people, but also connotative meanings about individuals' geospatial identity and socio-political integrations.

#### 4.3. *ʔinnə*- Personal Name-Based Place Names

The prefix */ʔinnə-/* in Amharic is a plural marker. It appends with personal names or personal pronouns in Amharic. This function of the prefix also happens with only proper names of places. Observe some examples in (3a and b) below:

- |                                       |                         |                 |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| (3) a. <i>ʔinnə-</i>                  | <i>biʔse</i>            | <i>sarmidir</i> |
| ASSO. -PL                             | God's person (in Ge'ez) | Grassland       |
| 'Place of God's people and grassland' |                         |                 |

## Naming of Some Selected Macro Settlement Places in Gojjam

---

b. <i>hulət</i>	<i>idɔdɔ</i>	–u	<i>ʔinnə-</i>	<i>issej</i>
'two	hand	3MSG	ASSO. PL.	gift (in Gēez)
'Boundary of two hands of gift's grandchildren'				
c.. <i>ʔinnə-</i>	<i>maj</i>			
ASSO. -PL	water (in Gēez)			
'Place of water'				

---

The Amharic-Geez hybrid name */ʔinnə- biʔse sarmidir/* in (3a)/, */biʔse/* was a prominent settler in the highland district of the wereda. Formerly, the place was called */ʔillə- biʔse/* for a long period when Ge'ez was dominantly spoken by the community, especially during the Axumite period. Then, the name shifts to */ʔinnə- biʔse/* in the restoration of the Solomon dynasty. The Ge'ez associative plural */ʔillə-/* shifts to the Amharic equivalent */ʔinnə-/* with the same personal name */biʔse/* and his followers. */sarmidir/* on the other hand was taken as a topographic feature, being full of grass in the lowland area, by local clergymen. Nevertheless, except for the northern direction of the area, another lowland part of it is not named */sarmidir/* as I was an inhabitant of the area. The Chronicle revealed that */biʔse/* and */sarmidir/* begot from Meselo (Tekle-Iyesus, 2011:45). In this frame of reference, the researcher believed that */sarmidir/* is a personal name. Phonologically, the sound */ʔ/* of the personal name */biʔse/* was deleted and */ʔinnəbse sarmidir/* becomes the official name of the district today.

On the base of the Culture and Tourism Office, the place name which is called */hulət idɔdɔ innə- issej/* in (3b) was first occupied by Semitic people. The movement of the people was from the Northern part of Ethiopia towards Gojjam across the South Wollo and Abbay Rivers. In the area, Issey begot Wolde-Issey and Wolde-Issey also begot three children. These children lived longer together. Then, one of them separated the boundary from his brotherhood and joined it with Goncha's boundary, but the empires of the two children were communal. Consequently, the name */hulət idɔdɔ innə- issej/* 'two parts of Issey's grandchildren' were given concerning the extent of land allocation and possessorship.

Concerning the name */ʔinnə- maj/* and others in (3b), religious fathers and senior citizens state that Jebal, Jeramene and Endeshignit were the ancestors of */maj/* 'water' that originally lived around Abbay (Blue Nile) River adjacent to Lake Tana. To protect themselves from the insular climate around Lake Tana, may and his descendants migrated towards the present east Gojjam. Thus, the associative plural */ʔinnə- /* refers to the above individuals in the district of */ʔinnə- may/* woreda. Consulted documents state that Shume begot

Amishenkor and Enablit, Jebal, Jeramene and Endeshignit as descendants of /maj/ (Tekle-Iyesus, 2011:192).

Other documents state that Shemshel, who was the granddaughter of Israelian Belem and navigated her spiritual life in the monastery, begot Deshet or Desset to mean 'found from water' (Fikre, 2008:58-59). Fikre argued that Shemshel conceived Deshet when she was washing her body with water that consisted of spilled sperm cells at the head of Abbay River one thousand four hundred years ago. Therefore, the researcher believes that /ʔinnə- maj/ would be the descendent of Deshet originally since the informants' interview is connected with this causal association of naming the area. The personal names, Shume and Shemshel, mentioned by Tekle-Iyesus and Fikre, respectively are supposed to be allonyms (variant names stemming from the same etymology). On the other hand, these names told us that places retained their names in the period of the Axumite or Solomon dynasty from prominent or chief personal names. To be certain, Habtamu (2020:15) states that ancient Amhara and Tigraway people called their place names by using the associative plural marker /ʔinnə-/ or /ʔillə/ with personal names during the southward expansion of people in the state.

Beyond referential meanings, these names can convey people's identity, geographical boundary and the linguistic inheritance of settlements naming culture in the period of Axumite or Solomon dynasty connotatively.

#### 4.4. Religious-Based Place Names

Ge'ez, the language of religious texts, can have its attribution to name places in generic-specific forms. Observe the examples in (4a and b) below:

- 4a. *dəbr*                      -ə                      *mark'os*  
      Church                -POSS.            Mark  
      'Church of Mark'
- b. *gəbəz*                   -ə                      *marjam*  
      Servant -POSS        Virgin Mary  
      'Servant of Virgin Mary'

The name, /dəbrə mark'os/ in (4c) is the capital of Gojjam province during the imperial period and the time of the Derg. Now, it is the capital of East Gojjam Administrative Zone. Based on the information obtained from the Zonal Culture and Tourism office, the place was formerly known as Menqorer during the reign of TedlaGualua around 1853. The reason for naming the places was that the area became the fief of Menqorer. The reason for naming the places was that the area became the fief of Menqorer. Then, the new site

gradually grew physically, and in 1882 TekleHaimanot established Saint Mark Church. As a result, the town got the name /*dəbrə mark'os*/ 'church of mark'os. Similarly, Sayeh Kassew and Reinfried (2020:6) stated that the initial name of the place was Menqorer. But, Tekle-Haymanot renamed it to be /*dəbrə mark'os*/ due to the principal and historical Saint Mark church establishment. The word /*dəbr*/ means 'great church' in Geez but not 'mountain' in the names context as mentioned in the Amharic dictionary of Kesate Berhan, (2011:1098; Desta Tekle-wold, 1970: 333).

The name system of /*gəbəzə marjam/in* (4b) is also religious-based. Clergymen informants enunciated that there was an aristocratic woman called Tamro in Kwarit/*k'warit*/. Thereby Tamro had an ark in the hand of the priest, Nolze. Tamro told Nolze to establish Michael's church at the current place /*gəbəzə marjam*/) to serve the church as /*gəbəz*/ 'servant'. Moreover, she also told Nolze to establish Virgin Mary church in another area to expand Orthodox Christianity and the Guilt system of the church. Then, Nolze restates that he would be the /*gəbəz*/ 'servant' of Virgin Mary church here (current /*gəbəzə marjam*/ but not Michael's church somewhere else. Then, they consented to each other and built Virgin Mary church in the present main town of K<sup>w</sup>arit Woreda. Consequently, Nolze became the /*gəbəz*/ 'servant' of Virgin Mary church. Thus, the causal name systems of both place names were religious-based, and both names have referential meanings to refer to the establishment of religious institutions.

#### 4.5. Water-based Place Names

Natural aquatic place names can also serve as the name of place names. Some of them and the case of naming are given below as follows in example (5a and b):

- (5) a. *bahir dar*  
       sea side/shore  
       'sea side/shore'  
    b. *t'is ʔabbaj*  
       smoke Abbay (great river in Geez)  
       'Smoke of great river'

According to the Culture and Tourism Directorate of Bahr Dar city administration, the naming system of /*bahir dar*/ in (5a) is associated with the establishment of a village in the south direction of Lake Tana. The cause of forming their village in the south direction of Lake Tana was due to the establishment of /*kidanə mihirət*/ 'unity's oath of grace' church at the current place of Saint George church in the city around the edge of Lake Tana. Yaregal (2016:6) and the magazine of Culture and Tourism Directorate of

Bahr Dar city administration (n.1) state that the name of the place was bestowed during the reign of Amade Tsion when rural people started to settle at the former */kidanə miharət/* 'unity's oath of grace' church. Then, people use the term */bahirdar/* to tell where people settled. Consequently, the use of this expression grew and became the cause of the name system of the area */bahirdar/*.

The place name */t'is ʔabbaj/* 'smoke of Abbay' in (5b) associates with the fall of Bule Nile (Abbay River). It emanates from the nearby Lake Tana and cascades down around 42 meters high. In case of this, there were dazzling sprays of mist and rainbows especially in the rainy season. Hence, the local people call the surrounding area */t'is ʔabbaj/* rely on the smoke-like environment of the area.

Semantically, both place names have referential meanings. */bahir dar/* refers to the direction of settlements at Lake Tana while */t'is ʔabbaj/* describes the smokiness of the area due to the waterfall of Abbay and the cultural and natural circumstance of realities in the world respectively.

#### 4.6. Circumstantial-Based Place Names

Circumstances, the condition of how something happens, can be the cause of place naming. Speeches of individuals in the examples (6a and b) below are good manifestations.

- (6) a. *fīndi*  
       'Thousands in such a / like this'  
       b. *fīnot -ə səlām*  
           road COND. Peace  
           'Road of peace'

In the legend of the community, the name system of the place */fīndi/* in (6a) is highly associated with the speech of Fitawrari Bekele Kassa and Bekele Ambaye who were the spear leaders in the west direction at */birbun/* 'spring' in Awngi during the five years Italian invasion. The spear leaders made a military arrangement. Thus, they commanded the soldiers to be */fī[h]indi/* 'thousands in such a' and */fī[h]indi/* 'thousands in such a' to attack Italian invaders in two directions. In time evolution, the sound */f/* of the first part of the word */fī[h]/* blends with the second component, */indi/*. Eventually, the place name becomes */fīndi/*.

The name */fīnotə səlām/* 'road of peace' in (6b) was given off by Emperor Haile Selassie. When Ethiopian Patriots brought liberation in 1941, he came to Ethiopia from the European League of Nations in Sudan. In his way, the

Emperor swelled at */wəɖʒet/*, the earlier name of */finotə səlam/*. In this circumstance, the area was found safe. Consequently, Haile Selassie renamed the area to be */finotə səlam/* 'road of peace'. Based on the informant's view, the earlier name */wəɖʒet/* was derived through phonological processes. First, there were consonant sound deletions of the word */wəɖhiɖʒi/* 'go ahead' in the feminine gender feature. Then, the name became */wəɖʒi/*. Finally, the simple nominal */wəɖʒi/* became derivational nominal */wəɖʒ-ət/* by the suffixation of the Amharic derivational morpheme */-ət/*. Concerning the meanings of the name */jindi/* and */finotə səlam/*, both of them have referential meanings of human sayings to refer to human action and peace of the area, respectively.

#### 4.7. Gender-Based Place Name

In place naming, the notion of society's understanding of gender, the socially constructed feature of masculine and feminine, is reflected to express the connotation between the names and real entities. Observe the examples in (7a, b):

- (7) a. *mərʔawi*  
       'bridegroom'  
       b. *yət     nor           -a*  
           where   live CNV -3FSG  
           'where did she live?'  
       c. *.na     [ʔa]bra!*  
           come- IMP   switch on-IMP -2MSG  
           'come and switch on'

The name */mərʔawi/* 'bridegroom' in (7a) is derived from the Ge'ez word. The name system is connected with the natural endowment of the area. The two streams Rivers */bərəd/* (in the North East) and */burk'a/* (in the North West) give fascinating features to the place. On the other hand, the natural location of the place found between Lake Tana and the Blue Nile as well as the path of Gondar- Addis Ababa and Bahir Dar to Debre Markos gives the place remarkable features. So, these things have been taken as naming causal motivations.

The name */jət nora/* in (7b) is a village bygone. The naming system is connected to Kullo Genet. She was a notable inhabitant of the area. But, she fled away to the lowland area of Saint Tekle-Haymanot cave church during the war held between the Italian army and Belay Zellek's Javelin. After a long time, the place became safe and Kullo Genet came back to the highland edge of the bygone village. Local people, who survived the war and settled in the village asked her */jət noraʃ mət't'aʃ/* 'where did you live and come?' Then, she responded that she was at the Cave Church of Saint Tekle-Haymanot.

Consequently, the place is gradually given the name /*jət nora*/ 'where did she live?'

Based on the informants' view, the place name /*nabra*/ in (7c) is connected to the speech of Menz aristocrats, Bella, and his followers. They made /*k'wusk'wamit*/ and /*sinna*/ Churches throughout the day and night. Bella in his work frequently said /*na [ʔa]bra*/ 'you switch on the light' when he was making the church during the night time in the early reign of Haile Selassie. In this phenomenon, the name /*nabra*/ was given to the area.

Semantically, the place name /*mərʔaw*/ has a masculine gender since it expresses the quality of the place in comparison to the adorability of the bridegroom connotatively. The name /*jət nora*/ has feminine features and connotative meaning by the villagers' effusive feelings. On the other hand, the name /*nabra*/ has a masculine gender. The second person masculine singular pronoun you was the agent to switch on the light.

#### 4.8. Day's Name -based Place Names

Bestowing a name to a place is related to time. Particularly, a temporal name can be related to certain names of days. Observe the examples in (8a-c) below:

- (8) a. *arb*      *gəbəja*  
          Friday market  
          'place of market on Friday'
- b. *maksənn*    -it  
          Tuesday    -DIM  
          'Place of market on Tuesday'
- c. *hamus*      -it      *gəbəja*  
          Thursday -DIM.    Market  
          'place of diminutive market on Thursday'

All the places in (8a-c) get their names from the names of days open for public service on different days of the week. Semantically, all place names have referential meanings to refer to the time when marketing is getting on. Moreover, the morpheme /-it /in (8b and c) further denotes the smallness of the market center even if the morpheme stands for a feminine gender marker in Amharic.

#### Conclusion

Based on data analysis and discussion, some macro settlement place names in Gojjam have simple, paired, and /*ʔinna*/-based personal name systems. Single personal name-based place names are indexation of past governors and first

founders or prominent occupants of areas. Paired personal name-based place names are a sign of boundaries integrity in the socio-political system by preserving the spatial identity of people. Moreover, /*ṗinnə*-/based personal name place names are signs of sociolinguistic identities in the Axumite and Solomon dynasties. In history, it was obvious that the Amharic /*ṗinnə*-/ and the Ge'ez equivalent version /*ṗillə*-/ are used as initial linguistic expressions of place names in the Axumite and Solomon dynasties (Habtamu, 2020:15). Furthermore, personal name-based place names are symbols of population diversity to form mutual solid geographical place. On the other side, broader settlement place names have religious, circumstance, and water-based name systems to refer to communities' religion, incidence, topographic features, gender, and time issues.

In the dimension of meaning, place names have referential and connotative meanings. Referentially, place names can denote individuals, human coincidences and socio-political situations. Connotatively, names can express the psychology of individuals or societies as affective meaning. Concerning the language of names, most of them are given in Amharic and Gēez, but some of the other names are in Amharic-Ge'ez hybrid. Few names are from Afan Oromo and Hebrew. This implies there were diversified people in the province.

Largely, it is possible to conclude that broader settlement place names are also used to label human culture since the naming processes cannot be divorced from the socio-cultural context in which names are created. The meanings of these settlement place names in various contexts are the best representations of sociolinguistic history.

### Acknowledgements

My gratitude goes to the local administrators who helped me to meet with selected informants. I also thank consented informants for their contribution of giving valuable information for the successful accomplishment of this study.

### Abbreviations and Acronyms

ASSO. PL: Associative Plural	POSS: Possessive
COND: Condition	2MSG: Second person Masculine Singular
CNV: converb	3FSG: Third Person Feminine Singular
DIM: Diminutive	3MSG: Third Person Masculine Singular
IMP: Imperative	



## References

- Abebaw Ayalew. 2002. *A History of Painting in East Gojjam in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: A Study of the Second Gondarian Style of Painting*. MA Thesis. AAU.
- AbrehamAlemu. 2015. *Ethnicity and Local Identity in the Folklore of the South-Western Oromo of Ethiopia: A Comparative Study*. PhD Dissertation. VU. University of Amsterdam.
- Ayalew, Tamene. 2000. *The History of Mer'awi up to 1991*. BA Thesis. Bahir Dar University: BahirDar.
- Batoma, A. 2006. African Ethnonyms and Toponyms: An Annotated Bibliography. *Electronic Journal of Africana Bibliography*.
- Culture and Tourism Office of East Gojjam. 2015. Historic Tourism Relish. Debre Marqos.
- Desta Teklewold. 1970. *ገዳዲስ ገጽገጽ ገጽገጽ ገጽገጽ* [New Amharic Dictionary]. Artistic Printing Press.
- Evans, G. 1973. The causal Theory of Names. *Collected papers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Feruz, K., A. 2020. *Principles of Toponyms (Place Names) Classifications*. 7 (6). Termez State University: Uzbekistan
- Fikre Tolosa. 2016. *ገጽገጽ ገጽገጽ ገጽገጽ* [The Real Descendant of Amhara and Oromo People]. Vallejo, California.
- Fillmore, C. J. 1982. Frame Semantics. *Linguistics in the Morning Calm*. Selected Papers From SICOL-1981. Ed. The Linguistics Society of Korea.
- Geda Gemechu, 2013. *Pilgrimages and Syncretism: Religious Transformation among the Arsi Oromo of Ethiopia*. PhD Dissertation. University of Bayreuth, Germany.
- Guma, M. 1998. The Cultural Meaning of Names among the Basotho of southern Africa: A Historical and Linguistic Analysis. *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 10, 265- 279
- Habtam Mengiste. 2020. *ገጽገጽ-ገጽገጽ ገጽገጽ ገጽገጽ (1408-1895). [Berara-kedamit Addis Ababa (1408-1895)]. idigətwudimət ገጽገጽገጽ. [Growth, Perdition and Birth (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Addis Ababa. Ethiopia.*
- Hall, S. 1995. New Cultures for Old. In P. Jess and D. Massey (eds.). *A Place in the World? Place, Culture and Globalization*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Helleland, B. 2012. Place names and identities. In B. Helleland, C.E. Ore & S. Wikstrom (Eds.) *Names and identities, Oslo studies in language*, 4(2), 95–116.
- Jane, R., and Lewis, J. (eds.). 2003. *Qualitative Research Practice. A Guide for Social Sciences Students and Researchers*. London. Thousand Oaks.

- Kesate Berhan Tesema Habte Micheal. 2011. *jəʔamarɨŋna məzigəbə k'alat* [Amharic Dictionary] . 5<sup>th</sup> Printing. Addis Ababa University. Golden Printing Press.
- Langacker, R.W. 2008. *Cognitive Grammar.A Basic Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- MulukenYizengaw. 2018. *A History of Resistance against the Italian Occupation in Mot'aAwrajja*. MA. Thesis.Bahir Dar University.
- Raper, P.E. 1977. *Toponymical practice*. Onomastics Series No. 4. Pretoria: HSRC
- Raper, P.E. 1987b. *Dictionary of Southern Africa Place Names*.Johansburge. Lower Publisher.
- Raper, P.E. 1988.Portuguese Contribution to South Africa Toponym.*ScieentiaMilitaria, South Africa Journal of Military Studies*, 18 (3):24-28.
- Sayeh Kassaw and Reinfried, M.2020. Community Involvement and Compensation Money Utilization in Ethiopia: Case Studies from Bahr Dar and DebreMarkos Peri- Urban Areas. *Sustainability*. Institution of Land Administration: Debre Marqos University:Debre Marqos.
- Strauss, A. L. and Corbin, J. 1998. *Basic of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques* (2<sup>nd</sup>ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.
- Taye Gebre Mariam (2016). *jəʔitjop'p'jahizbtarik* [The History of Ethiopian People] 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Addis Ababa: Central Printing House.
- Tekle-Iyesus, Wakjira. 2011. *jəgojamtiwlibəmulu. kəʔabbajiskə ʔabbaj* [The Generation of Gojjam from Abbay dawn to Abbay]. Addis Ababa. Addis Ababa University Press
- Tichapondwa, S.M. (ed.). 2013. *Preparing Your Dissertation of a Distance: A Research Guide*. Virtual University for the Small State of Commonwealth and the South African Development Community Center for Distance Education:Virtual University for Small State of the Collon weath-Vancouver.
- Tuan,Y.F. 1974. *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental perceptions, Attitudes, and Values*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ungerer, E. and Schmid, H. 2001. An Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. London: Addison Wesley Longman Limited.
- Yaregal Geremew.2016. *jəbahirdarkətəmatarik* [The History of Bahir Dar],1936-1982. Bahir Dar:haləha Printing Press.