

# PERSONAL NAMING AND IDENTITY FORMATION IN GUJI OROMO CULTURE: ROLES, CLASSIFICATION AND DYNAMICS OF CHANGE

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## Abstract

*This article is about naming practices, roles, classifications and dynamics of change in Guji Oromo society. It specifically aims to investigate the socio-cultural roles of names. In personal names there are semantic patterns, cultural and ritual practices. Nonetheless, these dynamics is changing to some extent towards “modern” naming style by ignoring its cultural value. Qualitative research methodology followed in the study. Socio-cultural and linguistic data were collected using key informants. The collected names were analyzed thematically; they were classified based on its references, how it’s given and its semantic value/meaning. Trend analysis was used to show degree of maintenance or endangerment of personal name giving practices. The results of the study show that names, which are often given express the context or the situation or condition during birth. Guji Oromo personal names have meaning. The meanings could be descriptive, associative or referential meaning. The naming in Guji Oromo is slightly changing from cultural or ethnic personal names into religious names, ‘modern’ names and Amharic names. The causes for such changes found to be disparagement, religion, and ‘modernity’ and Amharic hegemony. It was further found that giving cultural personal names to newborn babies were revitalized in the recent years.*

**Key words:** naming, Guji, Oromo, identity, culture

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 The People and the Language

Ethiopia consists of a number of nations and nationalities or ethnic backgrounds and ways of life. The Oromo people are the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia. The Guji people is among the Oromo ethnic and lives in the Southern parts Ethiopia, Oromia Regional state, in Guji, West Guji and Borena zones. The language of Guji is called **Afan Oromo** with some peculiar dialects and it is mutually intelligible with all other Oromo dialects. Afan Oromo has many dialectal varieties that are spoken in different parts of Oromia. Geographically, Oromia region covers vast areas of land in the country. Due to this, Oromo people speak different dialects, which are mutually intelligible. Oromo dialects grouped into *Macha, Tulama, Itu and karrayyu, Guji and Borana etc.* Oromia have vast area of land and people live far from one another, due to this, they practice slightly different dialects and various cultural practices (Gumi, 2012).

The Guji people are the one who have sustained the original Oromo traditions in their ways of life as well as their dialectal variety. Guji Oromo seem to be distinct from other Oromo with the exception of Borana. “Guji

share ways of life and speak a relatively similar dialect with Borana Oromo” (Van de Loo 1991: 9). Culture and language/dialect are the mirror image for naming that is manifestation of one’s identity, *Guji Oromo have its own practices of personal naming*. Names have been studied in different fields of studies. Historians study toponyms, animal names, and throne names to construct historical past; philologist study names to establish the etymologies of words, and anthropologists and sociolinguists study names to uncover human relations, such as their genealogies (Mehari, 2007). Concerning this, the current study falls under the ethnography of communication, how names communicate circumstances, aspirations, wisdom, power relationships, identity, which is reflected at different periods and social systems of the Guji Oromo. To my knowledge, ethnic personal naming pattern in Guji was not studied so far. The naming practice has been endangered largely. This study finding would help to create awareness thereby to preserve the culture of giving personal names.

**1.2 Objective:** The main objective of the study is to find out the extent that cultural personal naming in Guji are preserved or endangered.

**1.2.1 The specific objectives are:**

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

### 1.3 Methods

Interview and observation were used to collect sociolinguistic data. Twenty (20) informants who are living in the zone were interviewed and 20 households were observed. The sociolinguistic data were audio recorded and transcribed. As the data collected was textual, qualitative method was used to analyze it. Socio-linguistic data were thematically grouped based on manner, similarity and meaning associations. The data regarding change of personal names over time were analyzed using trend analysis (cf. Kumar 2002). 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 to 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 through: **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, identify 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. People from certain localities have identifiable physical make up due to genetic and environmental factors. Psychologically, he/she may identify himself/her selves as Guji and others can identify him by associating his/her name with Guji cultural personal name. As geography is the area where cultural groups live in, there is no question that some names are identified as Guji.

Socio-Linguistically, it is easy for one to identify himself with his language or is identified by other linguistic features, such as accent and/or using a single phoneme: Like

Guji dialect	Mecha dialect “standard”	Gloss
arrasse	arrabse	‘he insults’
kolle	kofle/kolfe	‘laughed’
darre	darbe	‘passed’
midda	mirga	‘right hand’

It is possible to contextualize one’s identity; change one’s social identity based on his/her tribe, religion, etc. when he/she finds it pertinent. Though people may identify themselves by different means, many scholars agree that the strongest of the identifying factors is a language. Wardhaugh (2006:6) confirms “...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 does not belong to another 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 does not exist outside its speakers. Speakers of a language or dialect identify themselves and identified by others with their language or dialect. There is argument, however, that there is no strict relationship between language and identity. Language can be acquired by anyone irrespective of blood ties (Fekede Menuta, 2014).

#### 1.4 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 or dialect. Such people may deny their identity; abandon using their language or dialect, and shift into another prestigious language or dialect 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 “X” is less complete than language “Y” may cause someone to deny his/her 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 or dialect speaking group.

## 1.5 Role of Guji Names

Guji names, such as *Galchu*, designate an individual as distinguish from other individuals, like Devinder, John, Fekadu, Yadesa and etc. In Guji Oromo names are more than references. “Many Ethiopian ethnic wishes, success, failure, sorrow, happiness, sickness, health, peace, war, death, birth and many more. They express circumstances, aspirations, fortune and relationships of the society” (cf. Baye, 2006; Zelealem, 2003). In Guji Oromo names, individual, group and ethnic identities are reflected. Guji Oromo names also reveal some cultural rites, which they use to express in their names as language use.

## 1.6 Classification

Personal names in Guji can be grouped according to their naming system i.e. names are given based on: weather condition/season, places of birth, manner of birth, birth order in the family, ritual and indigenous tree names, ancestral names, traditional calendar and time reckoning and proper or common names.

**1.6.1 Names given based on the weather condition during birth:** These are given by the community for individuals depending on the condition during birth. Naming during birth differs for men and women.

Gannaale (M), Robe (M), Roodduu (F), Bokeyo (F) etc. to signify that they are born during raining season or while raining.

**1.6.2 Intimacy and Respect Names:** Names in Guji Oromo can show degree of intimacy and respect. Young boys, who are age mates and close friends use *Jaalawu* to call one another. Both the addresser and the addressee use it. Similarly, intimate young girls call one another, *Jaalto*. A boy and a girl call one another **Haatoo** and **Ilmoo** respectively to show intimacy or respect. In addition to that the wife of your intimate/close friend, when you are a companion during marriage, call one another Haatoo and Ilmoo. However, haatoo and ilmoo are always used on agreement between the two individuals not to call one another by names. Sometimes there is punishment for the one who call the other by name. A few title names express both intimacy and respect. For instance, *aba*, *ayo*, *ako*, *akaku*, *abuya* and *etc.* meaning “Dad”, “mom”, “grand papa”, “grand mama,” “uncle” respectively are used to reveal intimacy, endearment and respect. Children in addressing their parents and grandparents use these names. Younger brothers and sisters in addressing their elder brothers use

title, **Ada**. They are more of respect markers. Elder sisters receive a respect name *obbolo/baabba*, which is not common. Guji Oromo community led and abided by Gada system and elders have different positions and roles in the community. Based on this, they are given different title names like *Abba Gada* (Gada leader), *Abba Bokku* (father of Bokku), *Hayyu, Yuba, Abba Dula* (Warriors leader), *Abba Murti* (Judge) etc.

### 1.6.3 Proper Names: male and female names

#### 1. Women Names

Most women names have feminine marker  $\{- (v)tu, oo, ee \text{ etc.}\}$ . All big inanimate nouns and animals are considered masculine grammatically, though gender distinction may be made lexically.

#### 2. Male names

Most male names have masculine gender marker like (-a, -u, -o etc) short vowels. Most of male names end in short vowel, where as female names mostly end in long vowels like, (-uu, -oo, -ee etc) showing feminine in Guji Oromo personal names. For instances, **Waare**- male name where as **Waaree** – is female names. However, there is an opposite case, where **Daadhii** (M) and **Daadhi** (F)

### 1.6.4 Places and conditions during birth

Guji Oromo give names based on the places and conditions of birth. It is to convey the circumstances and places where the baby was born. For example:

**Karaa** (M) literally mean ‘road’

**Godaanaa** (M) literally mean ‘on the move for resettlement’

**Godaanna** (F) literally mean ‘on the move for resettlement’

**Diida** (M) literally ‘outside’ **Diidu** (F) literally ‘outside’

Nb. It does not mean that this is always fact but when Guji Oromo man or woman have these names possibly one can speculate this or another possible reason are behind those names.

Table 1. Guji Oromo names based on places and conditions of birth

Male names	Female names	Gloss	meaning
<b>Diida</b>	Diidu	‘outside’	Born outside home
<b>Godaanaa</b>	Godaanna	‘relocation’	Born on movement
<b>Uraagaa</b>	-	Place name	Born at Uraga
<b>Daawwaa</b>	-	Place + river name	Born at Dawa

Galaano	Galaane (not common)	'The river'	Born around the river
Dhadacha	-	Place +tree name	Born at or under dhadacha tree
Karaa	-	'the road'	Born on the movement

The table 1 above illuminates personal names in Guji culture given based on places and conditions of birth event. It does not mean that this is always fact but when Guji Oromo man or woman have these names possibly one can mean this or another possible reason are behind those names.

### 1.6.7 Manner of birth

Guji Oromo personal names are not the manifestations of wish or aspiration that the family need the new born baby to be in the future rather, they reveal the circumstances surrounding the birth of a child, which could be long or short, painful or painless, predate or postdate, clinical or natural. They refer to **event-oriented** expressions, since the concern is the manner or circumstances surrounding the birth event. But now the naming culture is changing and the value and attitudes attached to personal names are mostly towards the expressions of power, hope, aspiration/wish and compensation which express the wish the child will figuratively become in the future. Names indicated in this table show how Guji Oromo personal name giving is based on the circumstances during birth be it with good or bad faith.

Table 2. Guji Oromo personal names given based on manner of birth

Male names	Female names	Gloss	meaning
Gannale	-	'the winter'	Born during winter/prosperous
Jilo	Jile	the 'ceremony'	Born on ritual day + good fortune
Badhessa	Badhesso	'the April'	Born during April + prosperity
Roba	Rodu	'The rainy'	Prosperity
Yatani	Yatane	'resettlement'	Born on resettlement + needy
-	Hageya	'the October'	Born in October + prosperity
Jio	-	'the moon'	Bright future
Yaatani	Yaatane	'Arduous'	Born when family is busy after resettlement + needy time
Gumii	Haadha biyyaa	'people/ mother of people'	Born while many people are there + leader + own many children

Names indicated in this table show how Guji Oromo personal name giving is based on the circumstances during birth be it good or bad or fortune or unfortunate.

### 1.6.8 Tree names

In Guji cultural names, some personal names are named after well-known indigenous trees and/or trees with cultural or ritual values like Wodeessa, Oda or Kilta.

Table 3. Guji names based on Indigenous trees

Male names	Female names	Gloss	Meaning
Birbirsa	-	Strong +height	Family's Protection
Ejersa	-	Indigenous tree	Strong and ritual tree
Kilta	-	Indigenous tree	Economic meaning
Oda	-	Indigenous tree	Ritual tree
Bika	-	Indigenous tree	Ritual tree
Hallo	-	Indigenous tree	Seniority?
Wodessa	-	Ritual tree	Ritual tree/
Uraga	-	Indigenous tree	Ritual tree + Seniority
Miesa	-	Evergreen	Ritual tree/Evergreen
Dambi	-	Strong+ rituality	Ritual tree

Most tree names in Guji are given for males. This is because of the reason behind meanings given for them. As can be understood from the above tree names, all of them signify rituality and/or strength. Guji Oromo selects strong, long, economic and evergreen trees for their ritual activities to wish good faith for their ritual. Hence, they give names of these trees for their newborn baby to signify the same.

### 1.6.9 Ancestral/family names

Names in Guji Oromo are sometimes given after his/her family names usually grandfather or grandmother and beyond to prolong their names in family line.

Example: Gedo Teshome Boru Gedo

Ejersa Adola Edema Ejersa

In the above names, Gedo and Ejersa appeared twice for prolonging the names of grandfather in the family line.

### 1.6.10 Age related name category

Sometimes Guji Oromo Cultural personal names are related with the age of his/her mothers or father.

Table 4. Guji names based on the age of the family

Male names	Female names	Gloss	meaning
Jaarso	Jaarte	'the old'	Born after his/her father became old
Dullacha	Jaarte	'the old'	Born after his father became old
Galgalo	Galgalu	'the evening'	Born after his/her father became old or born in the evening
Turee	Turtuu	'the late'	Born long years after the marriage of his/her father and mother

### 1.6.11 Names based on Prosperity of the family during birth

Guji Oromo give names for newborn baby based on the wealth of the family during birth.

Dureetti Dureessa, Miju, Badhaatu, Badhaanee, Badhaaso etc.

Table 5. Guji names based on the wealth of the family during birth

Male names	Female names	Gloss	Meaning
Badhaaso	Dureettii	'Wealth/leader'	To reveal family's wealth during birth
Soreessa	Soorettii	'Wealth/leader'	To tell family's wealth during birth + elder
Badhaadhaa	Badhaatu	'prosperity'	To tell family's wealth during birth
Badhaanee	Badhaatu	'prosperity'	To tell family's wealth during birth
Mijuu	Mijuu/Mijattee	'full'	To tell family's wealth during birth

The above stated names indicate the family's status or wealth when the child is born. Therefore, all of them indicate the circumstances during birth not wish or aspiration.

### 1.6.12 Names related to time/season of birth

Guji give names for their children based on the time or season of birth.

Bakalcha, Hageya, Baatii, Gobana, Ji'o, Badhessa, etc.

Table 6. Guji names based on time and season of birth

Male names	Female names	Gloss	Meaning
Barrako/Bariiso	Ganamee/Bariitee	'morning'	Born in the morning
-	Hageyya	'October'	Born in the October
Goobana	-	'full moon'	Born in the full moon

Jio	-	'moon'	Born in bright moon
Baatii	Baatii	'the 2 <sup>nd</sup> day of moon'	Born at the 2 <sup>nd</sup> day of moon
Badheessa	Badheesso	'April'	Born in April
Saafayii	Saafoyii	'Afternoon' Usually after 3:00 Pm	Born afternoon
Halkano	-	'night'	Born in the night

When Guji Oromo give names for their newborn child based on the time and season, they relate to the fortunate or misfortune, good or bad faith based on the specific time or season. In this situation, they believe that the bad or good faith will affect the life of the child in the future negatively or positively.

### 1.6.13 Names Related with famous animals

Guji give names to their children after famous animals like: Neenko (like Lion), Arba (Elephant), Jaldeessa (Mokey), Tarri, Simbirre (bird) etc.

Table 7. Guji names after famous animals

Male names	Female names	Gloss	Meaning
Neenqo	-	'The lion'	born during Ayyaana Neanqa (Brevity)
Arba	-	'The Elephant'	Ayyana Arba (faith of the elephant) + size
Jaldeessa	-	'The Monkey'	To refer baby boy
-	Tarrii	'thin, small and fast'	To refer to small size and fast during birth
-	Simbirre	'birds'	Beautiful + small size

Names in table 7 above are named after famous animals. For instance, Neenqo which means the lion is to signify bravery and simbirre which means bird is to denote the beauty.

Table 8. Guji Oromo unique traditional indigenous calendar

No.	Names	Gloss	References	Meanings
1	adulaa k'araa	'first adula'	ayyaana jilaa	ceremonial/ritual day+ lucky/fortunate day
2	adulaa eegee	'second adula'	ayyaana jilaa	ceremonial/ritual day
3	harrattuu	'inheritance'	ayyaana miiloo	inheritance day
4	deettii	'hunting'	ayyaana adamoo	hunting day
5	dullattii	'old'(f)	ayyaana jaarsaa jaartii	old men's and women's day
6	bita k'araa	'first bita'	ayyaana bita gatatanu	the day of averting bad faith'
7	bita eegee	'the second bita'	ayyaana bita gatatanu	the day of averting bad faith/fortune
8	sorsa	'battle day'	ayyaana injifanna	battle/ victorious day
9	algaagima	'pilgrimage'	ayyaana jilaa	pilgrimage day
10	arba	'elephant'	ayyaana ideema'aa	the movement day
11	bolla	'spiritual leader'	ayyaana k'aalluu	the day of men whom god's holy spirit is

12	busaa k'araa	'first wild animals day'	ayyaana imimmaanii	the day of funeral
13	busaa eegee	'second wild animals day'	ayyaana imimmaaniifi roobaa	the day of funeral and rain
14	c'arraa	'children's day'	ayyaana c'arraak'aa/ijoollee	the children's day
15	dureettii	'rich' (f)	ayyaana dureessaa	the day of the riches
16	dullattii	'old' (f)	ayyaana jaarsaa	the day of the old men
17	bidirsa	'bees' day'	ayyaana kinniisaa	act of attack and powerfulness to defend
18	shalbaanadeettii	'un fortune'	ayyaana dubbii	unfortunate/unlucky day
19	karaabiča	'grandfather'	ayyaana akaakuu	respected people's day
20	gardaaduma	'blessing'	ayyaana eebbaa	blessing day
21	bisaa k'araa	'first bisaa'	ayyaana duulaa fi adamoo	The day of hunting and gathering
22	bisaa jidduu	'the middle bisaa'	ayyaana neenk'a	The day of the lions/brave
23	bisaa eegee	'the last bisaa'	ayyaana k'eeransaa	The day of the tigers/victorious
24	gidaada	'inheritance'	ayyaana miiloo	inheritance day
25	ruuda	'cattles'	ayyaana loonii	cattle's day + prosperity
26	areerii garbittii	'first/servant areerii'	ayyaana jilaa	ceremonial/ritual day/fortunate
27	areerii bald'oo	'the wide and second areerii'	ayyaana jilaa	ceremonial/ritual day + fortunate

In Guji Oromo culture, the day, the week, the month, the season and the year are units for measuring time.

“There are also some sub-units like the names for different intervals in daytime. The day is divided based on some activities pertaining to cattle rearing and bee-keeping” (Elfneh 1991: 61-62).

In Guji society, each day of the month has specific significances. Different days have good or bad *kaayoo* 'fortune'. Therefore, serious attention is paid to dates to give names, to practice ritual activities or to hold ceremonies. Birth or death on a given day is prognosticative of either the peace or trouble to happen to a person, family or the society. Guji have their unique and indigenous calendar and time reckoning in which every day has its own indication/good or bad faith. Their unique calendar is also a source of proper and accurate social activities, rituals, personal name giving, cultivation and grazing. “According to Guji elders traditional Guji calendar is based on the universe, i.e. the movement of the earth, sun, stars and moon” (Tariku Demisie 2011:50).

In Guji community, woman give birth up to 12 children, usually they celebrate the birth of ninth child, and name him/her *Sallii* literally means 'ninth'. They celebrate this birth ceremony by slaughtering old cow, because the meaning of number nine (9) in Guji Oromo culture have bad connotation. They believe that number nine is '*laakkossa ekeraa*' literally means 'number of death'. They celebrate to avert this faith.

### 1.7 Dynamics of changes in Guji Oromo personal naming

Naming as social phenomena is dynamic and changes through time. This change does not seem random but patterned. Guji human names have slightly changing into Amharic at some stages, 'modern names' and religious names in the last two decades.

### 1.7.1 Trend Analysis

The following names are from different families in three generations (G-1...G-3). They were randomly selected from a Bokko village of Dudda Dawwa district and Bule Hora town. Religious names are not considered ethnic names.

Table 9. Naming trends in Guji Oromo

Category one below 15				Category two 15- 30				Category three above 50			
Name	sex	age	Meaning	Name	sex	age	meaning	Name	sex	age	meaning
Dinaol	M	10	Above the enemy	Tirunesh	F	28	Amharic	Jarso	M	70	Old one
Feneti	F	12	Our wish	Adola	M	26	Place name	Boru	M	79	First/ early morning
Guyatu	F	8	During the day time	Mandho	M	29	The younger	Raso	M	56	Stone
Nagelle	F	6	Peace	Galchu	M	25	Evening	G/kirstos	M	74	Amharic names
Franboni	M	15	Boost by relatives	Godana	M	27	Migration	Balli	M	52	Power/authority
Heneti	F	10	Planned	Boru	M	28	The first	Dadacha	M	55	Tree name
Michu	F	5	The Prosperous	Yohanis	M	18	Christian name	Utura	M	80	Late
Diramu	F	9	The morning	Dawit	M	20	Christian name	Gannale	M	90	Summary
Amanuel	M	7	Christian name	Aga	M	22	Fortune	Jirmo	M	70	Short one
Dadacha	M	5	Tree name	Mohammed	M	30	Muslim name	Wodesa	M	52	Tree name
Dawit	M	3	Christian name	Ebisa	M	25	Bless	Dukalle	M	65	Old one
Abraham	M	4	Christian name	Gada	M	29	Gada system	Wachu	M	68	Tree name
Obsinetti	F	2	By patience	Ejersa	M	26	Tree name	Roba	M	55	Rainy
Naoli	M	6	Above me	Ayantuu	F	22	fate	kutu	F	50	Prosperous
Hana	F	13	Christian name	Tadelech	F	30	Amharic	Haro	M	70	Lake
Turunesh	F	7	Amharic name	Guyatu	F	23	The day	Gobana	M	80	Full moon
Mathios	M	10	Christian name	Bokeyo	F	21	The rainy	Buno	M	76	

Argane	F	11	We got it	Galgalu	F	30	The evening	Elema	M	57	Milking time
Duba	M	5	Behind /absence	Dida	M	21	Outside	Miju	F	67	Full/prosperous
Badhadha	M	8	Prosperous	Roba	M	19	The rainy	Galgalu	F	55	Night
Tigist	F	9	Amharic name	Metete	F	29	talkative	Galano	F	54	The river
Addis	F	14	Amharic name	Gamade	M	30	Happy	Duko	F	78	-
Tadelech	F	15	Amharic name	Halkano	M	28	The night	Simbire	F	58	The bird
Galata	M	15	Thanking	Ganale	M	18	Summer	Shubo	F	51	Long hair
Dullacha	M	14	Old	Badhatu	F	17	Prosperous	Halaka	F	56	elegant
Gumi	M	12	Many people	Jaldesa	M	27	The donkey	Jarte	F	75	Old one
Alemitu	F	15	Amharic name	Abraham	M	20	Christian name	Rodu	F	64	The rainy
Nanati	F	8	Mercy on me	Getache w	M	24	Amharic	Bule	M	56	Place name
Ejersa	M	10	Tree name	Tigist	F	24	Amharic	Birbirs	M	79	Tree name
Rodu	F	15	The rainy	Hana	F	18	Christian name	Jilo	M	87	ceremony

Names listed under the generation-1 are children names under the age of 15. Naming in this generation is slightly changing mostly towards 'modern naming' style.

Names like *Dinaol*, *Feneti*, *Franboni*, *Heneti*, *Obsineti*, *Naol*, *Argane*, *Galata* and *Nanati*, are not originally and ethnically Guji, because none of these names appear in naming category three of the old generation. Hence, we can conclude that indigenous naming in Guji Oromo with its own way of naming based on the circumstances of birth event is slightly diminishing with all its values and identities. None of these names expresses indigenous Guji cultural values and way of life rather they are the expressions of wish and aspirations that we want our newborn child to become in the future. These names constitute 8% of the total sample names. Names like: Amanuel, Dawit, Abriham, Hana, Mathios are religious names, which are not originally, and ethnically Guji. These names have no any Guji cultural value expressions. They are thoroughly alien. Let alone knowing their meanings, Guji people cannot accurately utter them. These names express how religion is influencing Guji indigenous names and culture that reveal people's way of life and naming identity. They constitute 5% of the total sample names. There are no such names in the old generation. They are mostly given from Holy Bible. Even some individuals have changed their names to religious names from indigenous Guji names after taking Christianity. Other names are Amharic names, due to Amharic hegemony and the attitudes of some people towards Amharic as if Amharic names are modern and city names, they give Amharic names for their children. Some individuals simply give Amharic names without knowing its meaning as i have informed from my informants. From the table of naming trends in Guji, the above names like Tirunesh, Tigist,

Addis, Gidiyelesh, Alemitu are Amharic names. They express no values in Guji culture. As Amharic was dominating other languages in Ethiopia in the past regime of Menilik, Haile Selassie and the Derg, that influence is still in the mind of some people and it is tightfitting in the names of their children.

Category 2 is names of youths below 30. If not like category one, there are alien naming influences in this category two. In category three, sample names were collected from the people above the age of 50. In this naming category, there is only one Amharic name. As far as my informant is concerned, it was given when he was registering for school during the reign of Hailesilassie. During that time, Amharic was officially dominating all other Ethiopian languages. Schools, churches and government offices were not allowed to speak in any Ethiopian languages except Amharic. Other Ethiopian languages were suppressed. If you do not change your names for school purpose, you are not allowed to attend school. Therefore, very few people who attended school during that time have changed their names to given Amharic names. Rather than that, almost all names collected from those people above the age of 50 have indigenous Guji names. Though the samples taken are small, they clearly depict the trend that the naming practice is changing dominantly into “modern” naming style, religious and Amharic names. 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 category one and two generations are example of naming endangerment in which the names shifts from typical Guji names to “modern” naming style and Amharic or biblical names.

## 1.8 Causes for Naming Endangerment

**1. Denigration:** This negative stereotyping 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. These days, no Guji parent gives his child names like *Jaldessa* ‘monkey’. Parents do not want to give their child a name that may cause him/her feel stigmatized.

**2. Religion:** Many Guji names are endangered because of religion. Some Guji kids tend to take their Christian name when baptized. Christian names in Guji come from churches because they believe it is the sacred name. The same is true that children from Muslim religion are given Arabic than Guji indigenous names. Names like *Ramadan*, *Hussien*, *Məhəmməd*, *džəmal* and *Fuad*’ are not Guji names

**3. Amharic Hegemony:** The prestige Amharic had in the past because of being an official language, used in education, court and everyday communication had caused the Guji naming practice to shift into Amharic naming patterns.

**4. 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 observed that personal names began to change back to Guji indigenous names in the present time. People are changing their alien names to the indigenous ethnic names in recent time. 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.

**5. 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 one ethnic group may, however, be expressed by other means other than language.

## 1.9 Conclusions and Recommendations

Oromo personal names are an indispensable part of the language. In order to understand their meaning, the cultural background should be taken into consideration. The Oromo personal naming process cannot be divorced from the context in which these names are created: their meanings depend on the context and culture. Though personal names are used universally to label and identify people, the component of meaning cannot be ignored, particularly when one is studying Oromo personal names. This part demonstrated how the meanings in the morphological composition of Oromo personal names could convey messages from and experiences of the name-giver and the society. A few Oromo personal names are neutral and can be bestowed on both males and females. People use language to express themselves, and this is done through the use of words. This means that if there are no words, there can be no sentences and no meaning. Personal names are formed from words; therefore, personal names, like the language, are the carriers of meaning, particularly among the Guji Oromo society. Identifying the motivational force behind personal names deepens on one's understanding of the socio-cultural characteristics of Oromo community. We have argued that sociological and political factors including: *denigration, religion, hegemony, and language attitude* have negatively affected the cultural naming practice in particular and the development of Guji Oromo dialect 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 implies the endangerment of ethnic identity and reflects lack of loyalty by its speaker to the language.

The researcher recommend that parents from Guji Oromo should consider their identity while giving names for their newborn children.

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

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