

## TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT BY INFORMAL WORKERS: ANALYZING THE ROLE OF *TERA ASKEBARIS* IN MEGENAGNA TERMINAL, ADDIS ABABA

Eunji CHOI

*Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies, Kyoto University*

**ABSTRACT** *Tera Askebaris* are minibus and passenger queue keeper in various terminals in Addis Ababa. In current moment, most of *tera askebaris* are using their own methods in controlling the minibuses, which are the major transportation to citizens. However, even though their role is significant, few attentions have been given. In this paper, the role of *tera askebaris* is examined through analyzing series of management activities, specifically in the case of group  $\alpha$  in southeastern part of Megenagna terminal. I adopted qualitative methods, largely participatory observation and interviews. I determined out that the *tera askebaris*' rules are important in managing the system and maintaining the order. The paper also sketches the background of *tera askebaris* and government intervention on their business, which helps to understand the main part. The paper explores *tera askebaris*' role not only as queue keepers but as all-round managers who need to maintain peace and order in minibus terminal.

**Key Words:** *Tera Askebari*; Transportation management; Minibus business; Addis Ababa; Ethiopia.

### INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

#### I. Introduction

In Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, there are people who control orders among minibuses and passengers, called *tera askebaris*. The word *tera*<sup>(1)</sup> means turn or shift, and *askebari* means someone who maintains or protects something in Amharic. Thus, the *tera askebari*<sup>(2)</sup> implies a person who maintains peace and order, which is a term commonly used in minibus terminals. The minibus business in Addis Ababa has expanded rapidly as it gave speedy services to the passengers (Kassa, 2014). However, this rapid mode of transportation was not always showing positive aspects. It was somehow notorious for unreliable service and additional cost to the passengers (Fenta, 2014). Moreover, the city administration bluntly had no transport authority to manage urban transport from 2005 to 2011 (Hussen, 2016), which further aggravates the disarray among minibuses. The conflicts between minibus operators, as they tried to attract passengers, caused unnecessary discomfort to passengers. The high demand for traffic control catalyzed street youth to organize spontaneously and perform by themselves, which generated a self-organized group called *tera askebari*. At present, the *tera askebaris* are queuing the minibuses, lining up the passengers, solving crimes at terminals, and maintaining peace in general. As minibuses are not only

major transportation, but also work as daily conveyances to many citizens, their role is noticeable.

Researches on the public transportations in Addis Ababa have been conducted on various aspects. There are literature on traffic performance (Mulat, 1991), methods on developing the transportation system (Gebeyehu & Takano, 2006), and various recommendations on improving traffic problems (Voukas & Palmer, 2012; Hussien, 2016). However, *tera askebaris* received less attention academically as an agent of the traffic sector. Di Nunzio (2012) describes *tera askebaris*' activities as a one of the strategies of street people. The *tera askebaris* are referred in another article, mentioning their significant role in the 2005 protest in Addis Ababa, where they supported the strike action at first, but later acted as enforcers of the government orders to control the protesters (Di Nunzio, 2014; 2019). Additionally, the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations (AACCSA) describes them as self-appointed bus terminal managers and calls for a detailed study of their activities (AACCSA, 2009). Notwithstanding their crucial role in many terminals, there has been a lack of academic interest in providing a full account. In this regard, as further research on this subject was needed, the paper tries to figure out their role in minibus business by scrutinizing their activities to supplement the previous studies.

## II. Methodology

For this paper, three times of fieldworks have been conducted. The main objective of the primary and secondary fieldworks was to develop a general idea of *tera askebari*, so data were collected from various points of terminals. For the tertiary fieldwork, I have narrowed down the research scope to a specific area to observe the *tera askebaris*' activities intensively to figure out their role. The fieldwork was conducted from June 21 to July 22, 2017, from July 7 to August 23, 2018, and from August 24 to October 31, 2019, for a total of 149 days. During the primary and secondary fieldwork, case study methods, participant observation and in-depth interviews were used. The data were collected based on four features: the original location where *tera askebaris* have initially formed, the city centre, the outskirts, and newly created areas. During the first term, seven interviews were conducted: two of the citizens and the others of *tera askebaris*. In the second period, 30 interviews were conducted at 27 minibus terminals (Fig. 1). The tertiary fieldwork was conducted at the southeastern part of Megenagna terminal, one of the major terminals in Addis Ababa, which serves 34 destinations (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2). I used participant observation and in depth interview as main methods for the tertiary fieldwork.

## TERA ASKEBARIS IN ADDIS ABABA

### I. Formation of *Tera Askebari*

*Tera askebaris* in these contemporary times are developed in several stages. To

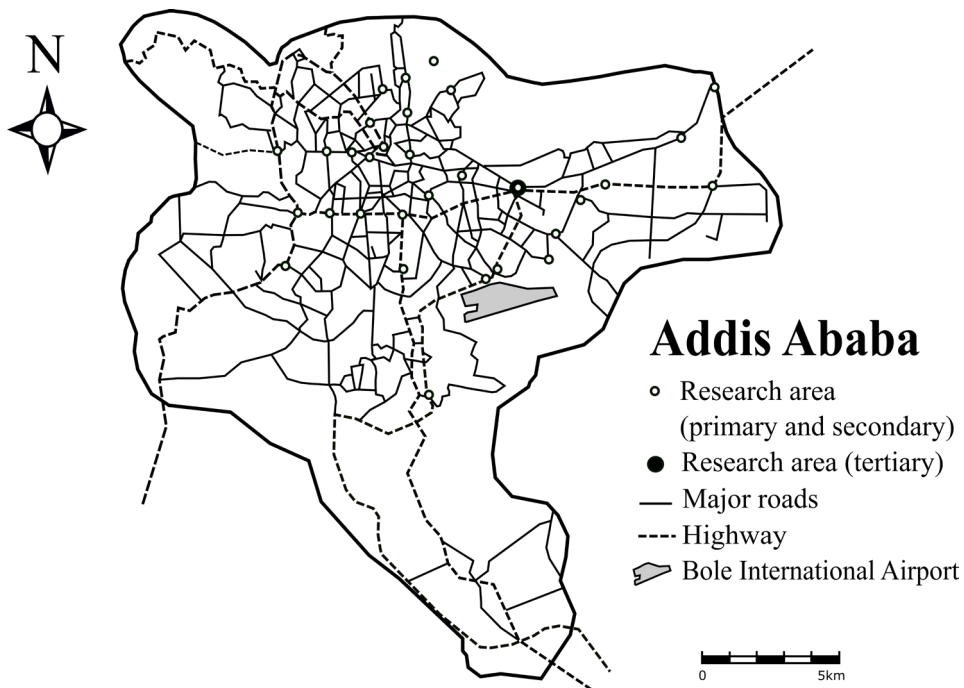


Fig. 1. Map of Addis Ababa showing research area.

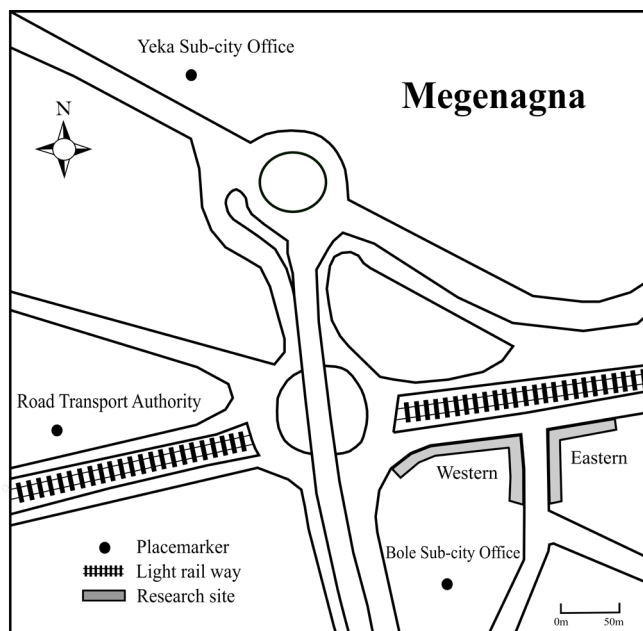


Fig. 2. Map of research site in Megenagna.

reconstruct the history, I relied on a few existing literature and interviews. *Tera askebaris* have evolved through several stages, and its complex process of development is formed by various factors influencing each other. These formations can be understood in two larger frames: people's initiatives and government's inception. The first frame can be divided into two sub-frames, Gash Abera Molla's initiation and street youth's initiation. The second frame also includes two sub-frames, government intervention to assist Eritrean-Ethiopian War veterans, and the government's inception along with MSEs (Micro and Small Enterprises) institution. One of the biggest differences between the two frames is that the first is a bottom-up movement, while the second is a top-down approach. In this paper, I would like to limit the range of analysis of *tera askebaris* in the first frame which denotes people's initiatives.

The first type of formation traces back to the end of the 1990s. Gash Abera Molla, a successful Ethiopian singer living in the United States, is believed to be a person who contributes to the formation of the *tera askebaris*. His original name is Seleshi Demissie, however, one character in his song, Gash Abera, an old man who takes care about his community became his nickname. In 1998, Gash Abera Molla returned to Addis Ababa after spending 20 years in the United States. During the visit, he realized that his childhood memories and the images he had of the city were opposed to the realities he saw. He was shocked by the widespread litter scattered in the streets. The reality that he saw, huge numbers of beggars, unemployed youth, and homeless people struggling for survival, pushed him to establish Gash Abera Molla Foundation in late 1998 (Alene, 2015). The foundation aimed to address social and environmental problems in Addis Ababa (BBC, 2001). The project became influential so that public parks were built and youth from every corner of the city collaborated (Cheru, 2016). As part of the project, the street boys were assigned to a work of lining up passengers in crowded minibus terminals. These street boys who maintained their work acquired the name of *tera askebari*. According to Abebe, who is a *tera askebari* in the Piasa Arada terminal, the work was allotted when he was 12 years old to earn a few cents.

I was young and poor. I did not know what to do. I was just wandering around the streets, finding whatever I could do for my survival. Then, one day, a guy called Gash Abera Molla asks street boys to tout and queue the passengers. At that time, I earned small cents from minibus operators when I array the passengers. (Mr. Abebe, July 10, 2018, interviewed at Piasa Arada)

This work suited to him, as it provided him a means of survival. Abebe mentioned that he and one of his friends are still working as *tera askebaris* in the Piasa Arada terminal. As time passes, they now become leaders in the terminal, and I could observe the young *tera askebaris* are working under them. Abebe and his friend are sitting under the shade of a shoeshiner's parasol, collecting money and checking the order of the minibuses. Over the years since the beginning of this work, former members have already found other work.

Although Abebe admits that he started the work through Gash Abera Molla's initiatives, he told me that he was not the 'original' *tera askebari*. According to him, the work was first initiated by two persons in the end of the 1980s, before the demise of the socialist Derg regime. They were leaders of the famous thug in Piasa Arada area and the first *tera askebaris* who initiated the work. They were potent enough to expend their reigning territory up to nearby Aratkilo and Sidistkilo terminals. Narratives that the first *tera askebari* appeared during the Derg regime is asserted not only by Mr. Abebe but also in several literatures (Di Nunzio 2012; 2014). Two different initiatives were derived from somewhat contrary aims. One initiative was to maintain the order and giving street youths a means of earning, while the other was to collect some sort of money from minibus operators. However, going beyond the discussion of the originator, I would like to emphasize the fact that the activities of controlling the disarray among minibuses were started from the local people's idea, not inaugurated by the government. Understanding both bright and somewhat dusky initiatives is also important to analyze the background of the *tera askebaris* as well as current situation.

The above two types of initiatives show the starting point of *tera askebari*-phenomenon. If the first one shows initial points, the second phase is rather complicated to clarify. It seems the second is rather sporadic and having asynchronous appearances. I understand this phenomenon as a potent group's initiatives in each *sefer* (area), which might or might not be influenced by the first one. When I conducted the research in 2018, within 30 *tera askebaris* in different terminals, 8 respondents argued that they are 'initiators' of this work (Table 1). All 8 respondents (anonym) listed in Table 1 claimed that they are the initiator of each terminal and the original member of their group. Their working experience as *tera askebaris* ranges from 7 years to 20 years. I could not find anybody who is in their 20s. The median age of the interviewees was 44.8, as the age ranges from the end of the 30s to the early 50s. They have been working for a long time as a leader or influencer of the street groups in their *sefer* and exercising some leadership or power to the groups. When I asked how they could start the work, all of them said it was because their 'group was strong.' It was a form of potent street youngster's *meheber* (group). The strong *meheber* in their *sefer* could exert their power on minibus operators through quite reasonable

**Table 1.** List of *tera askebaris* who claimed to be the first initiator.

Name of the Terminal	Interviewee (Age)	Years of Employment
Kazanchis	Mamosh (45)	7
Kara	Getachew (42)	12
Shiromeda	Girma (42)	13
Mexico	Haile (37)	20
Ttorhailoch	Adam (53)	20
Faransai	Yosef (46)	13
Kaliti	Berhanu (48)	8
Megenagna	Elias (46)	20

Source: Year of interview and analysis in 2018.

excuses for ‘retaining the peace and order of the minibuses.’ Powerful youths who are mostly *gulbetegna*<sup>(3)</sup> (strong men), could take over the business in the name of maintaining peace. The emergence of the new business by potent men in the terminal functioned as an external pressure to minibus operators to keep the order. The emergence of the *tera askebaris* were a glad occasion to many citizens, as disorder among passengers and violent touting has somewhat decreased. However, as minibus operators needed to pay the ‘illicit fees’ that were collected by *duriye*<sup>(4)</sup> (thugs), it was undesirable and unavoidable payment for them. The *tera askebaris* occurrence has become citywide phenomenon, stretched all over the city, which now becomes hard to find the terminals operating without *tera askebaris*. Whether they started the work from the pure heart to solving the disorder, or from pure intention to earn extra money, they could survive until current status, showing different characteristics in different terminals. Interestingly, the *tera askebaris* who were illicitly operating could retain this lucrative business through unique opportunity, which was the government’s formalization policy. The government intervention exerted large impact on the current landscape, whether this process perceived as positive or negative.

## II. Government Intervention

The MSEs development program in Ethiopia has been given attention by the government from 2004/2005. The national micro and small enterprise strategy has developed in November, 1997, however, the implementation to regional level was achieved in 2004/2005, by establishing Regional Micro and Small Enterprise Development Agencies (ReMSEDAs). As part of this policy, the Addis Ababa Micro and Small Enterprises Development Bureau (AAMSEDB) was established to manage the MSEs affairs in Addis Ababa. For the practical implementation, the branch office of AAMSEDB was established in sub-city and *woreda* (small-scale wards) offices. The major aim of the AAMSEDB was to assist informal sector workers to transfer into the formal channel. The informal sector was covering 26% of the population in Addis Ababa (Fransen & van Dijk, 2008), which attracted the city government to intervene to this hidden sector. As most *tera askebaris* in Addis Ababa were not registered in any organization and did not pay taxes, they were also a target for the AAMSEDB. The initiative was started from AAMSEDB, but many *tera askebaris* gathered by themselves and registered spontaneously. These registration activities can be interpreted as killing two birds with one stone. The government wanted to formalize this uncontrolled area, and the *tera askebaris* needed some recognition of their business as a means of retaining their business. The Fig. 3 shows the legal license of one *tera askebari* in Kazanchis terminal which was taken on July 9, 2018. A man said that he has been working as *tera askebari* for more than 7 years, and now he got the legal rights to operate the business. He again mentioned that a person who does not have a license cannot work in his area.

The AAMSEDB’s initiative was somewhat successful as it draws many *tera askebaris* to formal sphere. However, there was a critical problem which was not considered at the earliest stage. There were no proper regulations or guidelines



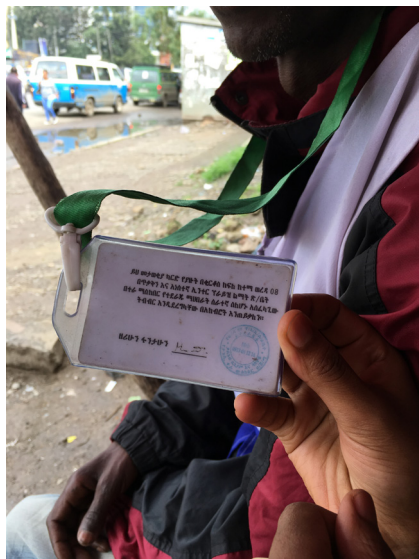


Fig. 3. Legal license of one *tera askebari* in Kazanchis terminal.

on mandatory savings. How much *sadi* (a queue keeping fee which is collected from minibus operators) to be collected has not been considered. Furthermore, AAMSEDB office was not actively collaborating with Addis Ababa Road Transport Bureau (AARTB), which loses an opportunity to give training to *tera askebaris* on traffic management. These above factors allowed the *tera askebaris* to abuse the system and retain the business, led thousands of *tera askebaris* to create their own methods on collecting and managing the busiest mode of transportation in Addis Ababa, let them perpetuate their power until current situation.

### III. Minibus as Major Mode of Transportation

Before going into the main discussion, a short introduction to minibus is necessary. The minibus is a major mode of transportation in Addis Ababa. These are Toyota HiAce vehicles with 12–14 seats. These vehicles are locally called as *taxi*, however, the term minibus is most widely used in the literature (Kumar et al., 2004; Abreha, 2007; Fenta, 2014; Young, 2014; Hussen, 2016). Although the *taxi* is more commonly used in the local, this term can lead to imagine 5 seats saloon taxi, so I am going to use the term ‘minibus’ as like other literatures. To run the vehicle, two operators are indispensable: a driver and an attendant, called *radat* or *weyala*.<sup>(5)</sup> The *radats*’ duty is to tout the passengers and collect the fare. Their communication skill is important, as their role is not only touting the passengers but also to inform other information such as the existence of police or lucrativeness of line. The passenger can get on and get off wherever they want within the route. The fare, which is decided by the AARTB, varies in accordance with the length of the line. The fare starts from 1.5 birr<sup>(6)</sup> for 0 to 2.5 km line, and another 1.5 birr is added every time the route passes another 2.5 km. AARTB

(2012) estimates the demand of public transportation peak to be about 4.1 million passengers, 18,000 public transport vehicles are operating in the city, with minibuses account for about 90% of the total fleet. This paratransit business becomes indispensable to citizen's life as it serves as major transportation.

## ROLE OF *TERA ASKEBARI* AT MEGENAGNA TERMINAL

### I. Megenagna, Where You Can Meet Everybody

Megenagna, which means connection or intersection in Amharic, is one of the major city centres in Addis Ababa. This area was designated as a subcenter (AACPPO, 2017), and its importance is increasing as a focal point of the city. Megenagna is a commercial area for businessmen and street vendors, providing recreation for the citizens, and working as a rendezvous. This complex sphere is situated in the middle of two important sub-city offices, that are Yeka and Bole sub-city. Bole sub-city is the largest among 10 sub-cities, with the scope of 112.08 km<sup>2</sup>, and Yeka sub-city is the third largest, 85.98 km<sup>2</sup> (AACA, 2019a; 2019b). Megenagna thus able to serve many functions to a wide variety of people. This area is well-known for its sizable terminal, possessing 34 lines, from which it is possible to reach almost every part of the city. I conducted my research in the southeastern part of this terminal as shown in the Fig. 2. The field site is spatially subdivided into two sections, the western and eastern section. Here, three regular lines are available, which is Semit, Ayat, and Arba Zettegn (Table 2). The Semit line is operating in the western section, while Ayat and Arba Zettegn<sup>(7)</sup> are running in the eastern section. The minibus fare is 4.5 birr, 6 birr, and 7.5 birr for each of the Semit, Ayat and Arba Zettegn.

### II. Group $\alpha$ 's Composition in Southeastern Terminal

The management of this terminal is organized by two *tera askebari* groups, group  $\alpha$  and group  $\beta$  and each group works on specific days. Group  $\beta$  works on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, while group  $\alpha$  works on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday. Both groups are legally registered in the Job Creation and Enterprise Development Bureau (formerly AAMSEDB) branch under the *woreda* office. Group  $\alpha$  is registered in *woreda* 5, while group  $\beta$  is registered in *woreda* 6, both under the Bole sub-city.

**Table 2.** Information of regular line at the research site.

Point of departure	Destination	Section	Distance (km)	Minibus fare (birr)	Minibus fleets
Megenagna, southeastern terminal	Semit	Western	7.5	4.5	281
	Ayat	Eastern	8.3	6	195
	Arba Zetteg (Ayat Chafé)	Eastern	11.8	7.5	167

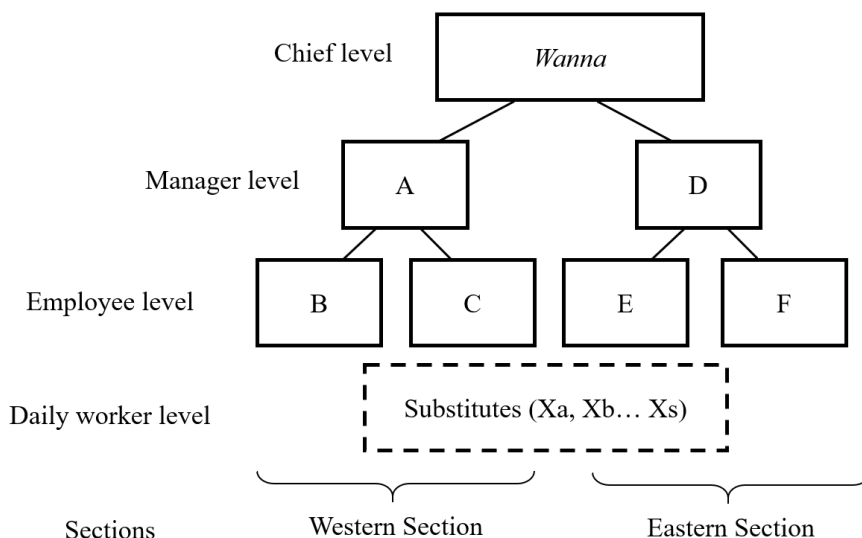
Source: AARTB (2019).



Group  $\alpha$  has been working legally from May 17, 2011. This group is expected to have 10 to 13 members. These *tera askeabris* who are registered are called *wanna*, which means major or main in Amharic. However, according to my fieldwork, I found out that none of the *wannas* were appearing at the workplace, whereas others were working instead of them. The *wannas* were hiring substitutes instead of working by themselves. The Fig. 4 shows the organizational structure of group  $\alpha$ . The *wannas* of the group  $\alpha$ , who are the ‘de jure’ *tera askebaris* were forming the chief level. The *wannas* hire two managers, A and D, to control terminal affairs. A and D’s controlling area was divided into two sections: A controls the Western section, while D controls the Eastern. Each of the managers again, hires the employees: A hires B and C, and D hires E and F. Sometimes, when the B, C, E, or F are absent, substitutes Xs (street youths, mostly unemployed youngsters, coming to the terminal for recreation), were replacing the work. To sum up, all *tera askebaris* that I have observed in group  $\alpha$  were all substitutes, who are not actually recognized by the government. However, it appears that most of those who run minibuses acknowledge these substitute workers as *tera askebaris* because these people were the ‘de facto’ workers, who were practically managing the vehicles and passengers at the terminal.

### III. Concepts of Cash: *Sadi*, *Jonata* and *Gebi*

The government’s weak regulation on *tera askebaris*’ business left space for them to develop their own ways of management. This condition also impacted on their business to create specific terminologies related to concepts of cash.



**Fig. 4.** Organizational structure of group  $\alpha$ .

These specialized terms: *sadi*, *jonata*, and *gebi*, which are Amharic slangs,<sup>(8)</sup> were important to understand their own rules. The Fig. 5 shows the conceptual diagram of concepts of cash in *tera askebaris*' business of group  $\alpha$ . The money, which *tera askebaris* collect from minibus operators, is called *sadi*. The managers (A and D) and their employees (B, C, E and F) collect *sadi* individually to the end of their duty hours. When the work finishes, the managers collect *sadi* from each of their workers. After that, when the managers collect all of the *sadi*, they give the daily wage to their employees, called *jonata/jonta*. However, after giving *jonata*, the leftovers cannot be possessed by the managers, because they need to pay the compulsory payments to their leaders, the *wannas*. This payment is called *gebi*, means income or revenue in Amharic. After giving the all the *jonata* and the *gebi*, managers can attain the true leftovers.

Through observing the money stream of the *tera askebaris*' business, one important point can be discussed. Three different jargons, *sadi*, *jonata*, and *gebi*, have been used in accordance with the manner of the money. The total sum of money paid by minibus operators and the amount collected by *tera askebaris* were equal, however, it was divided into three different terminologies. These terms were representing three different meanings depending on the payer and payee, even though those were the same 'money.' The distinction of the money not only shows the different concept of money, but also reveals the hierarchical structure among the *tera askebaris*.

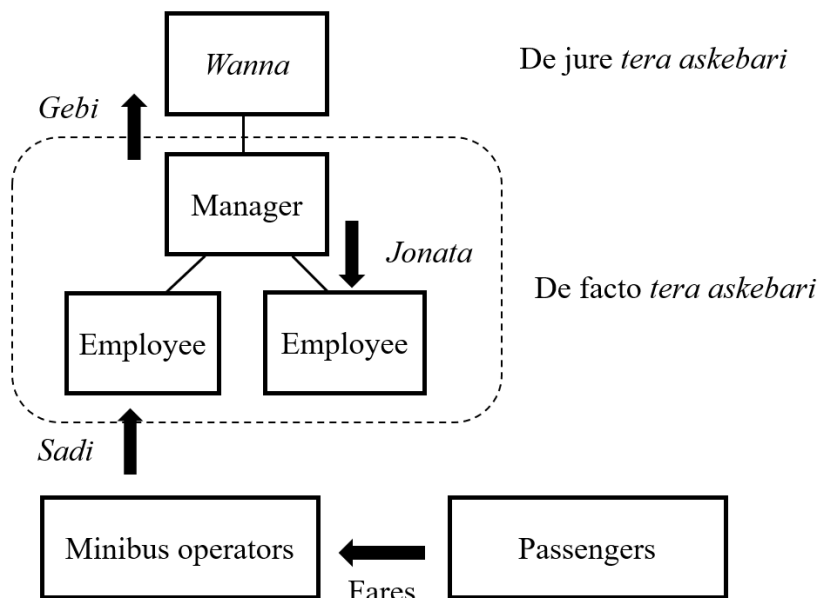


Fig. 5. Diagram of concepts of cash.

If the three concepts of cash in *tera askebari* business elucidate the money flow within the workers, Table 3 shows two types of passenger fare (normal and night-time) and three different types of *sadi* (*sadi*, *derebo* and night-time *sadi*). Previously, I explained that three regular lines are existing in this terminal (Table 2). However, many unpermitted lines were actively operating (here, the main agent on permitting the line is AARTB). Also, many passengers expected to take these unpermitted lines, because except the Gurd Shola, other unpermitted three lines were located in the extension of permitted lines (Semit Condominium after Semit, Ttafo after Ayat, and Bole Arabsa after Ayat). Two lines were controlled by the Western *tera askebaris*, while the five lines were controlled by the Eastern *tera askebaris*. Moreover, regardless of the government's permission, *tera askebaris* were controlling all vehicles (Table 3).

*Sadi* varies in accordance with the minibus fare. 5 birr *sadi* is collected for short-distance line, Gurd Shola, where passengers pay 1.5 birr. In the middle-distances line, Semit, Semit Condominium, Ayat, Arba Zettegn, and Ttafo, where passengers pay 4.5 birr to 7 birr, *tera askebaris* collect 7 birr. Lastly, the most lucrative line, Bole Arabsa's *sadi* is 20 birr, as passengers pay 10 birr as a fare. However, it is found out that *sadi* was varying depending on the situations, as the amount of *sadi*, *derebo*, and night-time *sadi* was different. *Tera askebaris* normally collect *sadi*. However, when the minibus operators commit a foul, they were collecting more money than of the normal *sadi*, a *derebo*, to protect the sake of the querer. Also, when it comes a night-time (between 7 to 7:30 pm), as the passenger fare increases, *tera askebaris* were collecting more amount of *sadi*, which was mostly 30 birr per minibus. This indicates that the *tera askebaris* are having their own standard on collecting the money.

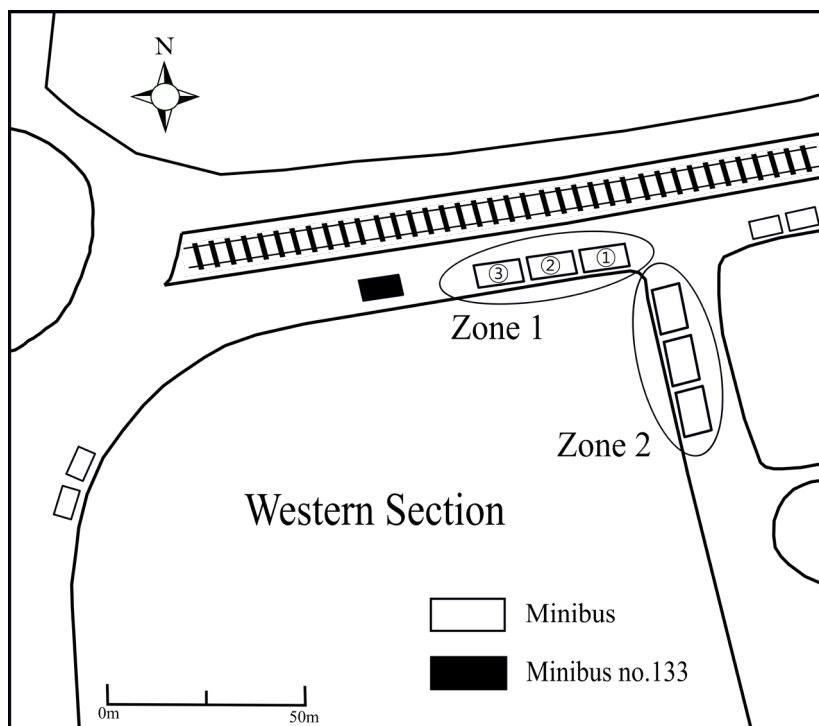
**Table 3.** Tariff of various type of fare related to *tera askebari* business.

Point of departure	Section	Permitted or Unpermitted	Destination	Distance (km)	Fare	<i>Sadi</i>	<i>Derebo</i>	Night-time fare	Night-time <i>Sadi</i>
birr									
Megenagna, southeastern terminal	Western	O	Semit	7.29	4.5	7	10	10	30
		X	Semit Condominium	9.76	6	7	10	10	30
	Eastern	O	Ayat	8.27	6	7	10	10	30
		O	Arba Zettegn	11.28	7.5	7	10	10	30
		X	Gurd Shola	1.93	1.5	5	5	5	10
		X	Ttafo	12.09	7.5	7	10	10	30
		X	Bole Arabsa	14.71	10	20	-	20	40

#### IV. Role of *Tera Askebari*

##### *Case 1: Monitoring Compliance (August 30, and October 15, 2019)*

In this terminal, all minibuses need to queue ordered by *tera askebari*. In zone 1, the minibuses line up from west to east side as it is shown in the number 3 to 1 in Fig. 6. Cutting in line and working secretly are regarded as breaches. These actions are called foul. On August 30, 2019, minibus no. 133 was touting passengers secretly at the end of zone 1. Before recruiting the passengers, the operators of no. 133 did not queue line, neither get any consent from the *tera askebaris*. Working secretly, the attendant could collect 5 passengers. Meanwhile, A found out the foul activities of no. 133. A went directly to the vehicle and insulted the attendant. “You, fat brain. What are you doing? Go away!” A opened the door and said to the passengers, “Sorry, please move to the front vehicle” and all the passengers got out of the car. After that, A slammed the door and the no. 133 were kicked out. In this case, A disapprove the no. 133’s business. However, there are other mechanism that the *tera askebaris* take. Instead of kicking the foul makers out, they rather give a chance through charging a penalty, called *derebo*.



**Fig. 6.** Committing a foul by minibus no. 133.

The Fig. 7 shows group  $\alpha$ 's territory with two types of foul makers. The long-grey line is controlled by manager A in group  $\alpha$ . However, exceeding the group  $\alpha$ 's controlling area is regarded as other *tera askebaris*' territory. Here, the important point is that foul makers are limited to the vehicles which are working in group  $\alpha$ 's controlling line (all seven lines). If the foul maker calls for another destination, for example, Kazanchis or Piasa, it is not regarded as foul. In the Fig. 7, I indicated two types of foul makers located in different group's territory. The square refers to a vehicle. The black square indicates minibuses working inside of group  $\alpha$ 's area, while the comb-pattern minibuses are not. On October 15, 2019, B could catch seven foul makers at the black square spot. Three of them were operating to Semit, while two of them were Ttafo, and the others were Bole Arabsa. When he observed the vehicles committing foul, he ran and caught them. He could collect 10 birr *derebo* per each minibus. The reason why minibuses are taking a risk to work at the black square area is that there are possibilities not to get caught by *tera askebaris* if they are lucky. For instance, on group  $\beta$ 's working day, I have not observed none of the *tera askebaris* catching the vehicles at the black square area. This means the area is worthy enough to attract passengers without paying any money to *tera askebaris* if they are not captured. Meanwhile, I observed many vehicles calling group  $\alpha$ 's destination working in the comb-pattern area, however, as these areas were not controlled by group  $\alpha$ , B could not reach to this end.

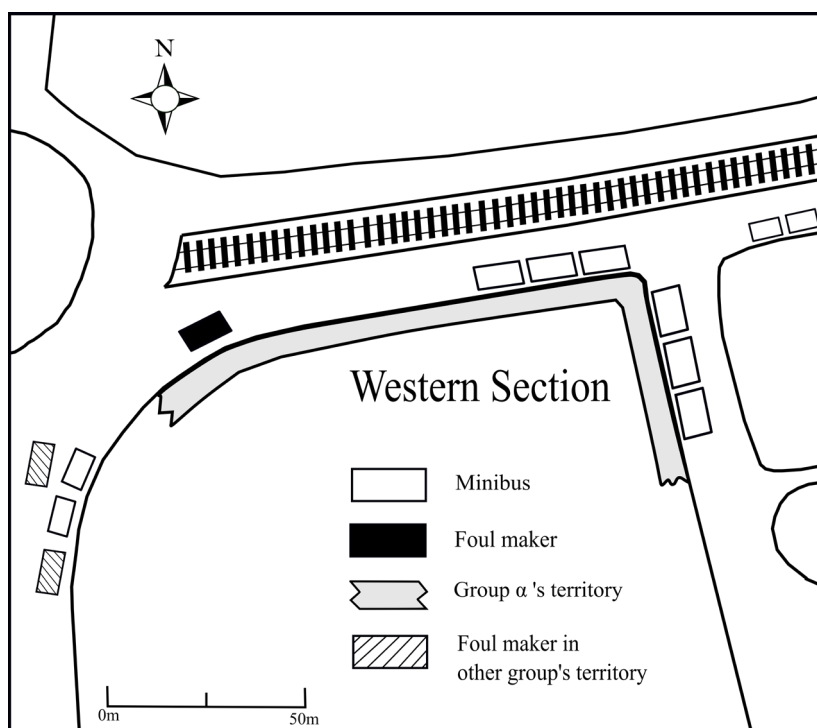


Fig. 7. Two kinds of foul maker within and outside of the group  $\alpha$ 's territory.

### Case 2: Allowing the Line which is Not Permitted

All minibuses should hang a plate on the top of the roof, called as *tapella*, which denotes its destination. *Teqot'at'eri*,<sup>(9)</sup> the controller from AARTB, monitor the minibuses through checking the *tapella*. Their duty is to check the whether the minibuses are working properly in their designated line or not, fining the minibuses operating on unpermitted lines (Semit Condominium, Ttafo, Gurd Shola, and Bole Arabsa) and those operating at outside of their registered line. The major difference between *Teqot'at'eri* and *tera askebari* is that the former controls the vehicles to operate in designated line, the latter controls not only the queue of the minibuses but varieties of incidents happening in the terminal. The minibus operators should pay penalties if they caught by *teqot'at'eri*. However, ironically, these unpermitted lines have high demands and sometimes can be more convenient for the passengers. For example, a passenger who wants to Bole Arabsa from this terminal should transfer at Ayat when he uses the permitted line (Fig. 8). Megenagna to Ayat, and Ayat to Bole Arabsa's total distance is 14.75 km, and the total fare is 10.5 birr. However, the unpermitted line, Megenagna to Bole Arabsa, seems giving more convenience to the passengers, even the total distance and the fare is not showing huge differences. The two interviewees answered that they are more comfortable for using Megenagna to Bole Arabsa directly, instead of transferring at Ayat terminal. These answers were probably because of two reasons. First, the passengers do not need to waste time for transferring. Second, since they are using a shortcut, it is faster than the using a regular line. The government is regulating the minibuses not to operate on this line however, this case study shows that the management of informal workers in this sector might provide more efficient service to the passengers.

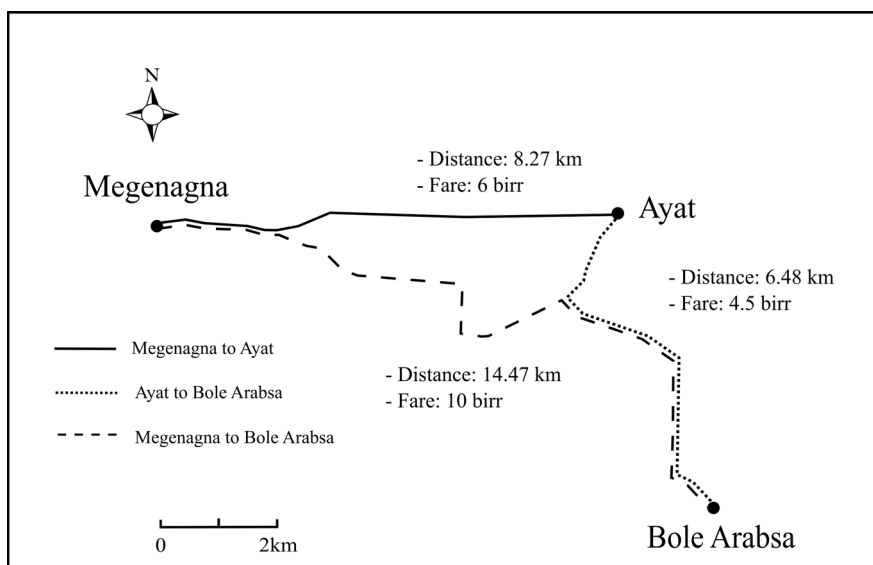


Fig. 8. Three different lines among Megenagna, Ayat and Bole Arabsa terminal.



*Case 3: Maintaining the Peace (October 31, 2019)*

In this terminal, I have also found out that the *tera askebaris* are not working for queuing the minibuses, but also do vigilant activities. In October 31, 2019, I encountered one incident.

Woman: Thief! Thief! The thief took my phone!

B: Hey! Hey!!!! (B runs and two street boys follow.)

C: You! (C runs from the opposite side, catches the thief.)

C: You, You thief. I am going to kill you. You, lazy donkey! (C beats his face and grabs his neck, lifts him to the sky, and throws him to the ground. A, B and many street boys are watching the scene.)

Thief: Sorry, sorry! I have no work and no money and what can I do? Please, I am very sorry!

B: (B takes the thief from A and grabs his neck.) We could have ended your life and put you in jail, but be thankful that we are letting you go. Do not dare trying to steal in our area. (He releases him.)

Thief: Okay. I am very sorry, sorry... (He passes the phone to the woman and escapes.)

Woman: Thank you very much, God will bless you. Thank you...

This dialogue shows that these *tera askebaris* were performing as parapolice in their area. B and C caught a thief while conducting their work. Even though they did not get any benefit from the woman, I have observed that they were proud of themselves to achieve justice. It was a surprising moment for me to spot this scene, as it was the first time for me to observe *tera askebaris* catching a thief. I observed that many people being astonished. Street vendors, minibus operators, and passengers were stopped by and watched the scene. Someone said *gobez* (great) to *tera askebaris*, someone said “*Aizosh*” to the woman, means “I understand your situation, please cheer up.” This dialogue recalls the term *gulbetegna* that I mentioned previously, which refers to a person who has a muscular shape or being rough enough to handle tough incidents. In this respect, being a *gulbetegna* is one of the important aspects for the *tera askebaris* to compel not only minibus operators but also passengers and other actors existing in the terminal to follow their rules in the terminal.

Through the three case studies, three different aspects of *tera askebaris* were observed. The first case study shows that they are a controller of the terminal. By imposing two kinds of methods on those who violate the rules, they protected the queuers. In the second case study, we observed the flexibility of *tera askebaris* on conducting the minibuses as they allow the high demanding line which is

restricted by the government. Lastly, they maintained peace through capturing the criminals in their working area. Through a series of case studies, the role of *tera askebari* has been examined. It demonstrates that their regulation has implied power, or a tacit agreement, as the other actors were following their rules undeniably. Whether their rule is adequate or not, whether their activities are informal or not, it is understandable that their activities are providing normative standards in establishing public order. They are all-round players, handling different kinds of incidents, and further, contributing to maintain peace.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, the role of *tera askebaris* is examined through observing their activities. In the first section, I briefly introduced the background of *tera askebaris*. It is assumed that the work was initiated by two leaders of the group in Piasa Arada area at the end of the 1980s. The other type of formation was inaugurated in the late 1990s, by a famous singer, Gash Abera Molla, who allotted street youths to queue the passengers in the terminal. After that, the large-scale phenomenon was developed by the potent youths in their *sefer*, which was asynchronous but also sporadic movement. The government buckled down to their business from 2011, however, the process of formalization brought a huge impact on the current transportation business. This process led thousands of *tera askebaris* being transferred into the formal sector, but also let them perpetuate their dominance until the current moment. To sum up, the *tera askebari*-phenomenon was not just created by the momentary incident but developed through the complex process in which various factors influencing each other. Also, it implies us to consider about importance of providing proper policy to informal workers.

In the second section, the focus moves on to the role of *tera askebaris*. The analysis was based on the observation of group  $\alpha$ 's workers in the southeastern part of Megenagna terminal. The members of group  $\alpha$  were forming hierarchical structures: *wannas*, managers, and employees, and sometimes includes daily workers. However, there was a huge paradox that 'de jure' *tera askebaris*, the *wannas*, were not performing at the terminal, rather the substitutes, managers and employee level of 'de facto' *tera askebaris*, were operating. After that, I identified three concepts of cash in their business: *sadi*, *jonata* and *gebi*. Those concepts helped us to gaze into the hierarchical structure among *tera askebaris*. After the basic information, three case studies were referred for the main discussions of the role of *tera askebari*. Two subcases were shown in the first case, which elucidate monitoring compliances on foul makers. Ejecting foul makers from the territory or imposing a penalty were methods to protect the queuers. In the second case, *tera askebaris* allowing minibuses to operate in the unpermitted line was providing more reasonable options for the passengers. Lastly, *tera askebaris*' role in vigilant activities has been demonstrated. Overall, we observe that their role is not limited to the concept of 'queue keeper' but need to be comprehended as 'all-round players,' handling various kinds of incidents in the minibus terminal. Also, observing the informal rules of the group  $\alpha$ : group structure, concepts of

cash, and collecting the different amount of fares depending on the situation, make us rethink about the precariousness and unpredictable characteristics of informal sector narratives. The series of analysis on case studies indicate that *tera askebaris*' activities are providing a normative standard in establishing the public order. This gave us a prospect to understand their activities in the public domain, not only focusing on the link between public transportation and *tera askebari*.

Starting from the 1980s, *tera askebaris* in Addis Ababa have been surviving and thriving up to the current moment. The form and the way of operation have come to differ from terminal to terminal, but they were playing as leading informal controllers of the minibuss business in Addis Ababa. It is questionable until when they can perpetuate their power. However, it seems that their dominance will not be easily challenged, as they have established a high reputation and already become important figures in this arena.

## NOTES

- (1) The term *tera* (ተራ) in Amharic possesses various meanings.  
—Ordinary, mere: It is used such as *tera sew* (ተራ ሰው), means mere or too ordinary person who has almost nothing.  
—Area: This term used mostly in the market to sell specific commodities or articles. For example, *atekelt tera* (አትክልት ተራ), a vegetable area, and *meskot tera* (መስኮት ተራ), a window selling area.  
—Shift, turn: It is used to refer a shift such as *tera betera* (ተራ በተራ), means sequentially. In the case of *tera askebari*, the last definition has referred.
- (2) The term *tera askebari*'s (ተራ አስከባሪ) pronunciation is [tāra asəkābari]. *ä* (ə) is a Mid-Central vowel which possesses short neutral sound. Di Nunzio (2012; 2014; 2019) romanised this terminology as *tera askabari*, while AACCSA (2009) write down in *tera askebari*, used 'e' instead of 'a' to express this signifier. It is a matter of fact, whether to write Addis Ababa (አዲስ አበባ) into Addis Ababa or Addis Abeba, since the ä sound can express both A and E in English words. The writer uses the latter one, considering the fact the *ä* and *a* sound in Amharic is divided into two vowels. The description of pronunciation was referred to Daniels & Bright (1996).
- (3) *Gulbet* (ጉልበት) literally means knee in Amharic. However, it connotes the meaning of strongness, toughness, and power. So, person who has a *gulbet* can be understood as a one who are physically strong and exert some pressure to other people. It is also called as *Gulbetegna* (ጉልበተኛ).
- (4) *Duriye* (ዱሪዬ) means poor youths who are hustling in the street in Amharic. Most of the time, this word has negative connotation.
- (5) *Radat* (ረዳት) means helper, while *Weyala* (ወያላ) possesses some scornful attitude on the attendants. They are also called as DJ or BJ as they sometimes change the music inside of the minibuses.
- (6) Ethiopia uses its own currency called Birr. The currency rate of the birr is 1 USD = 30 ETB. Online. <https://www.combanketh.et/More/CurrencyRate.aspx> (Accessed November 10, 2019).
- (7) Arba Zettegn means number 49 in Amharic (አርባ ዘጠኝ). The original name of the destination is Ayat Chafe Condominium (አያት ጩጫ ኮንዶሚኒየም). One of the public transportations in Addis Ababa, Anbessa Bus, operates to Ayat Chafe Condominium with the bus number 49. It seems Arba Zettegn gained its name from this number and become

- common words to the people.
- (8) Amharic slang is called Arada Language (አራዳ ቋንቋ) or Bird's language (የወፍ ቋንቋ) which is developed by urban street youth in Addis Ababa.
  - (9) *Teqot'at'eri* (ተቆጣጠሪ) means controller in Amharic, nominalized from *teqot'at'ere* (ተቆጣጠረ), means 'to supervise.'

## REFERENCES

- Abreha, D.A. 2007. *Analysing Public Transport Performance Using Efficiency Measures and Spatial Analysis: The Case of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*. International Institute for Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (Master's thesis), Enschede.
- Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations (AACCSA) 2009. *The Management of Commercial Road Transport in Ethiopia*. AACCSA, Addis Ababa.
- Addis Ababa City Administration (AACA) 2019a. *Yeka Sub City*. Online. <http://www.addisababa.gov.et/de/web/guest/yeka-sub-city> (Accessed July 2, 2019).
- 2019b. *Bole Sub City*. Online. <http://www.addisababa.gov.et/de/web/guest/bole-sub-city> (Accessed July 2, 2019).
- Addis Ababa City Planning Project Office (AACPPO) 2017. *Addis Ababa City Structure Plan 2017 to 2027*. AACPPO, Addis Ababa.
- Addis Ababa Road and Transport Bureau (AARTB) 2012. *Statistics on Number of Vehicles Registered in Addis Ababa by Type between 1993 and 2011* (in Amharic). AARTB, Addis Ababa.
- 2019. *Statistics on Routes and Vehicles on Paratransit Transportation in 2019* (in Amharic). AARTB, Addis Ababa.
- Alene, N.B. 2015. *Politicizing Waste Collection and Disciplining Waste Collectors: A Critical Analysis of Waste Management Practice in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (2003–2012)*. University of Toronto (Doctoral Dissertation), Toronto.
- BBC 2001. *Cleaning Up the Streets of Addis*. May 8. Online. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1319359.stm> (Accessed November 18, 2018).
- Cheru, M. 2016. *Solid Waste Management in Addis Ababa: A New Approach to Improving the Waste Management System*. Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences (Bachelor's thesis), Helsinki.
- Daniels, P.T. & W. Bright 1996. *The World's Writing Systems*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Di Nunzio, M. 2012. "We are good at surviving": Street hustling in Addis Ababa's inner city. *Urban Forum*, 23(4): 433–447.
- 2014. Thugs, spies and vigilantes: Community policing and street politics in inner city Addis Ababa. *Africa*, 84(3): 444–465.
- 2019. *The Act of Living: Street Life, Marginality, and Development in Urban Ethiopia*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca.
- Fenta, T.M. 2014. Demands for urban public transportation in Addis Ababa. *Journal of Intelligent Transportation and Urban Planning*, 2(3): 81–88.
- Fransen, J., & M.P. van Dijk 2008. *Informality in Addis Ababa*. Paper presented at the conference 'Are Cities More Important Than Countries?', October 30–31, 2008. Rotterdam, Netherlands.
- Gebeyehu, M., & S. Takano 2006. Application of logical planning model for public transport improvement programs in the city of Addis Ababa. *Studies in Regional Science*, 36(3): 663–682.
- Hussen, B.W. 2016. *Sustaining Sustainable Mobility: The Integration of Multimodal Public Transportation in Addis Ababa*. Université de Lyon (Doctoral dissertation), Lyon.

- Kassa, F. 2014. Informal transport and its effects in the developing world: A case study of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. *Journal of Transport Literature*, 8(2): 113–133.
- Kumar, A., E.A. Kwakye & Z. Girma 2004. *What Works in Private Provision of Bus Transport Services—Case Study of Accra and Addis Ababa*. Paper Presented at the 11th Conference of CODATU, April 22–24, 2004. Bucharest, Romania.
- Mulat, B. 1991. The commercial road transport sector in Ethiopia: Performance, problems and future prospects. *The Ethiopian Economy: Structure, Problems and Policy Issues*, 183–193.
- Voukas, Y., & D. Palmer 2012. *Sustainable Transportation in East Africa The Bus Rapid Transit Evolution in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*. Paper Presented at the 15th International Conference of Urban Transport, October 22–25, 2012. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- Young, A. 2014. *Cities in Motion: Addis ababa Already Has a Great Network—Minibus Taxis*. Online. <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/feb/19/cities-in-motion-addis-ababa-minibus-taxi> (Accessed October 18, 2018).

——— Accepted January 4, 2020

Author's Name and Address: Enuji CHOI, *Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies, Kyoto University, 46 Yoshida-Shimoadachi-cho, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto 606-8501, JAPAN.*  
E-mail: lulu.eunji [at] jambo.africa.kyoto-u.ac.jp