A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF PERSONAL NAME PRACTICES IN THE DOGONLAND: A CASE STUDY OF KORO MUNICIPALITY

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Résumé

Cette étude est une exploration ethno-linguistique du système de dénomination dans la communauté Dogon. Elle analyse les systèmes de désignation des prénoms chez les Dogons et leurs fonctions socioculturelles sous-jacentes tout en donnant un aperçu de la classification et des circonstances caractérisant les noms personnels des Dogons. L'étude a été menée dans le cercle de Koro, région de Mopti, dans trois villages éloignés des communes rurales (Madougou, Barapireli et Dangaténé). 50 participants clés âgés (30 hommes et 20 femmes) ont fait l'objet d'une sélection raisonnée en raison de leur expérience en la matière. Le travail de terrain a été complété par l'introspection des chercheurs car certains d'entre eux sont originaires de la zone d'enquête. Les données ont été recueillies au moyen de focus groupes, d'entretiens et d'observations personnelles. Le sujet mérite beaucoup d'attention en raison de l'absence notoire des travaux menés sur l'onomastique dogon. Les résultats indiquent que les Dogons ont une manière astucieuse de système de dénomination, y compris mais sans s'y limiter, aux noms naturels, les prénoms et les noms hérités, etc. L'étude révèle également que les catégories et les circonstances caractérisant la pratique des systèmes de dénomination des Dogons sont ordinairement diverses et que la pratique d'attribution de noms personnels traditionnels et coutumiers authentiques est maintenue.
Mots clés *: Anthroponymie, catégories, communauté Dogon, onomastique, prénoms.*

Abstract

This study is an ethno-linguistic account of naming system in the Dogon community. It analyzes the naming systems of the Dogon people and their underlying socio-cultural functions and provides an insight into the classification and circumstances characterizing the Dogon's personal names. The study was conducted in the municipality of Koro, Mopti Region, in remote three rural communal villages (Madougou, Barapireli and Dangatene). 50 elderly key informants (30 males and 20 females) were purposively selected to participate in the study. This was supplemented by the researchers' introspection as some of them are natives of the investigation area. Data were gathered through focus group

discussions, interviews and personal observation. The topic deserves much attention because not much has been written about. The findings indicate that the Dogon people have a crafty way of naming systems including but not limited to natural names, given names, and inherited names, etc. The study also reveals that the categories and circumstances characterizing the practice of Dogon's naming systems are various in nature and that the practice of attributing authentic traditional and customary personal names are maintained.
Key words: *anthroponymy, categories, Dogon community, onomastics, personal names.*

Introduction

The practice of naming people plays such a significant role in the society. Naming practices depend on speech communities and vary from one culture to another. In this respect, people name their offspring according to their language and culture. The way names are given, reasons for choice of particular names and the rituals involved in naming, vary from society to society (Olive A. Adjah, p.3). The name is closely related to its bearer that it stands for his /her identity. In this sense, Langendonck (2008) propounds that a proper name designates a unique entity at the level of langue to make it psychologically salient within a given basic category. Minkailou (2017) holds similar viewpoints in that he elucidates some categories where names, therefore, become a valuable source of information about gender, birthplace, nationality, ethnicity, religion and the order of birth of their bearers in the family. This shows that names are used to refer to their bearers and become inseparable from the latter. For example, Agyekum (2006) maintains that the Akan personal name system and practice is a marker of a people's belief, ideology, religion, culture, philosophy and thought. In many speech communities personal names are a status symbol and provide information on the name bearer's place (Anderson 2007, p.99). Personal names, therefore, become closely related to various events in the social life of a person, his/her family as well as society. Ansu-Kyeremeh (2000) further puts forth that personal names support human interaction as a medium for communication. Different people may call a person by different names under various circumstances.

The study of personal names (anthroponyms) and place names (toponyms) has attracted considerable attention from sociolinguists, ethnolinguists and anthropologists over the years. In fact, the study of names is known as onomastics which comprises of anthroponymy and toponymy. Anthroponymy investigates names of people and toponymy

that of place names (cf. Schneider, 2012). In this respect, because of their connectedness, in Minkailou (2017) R. Guo (2002) observes that it is difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between the two concepts as anthroponyms are sometimes used as toponyms and vice-versa. Also, Leguy (2012, p.51.) provides a definition of naming as follows, "To designate a person by a name is first of all a phenomenon of language. Naming is actually assigning certain sounds to an entity. To name a person is to name this person vocally[1]." (Translation ours). In other words, naming is of particular importance in that the attribution of personal names reflects the sociocultural practices in given speech communities.

In the Dogonland, personal names are closely related to social circumstances surrounding the birth, special conditions, family history, as well as the location of the birth. The act of naming follows specific principles and rules commensurate with traditional and customary practices. In constructing personal names, one of the principles is the home context which specifies the significant circumstantial and social contexts for the names. Niyi Akinnaso (1980) clarifies that the principle is reconstructed in the following forms as:

i)   The special circumstance that strictly pertain to the birth of the child or its appearance at birth; how the child was born, -did the child present its leg first instead of its head?
        ii) The social, economic, political and other conditions affecting the family or lineage into which the baby was born. Example, famine and war.
        iii) The religious affiliation or deity loyalty of the family- which God or deity is worshipped and what is His/her contribution to the welfare of the family?
        iv) The (traditional) occupation or profession of the parents or the family line, - are they hunters, drummers or warriors?

Moreover, literature on Malian onomastics is quasi inexistent (Minkailou, 2017). Houis (1963) cited in Dianka (2020) states that the Dogons for example receive three names: one common name given by

the patriarch, a private name given by the maternal family and used for it alone, finally a secret name given by the priest. The first and the second may constitute the official names and the third is secret. Both social and sacred values are encoded in the name; and it reflects a vital part of the personality. In addition, Minkailou (2017) conducted a sociolinguistic research about personal names which focuses on the systems of naming, the structure, the semantics, the morphology and the etymology of the Bamanan names of southern Mali. The work has analyzed the traditional Bamanan personal name typologies, determining the social and cultural bases surrounding their formation and significance, and providing a structural analysis of those names.

Sociolinguistic studies on relation between language and Dogon anthroponymy is scarce; however, the practice of their naming systems has survived despite their coming into contact with other neighboring cultures and the threats of new religions: Christianity and Islam. In the foregoing, the types of Dogon personal names, their contexts in use as well as gender distinctions are elucidated and described. Therefore, this paper provides non-natives an insight into the significance of the Dogon naming systems and the values they ascribe to them. Naming is a family and collective heritage; for this reason, elderly persons pass on the practice of their crafty naming system and principles from one generation to another. This paper restores and describes the anthroponomical practices of the Dogon people in the municipality of Koro.

1-Methodology

This portion provides a description of the research design, the participants, samples and sampling procedure, and methods of Data Analysis.

1-1-Research Design

This study used a qualitative descriptive approach. Kothari (2004, p.37) observes, "Studies concerned with specific predictions, with narration of facts and characteristics concerning individual, group or situation are all examples of descriptive research studies." So this paper employs descriptive design which deals with socio-linguistic

issues. Some of the researchers, being native speakers of the Dogon language (Dogoso), used personal observation to supplement the anthroponyms and elucidated them extemporaneously.

1-2-Samples and sampling procedure

Samples for this research were fifty local elderly persons (males and females) who are native speakers of the Dogon language. They provided both the anthroponyms of their area and their significations. The study used a purposive sampling technique to select the participants. The researchers decided to choose the most suitable informants in order to provide accurate data. The participants were aged forty-five years and over. These age groups are both familiar with the personal naming systems and experienced in meaning clarifications.

1-3-Data collection and methods of Analysis

The data of this paper were collected using a number of sources: interview, focus group discussion and personal observation. Focus group discussion allowed us to stimulate the conversations with participants and obtain reliable responses from them.   Interview was appropriate to collect in-depth information about the use of personal names. Consent from the interviewees was sought prior to the interview session.   Apart from the interviews and focus group discussions, we also made some personal observations. We observed how people practice the use of their personal names. We also had the opportunity to observe naming ceremonies in the areas of investigation. The data from participants were recorded with IC Recorder - Sony. The recordings were sorted out, described and explained.

2-Result and Discussion

There are many factors which are involved in providing personal names to children. This portion deals with the factors which form categories of the personal names as practiced in the Dogon community. Specifically, it considers traditional authentic names and looks at the social contexts and circumstances surrounding the birth of a child constituting prompts for the parents to determine names to be given.   These include circumstantial contexts such as gender, socio-economic background of the family, the time and manner of birth, and parents' interpersonal relationships with community members, etc. This

is consistent with Akinnaso (1980) when he defines naming as a way of talking about what a person (especially the name giver) "experiences, values, thinks and knows in the real world". The literal translations of the names are provided as well.

The following are the categories of Dogon personal names and the circumstances which surround their adoption:

2-1-Personal Names According to the Order of Birth

Names that refer to the order of birth in the Dogon speech community are as follows:

Order of birth	Male	Female
First born	Atɔ	Yatɔ
Second born	Alɛi	Yalɛi
Third born	Ataanu	Yataanu
Fourth born	Anai	Yanai
Fifth born	Anu	-
Tenth born	Apɛru	Yapɛru
Eleventh born	Asigɛ	Yasigɛ

The order of birth is part of the Dogon naming system. It is clear from the above table that children are named according to the order of birth. The first, second, third, fourth, fifth born children customarily receive their names accordingly. However, the Dogon from the Toro areas do not customarily name the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth born with ordinals. Reasons underlying such avoidance in naming were not elucidated. However, it is customary for the Dogon people to name with ordinals the 5th born (if male), the 10th and the 11th born.

The order of birth is marked with ordinal numbers and the gender distinction is drawn with a prefix. In the above examples, the prefix **A** deriving from **A**inɛ (Man) as in **A**tɔ, **A**lɛi, **A**taanu **A**nai is male gender marker. Likewise, the prefix **Ya** from **Ya**na (Woman) in **Ya**tɔ, **Ya**lɛi, **Ya**taanu, **Ya**nai is female gender marker. Very often, ordinals are employed to distinguish the order of birth.

2-2-Personal names of twins

Twins are treated and reared with special conditions in the Dogonland. Same sex twins are called Asɛgɛ and Asigɛ (males) and Yasɛgɛ and Yasigɛ (females). Different sex twins receive the names **Adiyɛ** (male) and **Ya**diyɛ (female) or Asɛgɛ (male) and Yasɛgɛ (female). In the situation when children come after the twins, they get socio-cultural names. The child that comes right after the twins is called Adeŋɛ or Apai if male or Yadeŋɛ, Yapai or Yalɔ if female. In contrast, children who are born after several boys or girls are called Asama (male) and Yasama (female). The lexeme Sama denotes change.

2-3-Personal names as death prevention mechanism

The Dogon people use survival names like other cultures in Africa. They believe that if a mother loses constantly her babies, then the reason of the mortality is that it is the mother in the family who is haunted by ill spirits. To overcome such an unfortunate situation, the new born is given a weird name. They also believe that, like human beings, death spirits do not like unpleasant names. Names which are strange and weird are given to babies only when all hopes are lost. The Dogon people use such a stratagem against death as a means for naming system when siblings keep dying. They give strange names to children whose senior siblings short-lived or didn't survive. They strongly believe in the superstitions and think that failure to observe ways of traditions would be deadly for them and family lineage. So parents give tricked names to their children in order for them to escape misfortune and the threat of death. Such names are Abɔjɔ (male) and Yabɔjɔ (female). The lexeme bɔjɔ means (excrement); other subterfuges include Jɛmɛgunɔ (for both male and female) meaning slave of the blacksmith and Gɔngunɔ slave of the 'griot'. In this case, the bound morphemes Jɛmɛ from Jɛmɛn means blacksmith and Gɔn from GɔnGɔn is 'griot'.

Community members cannot refuse anything to these caste groups who are highly respected, and it is hoped that by naming children after their slaves would be a good subterfuge to deceive the death spirits and escape from dying. In so doing, they think that death doesn't exist for spirits. They never cease to live; The Dogon people presume that death does not haunt slaves of the caste groups and hates

things which are not invaluable. These names serve as covers to disguise new born identities.

2-4-Personal names according to skin complexion and physical characteristics

Among the Dogon people, names can also be given, in some occasions, according to bearers' skin complexion and physical appearance. Names like Abɔgu (male who has long nostril and Yabɔgu (female with long nostril) are common. Also, in regard to body complexion, names as Abanrin (male) and Yabanrin (female) meaning light-skinned. If the new born is too black, the name Agɛmu (male) and Yagɛmu (female) is given. Specifically, girls receive the name Eju or Yaeju at birth if they came to be born very cute and beautiful.

2-5-Personal names depicting belief in God

The Dogon people believe in the God 'Ama'. The attribution of some personal names is the reflection of the Dogon's belief in Ama and his power to grant them with children. Ama is above all other deities, and the Dogon people recognize his existence as the one, unique and supreme God who has solution to everything. In this sense, parents customarily give children Ama invoking names when they have waited for long in order to have babies. Thanks to God's grace and supremacy, babies who are born in such a circumstance bear the names that follow: Amagunɔ (Slave of God), Amakanran (God did it); ɔgɔpɛmɔ (Long life with him), ɔgɔdana (God protects him); Amadiŋɛ (God's will); Amaga (God is great); Ama-ire (God is the best); Amapɛbɛlu (I don't blame God); Amadagalu (God didn't abandon me); Amasagu (I confide him to God); Amajugɔ (Acknowledgements to God); Amadɔmɔ   (one waiting for God); Amayaba (God save me); Amatege (Praise to God); Amayɔkɔ (God exists); Amalɛ (fear God); Lɛgomu   (I don't fear it; I will survive). From the foregoing, we notice that the Dogon people are religious and believe in the almighty God. These personal names show that humans are powerless and children who bear the above names were born following events which are not dependent upon their parents' will.

2-6-Personal names according to injunctions

Some names are in the form of supplication to request God's favors. Other names are also used to thank God for his goodness to us. Names like Gɛnmɔ (Let's pray); Amaobo (God give us); Asegun (God multiply us); Dɔmiyɛ (Let's be patient, wait for God); Agiriyɛun (male) and Yagiriyɛun (female) meaning God lead him/her; Ɔnjɛ (Bring us goodness); Mɛrɛbara (Consolidate family ties); Bɔrugɔ (Thank you); Gojoi (don't divide, unify instead); Ɔgɔdaana (Stablize the power). These names depict the close social relationship that exists between community members. These names thus portray solidarity and love. In addition, the name serves also to show that there is no gap between man and his immediate environment. The Dogons, with the use of personal names, help prevent or break any social barriers that may arise between different social categories and foster a climate of making peace and cohesion in the society.

2-7-Personal names depicting kinship, social cohesion and expressing gratitude to God

Dogon people name children after the circumstantial socio-economic background of the family. The events which coincide with the birth of a child affect the naming system. If the family is well-off, then the babies receive such names as ɔgɔbara (male) or Yabara (female) meaning (God help add more to wealth); it is the expression of gratitude to God. If the babies are born to find that all the family wealth is impoverished or one of the parents (mainly father) die before they are born, then they are normally named after the following: Aamɔ (male) /Yaamɔ (female) meaning one whose father has died before his/her birth. Atɛmɛlu (male) and Yatɛmɛlu (female) meaning a child who lost his/ her parents (mother or father) before birth. A child who is born to find his parents or family devoid of power, then he/she is given names like ɔgɔtemelu.

Moreover, The Dogon people give priority to the Kinship link 'Guina' or the large family that unites the family members. They have a permanent concern for social tolerance and cohesion. In this case, they try to restore kinship link and plead for revitalizing relationship between family and community members. Some of the names portraying kinship ties, tolerance and social cohesion are as follows:

Mɛnrɛn-oju (Means of kinships); Mɛnrɛn-suɲu (kinship ties) Gɔnɔyɛnɛ (reminiscence); Baisɔ (affairs among clan members), Tabaninju (ancestors' clemency; ɔgɔbara (Add more to power); Tɔnriyɔnɲɛmɔ (let's tie the kinship). In short, personal names are used by the Dogons to express kinship ties, unity, social cohesion among community members.

2-8- Personal names according to circumstances surrounding the birth

Personal names	Literal meaning	Context in use
Amadaga	God save	This name is given when parents lose their children successively. The name symbolizes succession of death.
Amadiɲɛ	God will	This name is given when parents desire change in sex. If they have only girls, then they expect to have boys. Now if their expectation is met, then the new born is named Amadiɲɛ
Amadɔmɛ	Wait for God	This name symbolizes hope and patience. Name givers wait for God until they receive what they hoped for.
Amaga	God is great	This name is referred to recognizing the power of God. This name is given when parents overcome hardships or receive a divine grace
Amakaju	God is powerful	This name symbolizes the supremacy of God.

		It is given when parents feel protected against invisible powers.
(Ama) Kaaba or Kaa or Kalba	Confide to God	Parents attribute this name following successive deaths due to sorcery
Amakɔ	God rear	Just after giving birth, if the mother dies, then the child is named Amakɔ. It symbolizes the early death of the mother
Akuni (male) / Yakuni (female)	Divine luck	This name is given to a new born when the family or community have overcome perilous events or escape a danger or disease.
Amayanwalu	God did not spoil	This name is given if, during the pregnancy the mother was very ill or the baby was saved miraculously
Ama o	Gift of God	This name is used when parents sit in the throne after arguments.
Amasagu	Confide to God	Amasagu is named after successive death of many children.
Amasoŋɔ	God is cleverer	This name is given when parents escape from a trap or very difficult situations
Amatege	God's glory	This name symbolizes any losses (death) of children although there are many in the family.

		It is God who give and he who takes back.
Amatige	Wait for God	Expecting something or a child
Ama ire	God is better	After running everywhere in order to get a child, finally god gave a child
Amayaba	God saved	After a danger or a risk
Abɔrukɔ,yabɔrukɔ	Thank you God	This happens when all the children born are alive and in good shape. It symbolizes thankfulness to God
AmaPɛbɛlu	I don't accuse God	In the case when a co-spouse has one baby and the other has many
Atumɔ (male) Yatumɔ (female)	One who came with teeth	A child who is born with his teeth as his pregnancy lasted more than nine (9) months.
Asiwɛ (male) Yasiwɛ (female)	Strangely positioned	At birth, a child whose leg came out first, the head after.
Agujɔ (male) Yagujɔ (female)	Defeathering (taking the feather off)	This name is given to children who are born in the bush. If this happens, then parents and relatives slaughter a cockerel in the bush and return home while defeathering it.
Abirɛ Yabirɛ	God made	A child born without eyes.
Ampilema Yapilema	I am back	New baby girl or boy who is born right after the death of his/ her

		siblings
Asama Yasama	The change	A child who is born after many boys or girls.

The above table shows that the Dogons strongly hold their traditions; and in their belief system, superstitions play an important role in naming. The circumstances surrounding the birth of the child determine the significance of the naming. In this respect, names are given to children to call for patience and humility, express rescue in the event of force majeure, transition in the order of birth, thanksgiving to God, etc.

2-9-Personal names describing bravery

Work is highly valued in the Dogon community. All collective activities are celebrated. Names are given in relation to successful actions undertaken by the workers in order to perpetuate good attitude and fight against laziness. Some of the names describing bravery are as follows:

Personal names	Literal meaning	Context
Orubaru	Bush aid / protect	Superstitious name, used when parents ask favor from the traditional bush guardians for protection. It symbolizes someone who has authority of bush protection.
Apaŋa/Yapaŋa	Strength	This name is given in reference to the family political and economic backgrounds. It is used to keep up the power of the family.
Jugɔnu	Knowledge	This name is used for the purposes of recognizing the misericord of God.

Aduŋu	Elephant	Powerful as an elephant. This name is given when one has resisted in the face of hardship
Paŋalɛ	Fear powers	This name is used when parents have been victimized in administration. It is also used to symbolize law and regulations that one should abide by.
ɔgɔ	Power/throne	When parents hope that God grant power to the new born
Jimule	Big worker	Attributed to any hard working persons
ɔgɔnu /ɔgɔnɛ	The king	This name is a symbolism for reincarnation of a king. Specifically, children who bear names like ɔgɔnu / ɔgɔnɛ are expected to be kings
Kɛnɛkuwo	Eat your heart	This happens if the baby is born when parents face difficult situations. This name is given in reference to pains and gains (no pain, no gain).
Kɛnɛ kunɔ	Persevere in work	This name refers to situations where parents are hardworking and want to perpetuate manpower. It symbolizes courage and perseverance.

The personal names included in the table above display the attitudes of the Dogon people in relation to their perception to individual and collective work. They are strong, brave and courageous. They prefer to work hard and live with dignity. That is where they find the joy of life. Such attitudes are reflected in their naming system as a sociocultural phenomenon to symbolize courage and perseverance in reference to pains and gains.

2-10-First names borrowed from the Fulani language

Like many cultures in West Africa, due to language contact and dynamics, the Dogon people borrowed words from the neighboring Fulani community. Fulfulde serves the lingua franca between the two communities in many areas in the Dogonland. Such names borrowed from Fulfulde are Alawɔnu (God exists), used when parents are accused wrongly; Alaburu (God is better) to mean it is better to resort to God than humans; Pulɔ ire (Fulani is better) is used when name givers are betrayed by their own people. Misawudi (I am fed up) borrowed from Fulfulde means enough is enough; Asawuru (Be clement) borrowed from Fulfulde. It means to beg one's indulgence.

Due to language contact with the Fulanis, this use of personal names is very common. The Fulanis and the Dogons live together in the same environment. For this reason, some Dogon people share group identity with them through language. Language contact may ascertain conviviality and social cohesion among community members. Therefore, borrowed names from Fulani's are the expression that language is an identity marker and contribute to shape our social and cultural perception of the self and of others.

2-11- Personal names before the return of menses

If women fall pregnant before seeing their periods, then the name of the child is Akuŋɔn (male) and Yakuŋɔn (female). Since it is unusual for women to be pregnant without menstruation, the Dogons, through these personal names, request God's protection and favors for the new born, his family and the whole community.

2-12- First names as homonyms

Homonyms are used to remember the departed family members and ancestors. The practice of naming children after them allows their reincarnation. In addition, homonyms are also used to mark politeness. It is impolite and even a taboo for anyone who is older than you to address him/ her by first names. For this reason, younger people avoid calling elders directly by their first names. Instead, they use prefixes such as Dide (for senior brothers), Dida (for senior sisters), De (for both fathers and paternal uncles; and, to a less degree, it can be used for any men to show respect); Da (for mothers, to a less degree it

can be used for senior sisters). Further illustrations include: Ba (father), Na (mother), Boru (paternal uncle), niŋun (maternal uncle), Ninrun (paternal aunt), Lɔ (aunt), Badiyɛ (senior father), Nadiyɛ (senior mother), etc. in order to sound polite and be pleasant to the older community members. Some examples of these names are as follows: Dide + first name (Dide Domo means senior brother Domo); Dida + first name (Dida Kalɛ - Senior sister Kalɛ); De + first name (De Gono means father Gono). Da + first name (Da Sama means senior sister Sama). Ba+ first name (Ba Akuɲɔ means father Akuɲɔ); Na+ first name (Na Amayɔ means Mother Amayɔ); Badiyɛ+ first name (Badiyɛ Iŋɛrɛ means Elder father Iŋɛrɛ); Boru+ first name (Boru Abɔjɔ means paternal uncle Abɔjɔ); Ninrun+ first name (Ninrun Yaana means Aunt Yaana), etc.

In the dogon culture, it is not allowed that younger people call elderly persons by their personal names. Affixes such as Ba, De, Na, Boru, Ninrun, Lɔ, Badiyɛ, Nadiyɛ, etc. are used to euphemize the address. Failure to observe these sociocultural rules will make the speaker impolite and rude.

2-13- Personal names related to the armed conflicts, family or land dispute

By tradition and customs, the Dogon people give children names according to the events which characterize a given situation. Such names include but are not limited to the following: Akɔmɔ (male) / Yakɔmɔ (female) mean one who is born during war or conflict. Agojɔlu (male) / Yagojɔlu (female) is (Do not do injustice); Amɔnɔ (male) / Yamɔnɔ (female) means (Unite people, family, kinship, etc.); Sɔjugɔ (both male and female) means (Know things; be wise and knowledgeable); Amɛnu (male) / Yamɛnu (female) is given to a child when the mother comes in the family with pregnancy, which is not from the new husband. Clearly, in the situation of war or dispute between two or more opposing groups, the Dogon people give names related to war or mediation or reconciliation for the purposes of avoiding displeasure, making peace and social cohesion.

2-14- Week-Days and Months as Personal Names

Dogon personal names for the week-days are borrowed and adapted from Arabic. The babies born on Monday are named Alitine. The one (girl) born on Tuesday is Talata. A child born on Wednesday receives the personal name Alaruba. A child born on Thursday is called Kamissa. Ajuma is the name for the one born on Friday. The personal name Nasiru is given to a child born on Saturday. These names are borrowings and adaptations from Arabic. They are integrated into the socio-cultural realities of the Dogon community. In the same way, some Dogon personal names are made reference to special events of the months. The name Korika is given to a baby boy or girl born during the fasting month (Ramadan). Personal names related to week-days and months are loan words and borrowed from Arabic. This practice may be due to the long term interaction between the Dogon and Arabic languages through religion. Conversion to Islam and contact with Muslims may be some of the motivating factors that led the Dogons to adopt such borrowings.

2-15- Names according to seasons

The Dogon people also give names to their children according to specific seasons of the year charactering their birth. In this case, the names such as Miŋupuye (flowering of shea tree), Aŋun (millet) are common. Miŋu (shea tree) is very much in demand and the Dogon people use it in various problem solving situations. Similarly, Aŋun (millet) is given to a child born during the harvesting season, specifically during which season the family harvest a great amount of crops. In plain words, the Dogon people use the name Miŋupuye to symbolize fertility and express happiness and hope on the one hand, and the name Aŋun to signify subsistence and issues related to survival on the other. Because they mainly live on farming, such names are used to embody their cultural livelihood.

2-16- Social significance of the study

In this study, we have explored some traditional Dogon names and described the circumstances and events according to which they are given. By putting these names at least in writing, we help to save them from a slow but sure death due to the overabundance of imported individual names. At the same time, we are sensitizing the Dogon

people to the importance of indigenous names. The advent of Islam and Christianism has contributed to making people believe that only names taken from the Koran or the Bible are valid. In other words, our names are regarded as inappropriate and incompatible with religion. However, if we analyze carefully, all the so-called Muslim or Christian names fit into the different classifications of traditional Dogon names that we have explored so far. Either it is given to allude to a consecutive loss of children (Dieudonné), or to ward off an evil (Pierre), or to allude to the place or time of childbirth (Tarik, Ramadan), etc. Therefore, it is a matter of drawing people's attention not to confuse religion with Western or Arab-Berber cultures. Far from advocating cultural autarky, our names must cohabit in perfect harmony with imported names. Moreover, the main social functions of anthroponyms could be determined as follows:

- ✓ Function of integration: the name received marks social recognition; In so doing, the name bearer is called to become a member of a community, and to become part of its history.
- ✓ Interpersonal function: the name serves as a relationship operator. In terms of address, the name serves to "challenge others, to call them, to question them, to invoke them, to intimidate them, to greet them (Motte-Florac & Guarisma, 2004, p.282), and also to bless or curse them.
- ✓ Referential function: when we refer to someone by name, it is the utilitarian function of reference that takes precedence: it is a matter of getting along well with the person we are talking about.
- ✓ Message carrier function: the named person becomes a living message in many places in the form of a collected and allusive statement addressed to various recipients. The bearer will undoubtedly be influenced by the message imposed on him.

Therefore, the name serves to show that there is no break between man and nature. In addition, these first names have the advantage of helping to prevent or break any discriminations and social barriers that may arise between different social categories and to establish a climate of peace and cohesion in the society. The names do not fall within any endogamy synonymous with folding over and

refusing to open to others. Whether our personal names are dictated by tradition or chosen according to circumstances surrounding the birth, they reflect our cultural heritage. For that reason, they need to be treasured and respected.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has described the Dogon people's naming system and explored the principles underlying their name creation. The cultural practices of naming systems are contingent upon people's language, which is a powerful tool and cultural resource. Dogon socio-cultural practices of name systems are a reflection of their ideology, philosophy, belief system, and religion, to mention but a few. Their personal names derive from their sociocultural realities and ways of life. Particularly, Dogon anthroponymy embraces a variety of categories. Such categories of Dogon personal names and the circumstances surrounding their adoption have been described and elucidated. Findings show that names are not created at random, but are related to meaningful socio-cultural phenomena. Illustrations such categories of Dogon personal names include but not limited to the following: They may be names following the order of Birth, names of twins, related to death prevention mechanism, skin complexion and physical characteristics, kinship, social cohesion and expressing gratitude to God, week-days, names borrowed from the Fulani language, names before the return of menses**,** etc. Dogon anomic prefixes (**a** and **ya**) are utilized to draw distinctions between male and female. Finally, the circumstances involved in naming system are various and unpredictable. For this reason, it is hoped that other researches be conducted on Dogon onomastics in order to gain further insights into aspects as morphosyntax and morpho-semantics of Dogon personal names.

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