

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC EXPLORATION OF ONOMASTIC DATA IN KHASSENG ENVIRONMENT: THE CASE OF ANTHROPONYMS

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Résumé

En faisant l'inventaire des recherches sur les noms de lieux et l'anthroponymie en milieu khasseng, nous constatons malheureusement que peu d'étude au niveau universitaire a été consacrée à ce domaine. C'est cette préoccupation de pouvoir combler ce vide et de faire de l'anthroponymie un mobile scientifique qui nous mène à faire cet article. Nous avons l'intention d'explorer le terrain, d'identifier et d'expliquer la pratique du point de vue selon lequel nos données serviront de base à d'autres chercheurs qui seraient intéressés plus tard par le domaine. Nous avons d'abord réalisé une étude de terrain pour constituer un corpus. Pour cela, nous avons à la fois consulté les documents écrits, écouté des personnes ressources, les gardiens de la tradition et maîtres de la parole à travers des questionnaires relatifs à la manière d'attribuer les noms de personnes et de lieux et leur contenu sémantique, l'événement qui donne lieu à cet événement. Grâce à ces travaux sur le terrain, nous avons pu identifier, classer et expliquer de nombreux types de noms individuels en milieu Khasseng.

Mots clés : Khasse (Khasse), Onomastique (Onomastics), Anthroponymie (Anthroponymy), mobile scientifique (scientific mobile), enquête de terrain (fieldsurveys).

1. Context and Justification

This study started from the theory that there is a difference between the proper name and the common name and that the proper name is more meaningful than the common name. In this respect, Leguy (2012) argues, "

Désigner une personne par un nom est d'abord un phénomène de langage. Nommer, c'est en effet attribuer certains sons à une entité. Nommer une personne, c'est designer vocalement cette personne »³ p.51. It is in this sense that as linguists, we have been interested in this field of research which as we can see with this definition from Leguy is a branch of linguistics although many other areas are also interested. Prieur (1991, p.4) goes on to say, " *De tous les objets de langage, les noms propres sont à coup sûr ceux qui ont inspiré le plus d'intérêt, dans des domaines variés à l'extérieur de la linguistique : philosophie, logique, anthropologie, onomastique, sémiotique, psychanalyse... ont pris pour objet le nom propre* " ⁴. Given the literal meaning of these khassonke names, many questions we had never thought of before came to our mind.

Naming people is as old as the world. The first men on earth according to the scriptures have already borne: Adam and Eve. The Traditional African society in general and that of the khassonke in particular cannot be an exception to this rule. The Khassonke people, like any other African people, have suffered the painful phenomenon of colonization to varying degrees, which has been a factor of depersonalization, acculturation, and assimilation. Khasso, especially on the left bank of the Senegal, was soon in contact with the outside world. The Logo and the Dembaya have even long been considered by French authors as the only land in Khasso hence their name by Sissoko (1986) of "The Khasso of French authors"⁵. So, in speaking of openness to the outside world, we speak of contact with other cultures and civilizations. In Khasso, colonization marked cultural and sociological attitudes and behaviors.

Today, the practice of naming continues but has undergone significant changes. We are witnessing the advent of more and more "imported names". The speed with which these changes take place sometimes pushes us to ask ourselves a certain number of relevant questions about our past, our culture nowadays, and about the very future of our culture.

By following the infernal rhythm of these social, cultural, ideological and philosophical changes, if we do not take a retrospective look at the route traveled by our societies to reach the current stage of their history, we will be lost tomorrow. So, three basic questions arise:

- Who were we yesterday?
- Who are we today?

³ Translation ours: 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

⁴ Translation ours: Of all the objects of language, the proper nouns are surely those who have inspired the most interest, in various fields outside of linguistics: philosophy, logic, anthropology, onomastics, semiotics, psychoanalysis ... have taken as their object the proper name

⁵ French authors thought that Khasso was only limited to Logo and Dembaya.

- Who will we be tomorrow?

For us, Khasso, like any other African society, must have recourse to its authenticity because the legitimate influence it has known in the field of Economy, History and even Science can become a calamity for itself if it does not have for parallel a spiritual development in accordance with its own mentality and the few advantages of the old traditions that we try to highlight in this paper, can enter into the awareness of a people in full loss of landmarks.

We are far from advocating a kind of self-cultural sufficiency, but it will not be necessary for foreign cultures to take the place of ours, there must be complementarity. As a consequence of the cultural aggression suffered by Khasso, the khassonke names are in constant decline giving way to names 'related' to revealed religions. We will add to this the ignorance of many people who link names to religious affiliation and from there, names to religious faith. We must also not overlook the often-harmful role played by the mass media, especially the cinema, in the proliferation of nicknames imported into the youth world.

The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the khassonke typical individual names of people and to make their typology.

Specifically, this work aims at the following objectives:

1. Identify and describe the names according to their use and their internal Morphology in Khassonke.
2. Make the inventory of anthroponymical practice in Khassonke environment.
3. Measure the impact of penetration and Islamization on the process of attributing individual names.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How are names identified according to their use and their internal structure in Khassonke?
2. How could the inventory of anthroponomical practices be made in the Khassonke environment?
3. What is the impact of penetration and islamization on the process of attributing individual names?

2. Methodology

The Khasso is composed of 10 communes. Not being able to investigate all the 10 communes with a total number of 180 villages and, so in order to have a representative sample, we combined the empirical method and the systematic random method with several degrees. In the empirical method, we selected four communes, two having the largest number of villages, and one having the smallest number of villages and one because of its very fast contact with the school and the white evangelizers. The number of villages/towns selected is shown in the Table below.

Table 1: The number of villages/towns selected

N°	Communes	Number of villages
1	Tomora	38
2	Khontela	28
3	Logo	19
4	Gopela	6
Total		91

Thus, we obtain a total of 91 villages which constitute our sampling frame. In order to have a representative sample, we adopted the multi-stage systematic random method. For this, we proceeded to:

- Random drawing at the 1st degree of $\frac{1}{4}$ of the 91 villages that make up the four communes selected. So, $91 \times \frac{1}{4} = 23$, and the number of villages retained is 23;
- Random drawing at the 2nd degree 15 households by villages retained in the 1st degree. So, $20 \times 15 = 345$, and the total number of households retained is 345;
- Random drawing at the 3rd degree of a household. So, $1 \times 345 = 345$ households.
The sample size is therefore 345 households and the head of household or its representative, having at least knowledge about anthroponymy will be subject to our pre-established questionnaire.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Classification of traditional first khassonke name

In traditional Khassonke society, the choice of the individual name of the child depends on several criteria, of which an increasing number is, because of Islam and modernity, questioned. These criteria are justified through:

3.1.1 Succession

Unlike Fulani and Bamanan societies where consecutive births of children give rise to specific first names, in Khasso, it is up to the father to give the eldest, the younger or the youngest the first name of a person of his choice corresponding to the sex of the child. This name is usually that of his father, his mother, an uncle or an aunt. The third child is entitled to the wife who in turn also gives him the name of one of the parents mentioned above. The same process continues until the woman stops procreating. This

practice, which is also the originality of the Khassonke in this area, responds to a need to perpetuate and immortalize the name thus bequeathed to the child by what is part of the family patrimony. However, we must recognize that since the Islamization of Khasso, in addition to the authentic name, the child can have a Muslim name corresponding to his birthday.

3.1.2 Names of twins

Twins are considered in traditional khassonke society as exceptional beings with special rights. In Khasso, in addition to Muslim names, the twins wore and continue to wear very specific names among which we can mention Funexe (twin brother) and Funemusu (twin sister). As for their cousin, whatever his sex, he wore and continues to wear the name Sajo.

3.1.3 Names for the consecutive loss of children

If a woman who loses her children successively gives birth to another, the names that are generally assigned to her are among others: Sungutunba (large pile of garbage); Jala (the cailcedra); Fili (To Throw); Kuru (Stone); Moxontafe (Nobody likes her); Fayike (Can he/she live); Bulafanpe (Left to himself), etc. This virtual "rejection" that is only verbal aims to allow the child to be the survivor of an untimely death that has taken away his elders. They could live as long as their parents want.

The khassonke think that the child who arrives is a revenant, that's why we give him/her these unpleasant and repulsive names that Maurice Houis (1963, p.83) qualifies of "antinomic name of death" and Obeng (1998, p.44) of "death prevention name".

3.1.4 Reproduction after a long period of infertility

In the same way as the previous case, it is to ensure long life to a child born by a woman who is recognized sterile. In such a situation, names invoking chance, hope, surprise, etc. are given to new borns. The first names that follow fall into this category: Juuku (Surprise); Kunadiya (Luck); Nimetiya (Life is not lost); Mandoxo (That's not bad); Nyamee (Long life), etc.

3.1.5 Special case of premature orphans

If a man dies while his wife is pregnant of a boy, the baby boy will bear the name of his father at his birth. On the other hand, the name Tunxo (remains after me) is given to any child (without distinction of sex) born immediately or a few days later the mother dies.

It is also possible to give the child a name celebrating the day of his birth, as it is much done in Akan society for example (Obeng ,2001), or in some Islamic populations such as the Zarma of Niger (Bornand, 2006).

3.1.6 Miscellaneous First names

We call them so because at the current stage of our research, it was not possible for us to decode them in order to know their meaning. Nevertheless, they continue to be attributed to the child like all other names. We propose in the future to pursue the research in order to decode them. Some names identified in this context are: Males: Dakiri, Modi, Tunka, Madi, etc. Females: Kama, Xunba, Xamisa, Takko, Kani, etc.

The nature of names and the distribution of respondents indicated in the table below.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to the nature of names

Nature of names	Number	%
Infertility	40	18.2
Consecutive losses of children	60	27.3
Date of delivering	10	4.5
Places of delivering	17	7.7
Names of animals	9	4.1
Condition of delivering	1	0.5
Order of birth	13	5.9
Names of twins	3	1.4
Physical traits and moral qualities	24	10.9
Flora and fauna	5	2.3
Names of princes	2	0.9
Alliance names	9	4.1
Others/Miscellaneous	27	12.3
Total	220	100.0

We calculated in this table the percentage for the different events or circumstances that explain the choice of such a name in Khasso.

4. Distribution of individual names according to their origins

By observing the individual khassonke names in their entirety, we realize that, beyond their specific ethnic origins, they belong as much to the spatio-temporal environment, to nature in its much-diversified form as to phenomena lived and observed in society. This means that among khassonke as well as among other ethnic groups present in Mali, the attribution of the individual names is not a fortuitous practice; it is always done by referring to a given reality. The latter as such can be concrete or abstract, natural or cultural, lived or observed, animated or inanimate, near or far. Some examples to illustrate the different origins of the individual name:

4.1 First name of alliance *(between social categories)*

Joncunda "the slaves' family", Numucunda "the blacksmiths family", Jalicunda "the griots family", Jalixe "griot", Numuxe "blacksmith", Jonxe "slave," etc. These first names have the advantage of helping to prevent or break any discrimination and social barrier that may arise between different social categories and to establish a climate of peace and cohesion in society in that the names in this category do not fall within, by no means, any endogamy synonymous with folding over and refusing to open. For example, Joncunda «slaves' family" or Jonxe "slave" are attributed to children of any other social category (that of free people included) different from that of captives.

4.2 Names from animal origins

They are mostly borrowed from wild animals. Tura "Bull", Sula "Red Monkey", Bala "porcporc", Xanbon "Panther", Gon "Black Monkey", Bugari "Hyena", Sulin "Horse" Wara (ba) "Lion" etc.

4.3 Names from plant origins

These include Turo, Jala, Kobo, Tunbin, Tonboron, Kunje, Gaawa, Sexene, etc. which are all names of wild trees to which are added names of herbs such as: Binkutun "rest of grass", Soolin, Baara, Badon, Bo, etc. and names of food crops: Kinti, Daloba "varieties of millet ", Makka" maize ", Tiga" peanut ", Nyugu" vegetable ", etc.

The explanation that can be given to the attribution of names of animal and vegetable origin is twofold:

4.3.1 Didactic

In other words, it is a question of familiarizing the child with the fauna and the flora of its soil when one knows that the mentioned animals are supposed to be among the most current and the recorded trees are among the most useful thanks to their shade or to their fruits and leaves.

4.3.2 Religious

For the reason that some fetish trees like Jala, Tunbin, Sexene are reputed to be popular in the khassonke cosmogony, some women in need of children entrust their newborns to these trees in order to guarantee them a long life.

4.4 Names from hydronymical origins

The most common are: Baji "River Water", Woyo "River Current", Jita "take water", Bafin "Black Water", Sanji "Rainwater", Jisuma "Fresh Water", Jibon "pour water" etc.

All these names are related to water, and like those related to flora and fauna are part of the natural environment.

4.5 Names from mineral origins

They are for example: Kuru "Pierre", Nege "Iron", Sanu "Gold", Godi "bracelet", Muru "Knife" etc. They are all technological and refer to the trade of the blacksmith who is of paramount importance in this society for the good reason that it is him the manufacturer of all these instruments and jewels.

4.6 Names inspired by the time and place of birth

These are Tenin "Monday", Araba "Tuesday", Xamisa "Thursday", Juma "Friday", Susaba "three nights corresponding to the duration of childbirth" are all female first names, Sanjaxu "bad year", Sunxaru "month of Ramadan", Tutuba "a long rain". To these names with temporal value, are added those with rental value: Dankun "crossroads", Bunju "bottom of the room", Silaba "the high road", Babuwoto "in a pile of goats' excrement", Salikene "the praying area," etc.

All these names identify the different places where the birth of children bearing the same names takes place. These moments and places are sure memories for the mother and the child but they do not have the same meaning for both. For the first, they remain concrete and indelible proofs of the pain of childbirth, but they are also so exalting and honorable for every woman. As for the second, especially speaking of these places, they represent places of worship where the child goes alone or accompanied by the mother every time, s/he is facing a hard test to seek the help of the spirits that haunt him/her. In the same vein, it should be pointed out that the links which unite them henceforth are governed by the rights and duties that the homonyms, that is to say, the individuals carrying an identical first name, owe each other and which is characterized by friendship, mutual help and sharing.

4.7 Names inspired by observed facts

First names in this category are originally inspired by the partial physical portrait of the individuals to whom they were assigned. These, at the same time, became both referents and bearers of names. The given names in this category include: Kunbuna "non-braided hair", Dawulin "red mouth", Xe (ba) "big man", Xefin "black man", Musumaxan "cozy woman", Xanxunan "bitter voice", Xansutun "short neck ", Kunjan" oval head ", Nyamessen" little eyes ".

To these different names belonging to very diversified origins are added others of commercial origin as Sanbali "which is not sold or which cannot be bought", Jaagu "commerce", and celestial like Loolo "star", Sanji "literally water of the sky that is to say the rain". Still, concerning individual names, a single individual may have several.

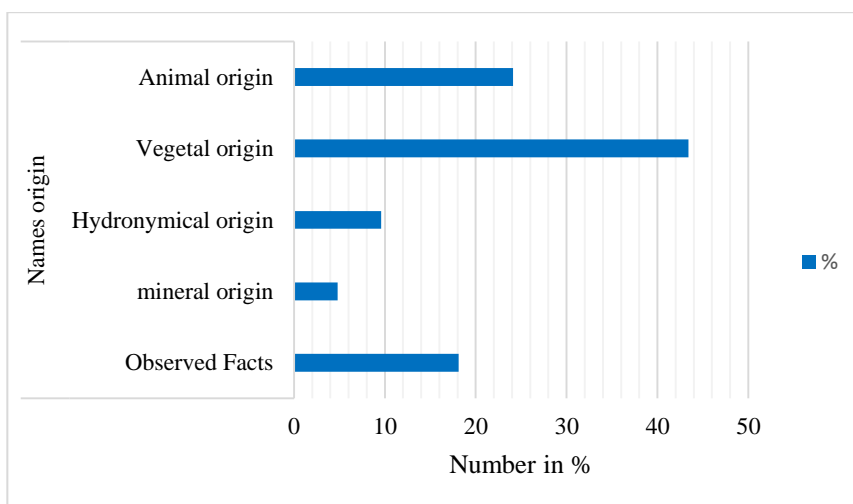


Figure 1: Distribution of respondents according to the origin of names

The results in this figure show that the Khassonke individual names are methodically drawn from all areas of life, and nature so as to confirm the unity of the world and the lack of breaking people / nature. Morphologically speaking, out of a total of 210 names that make up our corpus, 55.5% are simple and 44.5% are compound and 50% are male, 32.7% female and 17.3% mixed. As illustrated in figures 2 and 3.

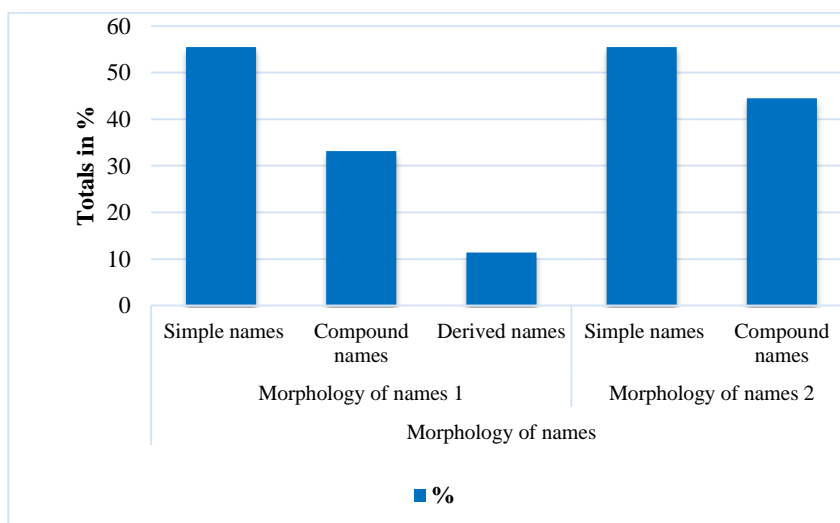


Figure 2: Distribution of respondents according to the morphology of names

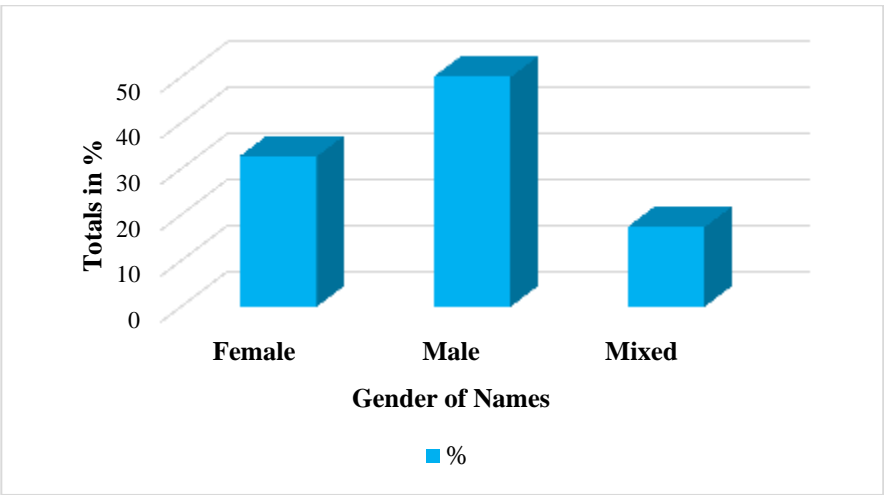


Figure 3: Distribution of respondents according to the gender of names

4. FINDINGS

We assume that names have a special social role in Khasso: that of generating a harmonization of life between different social classes. Khassonke names are methodically drawn from all areas of life, and from nature so as to confirm the uniqueness of the world and the absence of man/nature breakdown.

The survey also determined that the typical khassonke naming ceremony is disappearing, giving way to an exhibition naming ceremony.

5. SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In this study, we have explored some traditional Khasso 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 khassonke people to the importance of indigenous names. The advent of Islam and Christianity 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 Khassonke 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.

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, we say that this work is primarily intended to announce a detailed register of khassonke names of people. All elementary it is, we would like to see the enterprise's pitfalls and difficulties inherent in term of qualitatively and quantitatively very inadequate documentation. But at a time when these names face the challenge of survival, we consider it is desirable to highlight this too little-known area of our heritage as "most of the names given to children are messages to understand in a particular context" (Leguy, 2005). The choice of this topic as an article fits into this framework. We would like to bring our small contribution to the effort of description and identification of the names that are used in the same way as statements we use to understand. These names play an important role in our society as Obeng (1998, p.170) puts it "the names are created to help members of a society to speak the unspeakable".

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