

A Sociolinguistic Survey of Yoruba and Ashanti Naming Re-engineering: The Case of Nigeria and Ghana

Yekeen Bello

Department of Arts Education/Faculty of Education/University of Ilorin,
Ilorin, Nigeria.

belight1010@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study investigates how that human beings and their cultures have names by which they are designated or called. This paper therefore, is a survey of naming tradition between two ethnic groups in West African Sub-region namely Yoruba ethnic group in Nigeria and Ashanti ethnic group in Ghana. Various cultural names with their meanings and origins from the two traditions of Yoruba and Ashanti were analysed. Purposive sampling technique was used to select elderly people in the Offa community whose consents were initially sought and interviewed based of their experience. Data were also obtained from libraries and texts. It was found that naming as a tradition, is an important sociolinguistic phenomenon, the practice of which dates back to the biblical time of creation. The study found that names are given in Yoruba and Ashanti cultures according to circumstances such as physical, spiritual, socio-economic, day names, theosophic or Anglicisation surrounding the birth of a child. The study reveals that the common denominator in the naming tradition of the two ethnolinguistic groups is the peoples' belief system. Many cultural names are derived from God, gods, goddesses, deities, shrine or priests, and such names are Nyamekye and Oluwatosin. Many of such names are used as a prefix, suffix or infix as the case may be. It was therefore, concluded that the two ethnic groups, though not from the same country, share certain common ethnographic and ethnological traits as such, name practices and re-engineering between the two traditions of Yoruba and Ashanti are very intriguing and revealing.

Keywords: Yoruba, Ashanti, Name Re-engineering, sociolinguistics.

دراسة لغوية اجتماعية لإعادة هيكلة التسمية في لغتي يوروبا وأشانتي : نيجيريا وغانا أنموذجاً

يقين بللو

قسم آداب التربية/ كلية التربية/ جامعة إيلورين/ نيجيريا

المستخلص:

تبحث هذه الدراسة في كيفية توظيف البشر وثقافتهم الأسماء التي يتم عبرها تعريفهم أو مناداتهم. لذلك فإن هذه الدراسة عبارة عن مسح لتقاليد التسمية بين مجموعتين عرقيتين في منطقة غرب إفريقيا الفرعية وهما مجموعة اليوروبا في نيجيريا والأشانتي في غانا. إذ تم تحليل أسماء مختلفة مع معانيها وأصولها من تقاليد اليوروبا وأشانتي عن طريق استخدام تقنية أخذ العينات عن قصد لاختيار كبار السن في مجتمع أوفّا بعد أن تم الحصول على موافقتهم في البداية وإجراء مقابلات معهم بناءً على تجربتهم. كما تم الحصول على البيانات من مكتبات ونصوص عائدة لهاتين الثقافتين. لقد وجدت الدراسة أن التسمية، بوصفها تقليداً، هي ظاهرة اجتماعية لغوية مهمة، تعود ممارستها إلى زمن نشأة الخليقة. ووجدت الدراسة أن الأسماء في ثقافتَي اليوروبا والأشانتي تمنح وفقاً لخصائص جسدية وروحية

واجتماعية واقتصادية، وأسماء اليوم، والأسماء المنسوبة للخالق أو تلك المأخوذة عن الانكليزية. تكشف الدراسة أن القاسم المشترك في تقليد التسمية للمجموعتين العرقيتين اللغويتين هو نظام معتقدات الشعوب. العديد من الأسماء الثقافية مشتقة من الله أو الآلهة أو المزار أو الكهنة، ومن أمثلة هذه الأسماء تلك التي تعطي معنى "هبة الخالق" و"خادم الرب" إذ يتم استخدام العديد من هذه الأسماء بوصفها بادئة أو لاحقة أو لاحقة بحسب الحالة. لذلك، تم التوصل إلى أن المجموعتين العرقيتين، على الرغم من أنهما ليسا من نفس البلد، تشتركان في بعض السمات العرقية والمجتمعية المشتركة على هذا النحو.

الكلمات الدالة: يوروبا، أشانتي، إعادة هيكلة التسمية، علم اللغة الاجتماعي

Introduction

Linguistically, onomastic is the study of names, their corresponding meanings and their socio-cultural significance in the ethnology of mankind. A name is a word or an appellation by which humans, animals, places, things, events are known and, or called. Bangbose [1] suggests that, a name is that by which a person is called, known or designated in contradistinction. Bangbose explains further that, naming as a cultural practice is as old as man. The origin of name dates back to the time of creation. Historically, and religiously, naming can be traced to the Almighty God, the creator of the universe, who is called and given praise names by mankind. It is from this divine practice of the Almighty God that mankind all over the universe borrow and start giving names to their off-brings, animals, places, things, events, festivals, times, occasions, among several things. Biblically and Quranically, the first naming of things (ceremony) was instituted by God, the Almighty. He, the Almighty first gave Adam both a generic name "MAN", and a personal name ADAM (Bible) and (Quran). In the world over especially Africa, and Nigeria (Yoruba) and Ghana (Ashanti) in particular, name re-engineering is practised [2].

The Yoruba in Nigeria and the Ashanti in Ghana, and perhaps most of the ethnic groups in Nigeria and Ghana are no exception from this cultural practice. Child naming for instance in Yoruba and Ashanti lands is very significant, and are often marked with celebrities and festivities. In many places, naming is done with pump and pageantry. Studies by scholars among whom is Olaoye [2], contend that the Yorubas are one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria, mostly found in Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo, some parts of Kwara and Kogi States. It is noticed that the Oyo, Egba, Ijebu, Ekiti, Ijesha, Igbomina, Yagba, Kaba and Owe dialectical groups speak Yoruba language but with different dialectical variations. Similarly, Asante [3]; Agyekum [4], Boye [5], assert that the *Asante*, *Brong Ahafo*, *Kwahu*, *Akyem*, *Akuapem*, and *Fante* all speak Twi (Ashanti language) but mostly with different Akan dialectical variations. Olaoye [6], and Agyekum [4], contend that Yoruba and Twi respectively are tonal and generally grouped as one of the KWA languages of West Africa. Olaoye [2], is of the view that the standard Yoruba is the one taught in schools, used in literature and for radio and television of broadcast. In his own contribution, Obeng [7], affirms that the Akan people occupy the greater part of the Southern part of Ghana, and Akan is spoken as a native language (LI) in six of the ten regions in Ghana namely Ashanti, Eastern, Western, Central, *Brong Ahafo* Regions, and that the Akan is made up of various dialects that are mutually

intelligible. These are Asante, *Akuapem*, *Akwamu*, *Fante*, *Akyem*, *Agona*, *Assin*, *Denkyira*, *Twifo*, *Wassaw*, *Kwawu*, *Brong* and *Buem*. Like Yoruba too, standard Akan is the one taught/studied from primary school up to the university level.

Child naming according to Bangbose [1], in Yoruba culture, a child is named/ christened on the 8th day, and names given at the naming ceremony are personal names decided by the parents, and in some cases based on cultural phenomena such as day, reason, situation, circumstance, chronology of birth after certain events, position among other siblings, as well as other circumstances. In furtherance of this Bamigbose emphasises that surname is not a child's personal name, but inherited and in most cases they (surnames) are unchangeable because of their ancestral connotations.

Similarly, the Ashanti people also name their children on the 8th day, and the names that are normally given to newly born babies on the day of the ceremony are personal names that is Ashanti personal names (APN) are most often than not decided by the parents (mostly the grandparents where available), based on cultural events such as day, season, circumstance, situation, chronology of birth after certain events, position, among other siblings and the source from where such a child is obtained Buburi [8]. Buburi contends further that these Akan dialectal groups have a monolithic culture but with many dialects at language level. These, among other things like the Yoruba groups may be the reason for the striking similarities in the Yoruba personal names (YPNs) and Ashanti personal names (APNs).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study among other things is to find out:

- a. the meaning of some names among Yoruba (Nigeria) and Ashanti (Ghana);
- b. the similarities and differences in the Yoruba and Ashanti naming traditions;
- c. the factors that determine what names to be given to children of Yoruba and those of Ashanti;
- d. if names so given to children in Yoruba and Ashanti traditions have any influence on the bearers life style and people's perception of such names;
- e. the significance of names of the two traditions; and
- f. the type of naming re-engineering practices among Yoruba and Ashanti ethnic groups in West Africa.

Methodology

The main data collection instrument is interview carried out among the Yoruba traditional people living in Offa and also the Ashanti community in Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria. Being a survey research, purposive samples of elderly people in the Offa community whose consents were initially sought were interviewed based of their experience. Data were also obtained from libraries and texts. The researcher gathered information from the history of the origin of the places and people interviewed, some of their old and new names, reasons for such names (both old and new where applicable) and the reasons for the names so given to their off-springs. No interpreter was needed since the researchers can speak in the two languages fluently. The interview questions were directed to the respondents to elicit answers from them.

Data Analysis

The data collected were various traditional names used by both Yoruba and Ashanti people for their children. These names were examined, gloss provided to English and analysed accordingly.

Yoruba Names

Gloss is provided on the Yoruba names to English following semantic rendition and sociolinguistic interpretation. The study focuses on different types of name such as praise names (oriki), lyrics, nicknames, cognomens/appellations and God/gods associated names as well as the reasons for giving such names. Olaoye [2], contends that human names, for instance are derived from family backgrounds, villages/towns, socio-economic background of parents, circumstances surrounding the birth of the child, i.e. the psychological states, physical appearances, social circumstances, season of the period the child is born, time and order of birth, place of birth, religious belief of the family into which the child is born. Based on these multifaceted sources of Yoruba names, the Yoruba personal names (YPNs) have been classified into several semantic categories. Some of the classifications are:

1. praise names reflecting family pedigree
2. names reflecting events
3. praise names reflecting the parents' socio-economic, psychological, physical and social status
4. praise names reflecting child's physical appearance, order of birth, circumstances surrounding the child's birth and personal character at birth.
5. names reflecting cultism, fetish beliefs
6. names reflecting or derived from the attributes of God, gods and goddesses.

In line with the above, Olaoye [2], categorically groups these different Yoruba personal names (YPNs) under:

- a. theosophical Yoruba personal names (YPN)
- b. testimonial YPN
- c. ideational YPN
- d. monumental YPN

Similarly, Bangbose [9], also posits that the Yoruba give their children names according to the family into which they are born or how they are born, and that many Yoruba children do bring some names along to the word at birth such as:

1. Theosophoric YPNs

A. Names Given in Praise of God

Theosophoric names are praise names given in recognition of God's goodness or mercy to mankind. Such names are given to acknowledge God or to praise Him Zuzma [10]. This includes "Olu" being the short form of "Oluwa" meaning God, such names used with "Oluwa" includes:

- a. *Oluwaseyi* (which could be called *Oluseyi* or *Seyi*), which means God has done this (for us), so we thank God for this child.
- b. *Oluwatosin* (which is often shorten as *Tosin*), meaning God is worthy of worship.

- c. *Oluwaseun* (generally shortened as *Seun*), meaning thanks be to God (for giving us this child).
- d. *Oluwafunmilayo* (often shortened as *Funmi* or *Funmilayo*), meaning God has given me joy.
- e. *Oluwande* (often shortened as *Wande*), meaning God has searched for, and visited me.
- f. *Oreluwa* (often shortened as *Oreofe* or *Ore*), meaning God's *free gift*, among several other YPNs.

B. Natural/Personal or Physical Appearance at Birth: (*Oruko amutorunwa*) name brought from heaven)

These YPNs under this category according to Olaoye [11], show cases how the child is born or having some

physical or personal characters at birth, and they include:

- a. *Ojo/Aina*: a name given to a child born with the umbilical cord twined round his (male) her (female) at birth.
- b. *Dada*: a name given to a child (male or female), with long, intertwined (dread) hair which is never to be cut i.e. (like that of "Bob Marley" hair style or dread lock).
- c. *Ilori*: a name given to a child (male or female) without the mother menstruating before conception and still becomes pregnant.
- d. *Oke*: a name given to a child born but wrapped inside a punch-like mother's sac.
- e. *Okanlawon*: a name often given to a single male child born in the midst of many girls and vice versa.
- f. *Ige*: a name given to a child (male or female) born with or her legs coming out first during delivery instead of the normal head, among other examples.

C. Names given in praise of gods/goddesses based on the parents religious belief

The names under this category are derived from gods or goddess attributes such as:

- a. *Aboyade*: a name given to a child that is believed to have been given by god of river (*Odo oya*), or a child that is born during "oya" festival.
- b. *Abogunrin*: a name given to a child believed to have walked with ogun (god of iron), usually a child born during the festival of the god of iron.
- c. *Sangosanya*: a name given to a child believed to have been given birth to after several suffering upon which appeasing to the god of thunder is born to bring reparation and solace to the family.
- d. *Fakayode (Ifa ko ayode)*: a name given to a child after appeasing the god of divination (ifa) and thus giving the parents a child that has brought joy to the house.
- e. *Orisasina (Orisa si ona)*: a name given to a child that is believed to have been got by appeasing god of oracle thus opening the womb of the mother for more children to come.
- f. *Ogunyemi*: a name given to a new born child based on the worship of Ogun (god of iron), hence believing that the worshipping of god of iron favours me, among several other examples.

D. Names of Re-incarnated (*Abiku*) Child

In the Yoruba tradition, Olaoye [12], opines that children who re-incarnate (*abiku*) is very common. They are said to be children with supernatural powers, and as such they are feared by their parents because of their propensity for terminating their existence at will. They are thus given names such as:

- a. *Kokumo*: a name given to Yoruba child who would not die again, that means that they christen the child thus so that he/she would survive, and refuse to terminate his/her own existence again.
- b. *Bambee*: a name given to a child who does re-incarnate, thus pleading with people by the parents to help beg such a child not to die again.
- c. *Lambe*: a name often given to a child who does re-incarnate, meaning that it is God we are begging to spare the child so that he/she should not have power to exterminate his/her life again.
- d. *Durojaye*: a name given to a child who does reincarnate, naming that this life is good to live in so he/she should remain in life to enjoy the sweetness of life and not to die again.
- e. *Ojulari*: a name given to a child who does re-incarnate, meaning we can only see the child's face, nobody knows the child's plans or intention whether he will die again or not. So, when such a name is given, such children will feel shy to die again.
- f. *Mabogunje*; also a name given to children under this category, meaning that the parents are pleading with such children to react and respond to medicine and treatment so that he/she can survive. So he/she must not spoil the potency of the medicine used in treating him/her.

2. Testimonial Names/Testimonial Names

These are names often given to testify to the fortune, good luck or providence attendant on the birth of a child. Such names include:

- a. *Oladipupo*: a name given to a child whose birth increases the parents' riches, wealth or affluence.
- b. *Folayemi*: a name given to a child meaning the child's birth should show or adore the parents with honour and opulence.
- c. *Ayobami*: given to a child signaling that the birth of the child has brought joy.
- d. *Ayodele*: meaning joy has come home, is given to a child whose birth is believed to have brought joy into the family.
- e. *Otedola*: which implies conspiracy has turned into wealth, honour or affluence is give to a child whose birth quenches conspiracy but rather increases the parents' wealth or honour.
- f. *Afolabi*: given to a child born during time of plenty, riches or wealth, hence comfort in child delivery

3. Idealational Names (Yoruba cosmology)

Idealation names represent the Yoruba cosmological (world view) concept of life, death and existence. These names usually are derived from cultural beliefs of the Yoruba. Such names include:

- a. *Abiona*: a name given a child born on the road to the town, river, market, hospital; or on a journey.
- b. *Bidemi*: a name given to a child who is born while the father is away from home, this means a child born during the father's absence.
- c. *Abiodun/Abodunrin/Abodunde*: a name usually given to a child that is born during a major year such as New Year, Christmas time, Easter period or even any traditional religious festival.
- d. *Babatunde*: a name given to a male child who is born after the death of his father's father or his mother's father, signaling the dead grandfather has come back or reincarnated.
- e. *Yetunde/Iyabo/Iyewande*: usually given to a female child who is born after the death of her mother's or father's mother, signaling that the dead grandmother is back again or has reincarnated.
- f. *Abioro*: a name given to such child when certain tradition is being celebrated (Oro).

4. Monumental Names (Nicknames)

Names under this category are derived from the child's or parents' physical prowess, successes, with virtues, beauty/handsomeness, chivalry:

a. Yoruba Nicknames

In another development, Olaoye [13] is of the view that in Yoruba tradition, nicknames are given on the basis of the child's behaviours, appearance or kinship relation, or even according to certain qualities, prowess or attributes. Names given to children based on physical qualities or appearance include:

- i. *Opelenge*: normally given to a slim and beautiful/handsome child.
 - ii. *Pele-yeju*: given to a child whose three-stroke tribal marks fit face.
 - iii. *Ibadi-aran*: given to a child whose buttocks fascinate like a shining Yoruba cloth popularly referred to as "aran".
 - iv. *Adubi-aran*: given as name to a child who is very dark in complexion and beautiful thus likened to "aran" a very costly Yoruba cloth.
 - v. *Pele-wura*: a name given to a child whose three-stroke tribal marks are likened to gold, thus making such a child with exquisitely beautiful tribal marks.
 - vi. *Eyin-afe* ____ meaning likeable teeth usually christened a child with attractive set of teeth which endears him/her to many.
- b. Other Monumental Names (like family cognomen) Names under this category are equally based on family traditional names such as:
- i. *Omo-ekun*: a family cognomen which is used for all that family members signifying a brave child both male and female) meaning a child of tiger who is fearless.
 - ii. *Ajagunla*: a family cognomen meaning war monger who prosper from warring or going to battle.
 - iii. *Adifala*: a family cognomen meaning one who becomes prosperous through or from oracle (*ifa*) divination.
 - iv. *Ajanaku*: a family cognomen meaning people of strength, and as big as elephant.

v. *Balogun*: a family cognomen meaning a child that is not afraid of battle, whose father is always found at the war front.

vi. *Alagbede*: a family cognomen meaning people who are very good in blacksmithing.

5a. Mixed Yoruba Personal Names

In the Yoruba tradition, it is very not common to call a person by the name of place of birth unlike the Hausa tribe who bear the names of their towns, place of birth or even wards such as Shewu “Shagari”, Aminu “Kano” where “Shagari” and “Kano” are the names of their town and city respectively. Place names only come into a person’s name when praise songs (*oriki*) or cognomen are being showered on the child by praise singers or elders. Cognomen (*oriki*) falls amongst the most important forms of Yoruba oral poetry. Cognomen is used on various occasions some of which are accompanied with talking drums (*dundun*). Cognomen can be used to trace a person’s descendant or where he/she comes from otherwise known as geo-linguistics; cognomen may be sung or said in appreciation of a person’s good behaviours, performance or feat of wonders during festival or at the birth of a child. When cognomen is displayed with dexterity, it makes a person to remember his home or place of birth and also puts one on the memory lane and thus encourages one to strive harder for excellence in whatever one does Oyetunde [14].

In his own contribution, Yemitan [15], espouses that cognomen can be used as part of Yoruba traditional songs of hunters (*ijala*) popularly sung during festivals or when going for a large scale hunting expedition. Yemitan affirms that cognomen of this type is mostly used as words of encouragement. Similarly, Yemitan posits that other form of cognomen is a traditional verse generally recited or chanted by women on occasions such as hunters’ festivals and wedding (*rara*). In the verses are names of men and women of honour, people of distinguished characters who have displayed valour, fortitude, temperance and moral rectitude and those who are related to the people being praised. These names and the accompanying encomium often spur people to more valorous deeds.

In another development, Akinjogbin [16], contends that another traditional praise song or poetry (*ewi*) is also replete with eulogies poured on distinguished personages or the celebrants at various ceremonies. Such poetry is full of information about the celebrant’s forefather’s family relationship, kinship, and worthy virtues of such praised people.

In a similar vein, Babalola [17], argues that another form of cognomen is the praise given to towns and villages (*orile*) which are used to address, and used as praises for indigenes of such towns or villages. Cognomen in this category includes:

- i. *Offa* town has its cognomen as “omo olofa majo, omo olalomi, omo abisujoruko, omo ijakadi katakiti loro offa”.
- ii. *Ibadan* town has its cognomen as “omo Ibadan mesi ogo nile oluyole, omo afi ikarahun foori mu”.
- iii. *Gbogan* town has its cognomen as “omo olufi arokode ija”.
- iv. *Okerimi* town has its cognomen as “omo oloorimi, omo ayobiere”.
- v. *Oro* town has its cognomen as “omo olorooekan”.
- vi. *Ilorin* town has its cognomen as “Ilorin afanja, geri alimi”

Babalola contents further that through (oriki) cognomen, one can know and understand the meaning and how a town or village came into being, it can also tell us about people's status, religion, occupation, industry and socio-economic background of such people and places, thus referring to this as historical linguistic aspect of names.

b Place Names (orile) Toponymy

Cognomen (*oriki*) and toponymy (*orile*) are, by extension names which refer to places and people and give historical accounts of people and places. Place names like people's names follow certain criteria, which determine why such names are given to particular towns or villages. In the light of this, Daramola [18], and Fadipe [19], are of the opinion that determining factors for naming places are geographical, historical, ecological, mythical, and physical, among several other things. Places and their meaning under this category include:

| Place | Meaning | English Equivalent |
|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. <i>Offa</i> | <i>ofa</i> | bow and arrow for hunting |
| 2. <i>Osogbo</i> | <i>oso inu Igbo</i> | demons of the forest |
| 3. <i>Isanlu</i> | <i>ile ti osan ni</i> | town that favours one |
| 4. <i>Mejeroku</i> | <i>mo je ero oku</i> | don't let strangers' die |
| 5. <i>Ijagbo</i> | <i>aja gbo ohun abe</i> | dog hears the voice of Abe |
| 6. <i>Ayeteju</i> | <i>aaye to te ju</i> | a flat or plain land |

c. Appellation Names

Akinjogbin, [16], and Ilesanmi [20], posit that the Yoruba culture do not only give names to their offsprings, places, but they also give different names to God the Almighty and appellations according to their perception of God, as such the following appellations are common among the Yoruba tradition:

| Appellations | Meaning |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1. <i>Oluwa</i> | the Owner, our Head, Lord, God |
| 2. <i>Olodunmare</i> | the Owner of the universe, God |
| 3. <i>Olorun</i> | the Owner of heaven, God |
| 4. <i>Eletì gboaroye</i> | the Pardoner, great Listener, One with listening ears |
| 5. <i>Aterere kariaye</i> | the Omnipresent, the Omnipotent |
| 6. <i>Olumoran Okan</i> | the Comforter, One who knows the minds of individuals, the Intent |

Ashanti Personal Names (APNs)

Ashanti naming tradition is very similar to that of her KWA family member (Yoruba of Nigeria). Utley [21], asserts that personal names of Ghanaians consist of several given surnames based on the language of the ethnic groups in Ghana including Akan, Mole-Dagomba, Ga, Ewe, and Nzema. Frequently, children are given a "day name" which corresponds to the day in the week they were born. These days have further meanings concerning the soul and character of the child. Middle names have considerably more variety and can refer to that birth order, twin status or an ancestor's middle name.

1. THEOSOPHORIC ASHANTI PERSONAL NAMES (APNs)**a. Names Given in Praise of God**

Agyekum [4] is of the opinion that there are certain names that depict the Akan's belief in the supernatural beings and their power to be given to their children. These names are normally given when parents have struggled for children for a number of years and all hopes are seen lost, but when later God, gods or goddesses give them child, such child/children are named according to the source from where such a child is got, this includes:

- i. *Nyamekye*: a name christened a child believed to have been given by the supreme God, meaning God's gift.
- ii. *Nyameba*: a name christened a child believed to have been given to the parents by the supreme God, meaning God's child.
- iii. *Nso Nyameye*: usually given to a child whose parents have lost hope of ever having a child but at last, the Supreme Being answers their prayer by giving them a child, meaning there is nothing God cannot do.
- iii. *Nyame entese onipa dasane*: is given to a child whose parents have been mucked severally, that they can never be blessed with any child, but eventually God provides the parents with a child, meaning God is not like human beings.
- iv. *Nyameye*: a name given to a child to praise God for His mercy on the parents, meaning God is good.
- v. *beɣɛamayɛn*: a name given to a child as a sign of rekindling the hope parents, meaning God will do it for us.

b. Children who were sought from other duties apart from God the Almighty are also named after the duties believed to have given them such children, names in this category include:

- i. *Akua Abagyina*: a name given to a female child born on Wednesday through the power of *abagyina* deity, meaning child stability.
- ii. *Yaw Dumgya*: a name given to a male child born on Thursday through the power of *dumgya* deity that is the deity that has quenched the fire of barrenness.
- iii. *Kwame Kɔmfo*: a name christened a male child born on Saturday believed to have been given to the parents by the power of *kɔmfo* that is traditional priest.
- iv. *Akwasi wuran*: a name christened a male child born on Sunday believed to have been given to the parents by the power of water goodness call *wuramso*.
- v. *Amma Bonso*: a name given to a female child born on Saturday through the power of river goddess.
- vi. *Kofi/Afua Kwakye*: a name of male or female child born on Friday through the power of deity *Kwakye*. It is important to know that all the names attached to the day names above are names of Akan deities (<https://en.name.org/name/Ghanaian.name>)

c. Natural/Birth Names

- i. *Kwame Bonso*: a name given to a child born on Saturday during raining season
- ii. *Gyasi*: a name given to a child whose birth was mysterious, and as such naming the child as a wonderful child.

- iii. *Adom*: a name given to a child whose birth was mysterious, and so being named only help of God.
- iv. *Nyamekye*: a name given to a child whose parents have lost hope of ever getting a child and as such naming him/her a gift from God.
- v. *Odwira*: a name given to a child who was born during yam festival (https://en.org/-i/Akan_names).

d. Names Given According to Parents Religion/Religious Belief

These names were derived from certain deities the ancestors of Akan people worshipped in the olden days and which the presents' family members hold in highest esteem, such names include:

1. *Bosommuru*
2. *Bosompra*
3. *Bosomtwe*
4. *Bosomnkotia*
5. *Bosompo*
6. *Bosomafram*

The first morpheme "bosom" in all the names exemplified in 1-6 above stands for a deity. Each of these names belongs to certain clean as specific and peculiar to specific clan

(https://omgvoice.com/lifestyle/akan-names-meaning?fb_commentid=1495193863879542_15206609501#f1f0ee877188b4)

e. Names of Re-incarnated Child: Cases of Re-engineering

- i. *Dank*: a name given to a child who does re-incarnate, but the name *Dank* which means slave does irritate such a child and therefore makes him or her to decide to stay alive.
- ii. *Sewaah*: meaning the noble one, is given to a child who does re-incarnated, and that praise name seems to fascinate him, and as such decides to stay alive.
- iii. *Bagyina*: meaning stable child is often given to children of this category by their parents to whirl the head of such children and who eventually decide to stay to proudly bear that name.
- ii. *Sumina*: meaning garbage is often given to children of this category by their parents to regard them as a dumping ground. This of course does irritate such children and hence decide to stay alive.
- iv. *Agyegysem*: meaning being troublesome is usually given to children of this category by their parents, and by so doing such children tend to turn a new life by staying alive and creating less anxiety to the parents.
- v. *Kaya* which implies carrier of load is given to children of this class to humiliate them and thus decide to stay alive (<https://buzzghana.com/Ghanaian-names/> Retrieve March 19, 2019 John Degen, Traditional Ghanaian names (<https://web.archive.org/web/20070930023517/http://home.wxs.nl/~degenj/ghana1/gh-names.html>) at the Waybackmachine (archived September 30, 2007).

2. TESTIMONIAL NAMES

This may relate to the sequence by which the mother has given birth. More importantly, there are names that refer to order in which the children come or are born. Ordinal names include *Piesie*, that is first born, made of “pie”, which means erupt from a place, and “sie” is anthill. Here the stomach of the pregnant mother is compared to an anthill and the first born is conceptualised as the one who has erupted from the anthill Bhém [22]. Such names include:

- a. *Piesie* i.e. first born
- b. *Mensa* i.e third born
- c. *Awotwe* i.e. eighth born
- d. *Nkrumah* i.e. ninth born
- e. *Nsia* i.e. sixth born
- f. *Anane* i.e. fourth born

3. IDEATIONAL NAMES (ASHANTI COSMOLOGY)

These names are derived from the Ashanti cosmology i.e. world view or concept of life, death, existence, etc, Zawawi, [23], states that names in this category include:

1. □*kwan*: a name given to a child born on the way to the stream, farm, market, on a journey or to the hospital.
2. *Afuom*: a name given to a child born in the farm.
3. *Afiriya*: a name for a child born during the celebration of a major year like Christmas, New Year
4. *Nyamekye*: meaning God’s gift is given to a child whose parents have lost hope of ever getting any child.
5. *Anto*: is a name given to a child after the death of the father, meaning he did not know his father.
6. *Agyenim*: is a name to a child by the parents as a great one from God the Almighty

4. MONUMENTAL NAMES

- a. In Ashanti tradition, nicknames are given on the basis of the child’s behaviours, appearance or kingship relation, or even according to certain qualities or attitudes. Those that refer to physical appearances or qualities are:

Ashanti Nicknames

- i. *Akenta*: a name given to a child who is thought of that would be very experienced in future thus referring to him or her as the experience.
- ii. *Kwandah*□: a name given to a child whose presence has shown that there is road or way for successes, riches and even for other children to come.
- iii. *Mpeasem*: meaning does not like any trouble is a name given to a child that does not like trouble, i.e. an easy-going child.
- iv. *Obiadεεab*: meaning something beautiful that belongs to other people has just come, is given to a beautiful or handsome person that ought to belong to a particular family due to his/her beauty or handsomeness but has just come to this family.

v. $\square d \square yef\epsilon$: meaning love is beautiful is a name given to a child who, because of his/her beauty or handsomeness is endeared to all people.

vi. *Susuka*: meaning say it moderately is a name given to a child that does not talk much. Such a child talks little, but sensibly

b. Other Monumental Personal Names are:

i. *Bodua*, meaning the protector during war or a leader

ii. *Okoto*, meaning a humble or calm personality

iii. *Ogyam*,. Meaning a good or humane personality

iv. *Ntonni*, meaning an advocate, or a hero

v. *Pereko*, meaning a fearless and firm personality

vi. *Okyin*, meaning an adventure or an itinerant

5. Mixed Ashanti Personal Names (APNs)

A. People from the following towns or villages, or the towns/villages themselves have the following cognomens:

i. *Asnti* people have their own cognomen as “Asanti $K \square t \square k \square$, wu kum apim apim beba”, meaning that *Asanti* the warrior, if you kill one thousand of his soldiers another one thousand will appear from nowhere again, or better still, the killed one thousand shall all resurrect to fight again.

ii. $\square d \square yef\epsilon$ village has its cognomen as $\square d \square yef\epsilon$ *kyen adi biara*, meaning love is beautiful than everything in life.

iii. *Juabeng* town has its cognomen as *aben waha*, meaning it is good, sweet and comfortable here.

iii. *Bekwae* town has its cognomen as *abenkwan* is delicious, meaning soup prepared from palm fruit is very delicious.

iv. $\square fuase$ village has its cognomen as $\square b \square fu \square ase$, meaning the abode of a brave hunter.

v. *Abetinin* village has its cognomen as *abetintinin*, meaning a place where there exists the tallest palm trees

B. Place Names (Toponymy)

There are certain names that are based on the circumstances surrounding the birth of a child. These may relate to the place of birth, period of time, festivals or sacred days, manner of birth, etc. According to Blum [24], these names are viewed as governing the child's fate in some ways, they should normally harmonies with the time and often the place of the child's birth, etc. These names are therefore grouped into: anthro-toponyms and temporonyms.

a. Anthro-toponyms according to Algeo [25], are personal names that pertain to the place of birth of the child, such as:

i. *Kwaku Bekwae*.

ii. *Afua Kumasi*

iii. *Kwabena Kokofu*

iv. *Amma Ag $\square g \square$*

v. *Kwaku Mamp $\square n$*

vi. *Abena Dwansa*

b. Tempronyns as used here are names that relate to the period of birth. Under this, the period may relate to sacred days in the Akan calendar like:

| | NAME | MEANING | ENGLISH EQUIVALENT |
|----|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. | <i>Fofie</i> | sacred Friday | Friday |
| 2. | <i>Adae</i> | sacred Sunday | Sunday |
| 3. | <i>Dapaa</i> | sacred Tuesday | Tuesday |
| 4. | <i>Dapaa</i> | sacred Saturday | Saturday |
| 5. | <i>Kofi Fofie</i> | male child born on sacred Friday | Friday |
| 6. | <i>Odwira</i> | yam festival | Festive period, etc. |

| c. | PLACE | MEANING | ENGLISH EQUIVALENT |
|----|-----------------|------------------|---|
| 1. | <i>Kumasi</i> | <i>kuma asi</i> | under the axe (of the warrior) |
| 2. | <i>dɔ usu</i> | <i>dɔ u nisu</i> | place of plenty yams |
| 3. | <i>fuase</i> | <i>b fu ase</i> | the place of abode of a brave hunter |
| 4. | <i>D yɛfe</i> | <i>d yɛfe</i> | love is good, beautiful |
| 5. | <i>Abesuase</i> | <i>Abesu ase</i> | under a particular fruit (asua) |
| 6. | <i>Esiampa</i> | <i>Ampa esi</i> | It is time that its (trouble) has come to |
| | an | | end |

Appellation

The Ashanti not only give names to their offsprings, they also give God different names and appellations according to their perception of God Blum [24].

- Ad mfɔ*, meaning God, the merciful
- Minkah*, meaning God, the judge
- Ewurade Nyakup n*, meaning God, the all knowing
- Agyemangfu*, meaning God, whose sovereign power is unknown to anybody
- Kyediampɔng*, meaning God, the everlasting
- Nyemetintin*, meaning God, the tallest (the Being who is the highest).

Other names peculiar to Ashanti People

a. Honourific and Title Names

Some other names according to Mey [26], and Buburi [8], are achieved outside people's given names. Such names may be achieved from occupations, wars, zeal, and stool names especially when a person is enthroned. Such names are appellations and titles. They include *kogyeasuo*, meaning a great fighter who seizes a river; *k forobo*, meaning a fighter who climbs rocks; *deneho*, meaning the independent one, among several others. Some of these names may be religious. Traditional Priests, Christians and Muslims acquire them when they are ordained into office. These include *s fo*, meaning pastor, *k mfo*, meaning traditional priests; and Imam, meaning Islamic leader, among several others.

Similarly, some titles were previously based on excellence in wars and such names are now established as personal names. They include *Bekoe*, meaning came to fight,

□ *kafo*, meaning the warrior; *katakyie*, meaning the strong man; □ *safohene*, meaning the commander; *ankoana*, meaning does not sleep or without sleeping; *Bediako*, meaning one who came to engage in wars; *Agyeman*, meaning saviour of the nation, etc (https://en.org/w/index.php?title=Ghanaian_name&oldid=Akan).

There is an Ashanti maxim which states that *Bekoe din fata no a efata no w□ akono na enye gyedua ase*, meaning if *Bekoe*'s name befits him, it befits him at the war front not under the shady tree. This maxim depicts the situated functionality of Ashanti names. The word *Bekoe* is made up of the notional prefix "be"- which indicates a coming, the verb "ko", meaning fight, and the past tense suffix marker -e. The word therefore means 'came to fight', and it implies that the bearer should be a fighter. We can then see that the name is not arbitrary, there is a correspondence between the name and the bearer Agyekum [4].

b. Innovations in Ashanti Names

Asante [3]; Levy & Wong [27], and Ray [28], argue that some name system of Ashanti is as a result of westernisation, education and foreign religion. It first considers the use of multiple names. Religion, education, westernisation and urbanisation have brought about innovations in the structure and system of Ashanti names. Some members of the elite are gradually shifting away from the traditions. These days, apart from birth day names and surnames, some people get additional Christian or Muslim name(s) during baptism or when they first enter into formal school. Some nationalistic members would maintain their traditional names without taking any Christian or Islamic names during baptism or at school.

At school, most people would now use their father's or sponsor's name or combine names of these people with their own names. Agyekum submits that people whose schooling have been on the sponsorship of some people other than their biological parents take the names of their sponsors and may have two varied names. Considering cultural dynamism, the above analogy is a real shift from the tradition where the fathers and their children do not bear the same name. Also, assuming that a boy is called "Ofori", and the father is called Agyemang, the following name combinations can be expected: John *Ofori*, John *Agyemang*, *Kofi Ofori Agyemang*, etc. In addition to this, some people would add appellations to their names thus having names like *Kofi Ofori Amanyio*, John *Ofori Amanfo*, *Agyemang Pamb□ Prempe*, etc.

C. Anglicised Names

Boye [5], and Buburi [29], contend that there is another dimension of naming innovations among the Ashanti people that has to do with Anglicisation of Ashanti names. Two categories can be drawn here:

i. English Orthography

In this section, Ashanti names are spelt with English alphabet and sounds, such names under this include:

- Acheampong instead of *Akyamp□n*
- Arthur instead of Attah
- Quarcoo instead of *Kweku* or *kwaku* or *Kweku*.
- Otchere instead of □ *kyere*

- e. Crenstil instead of *Kwenstir*
- f. Forson instead of *F□*

ii. Anglicisation Through Translation

Some Ashanti names according to Opoku, [30]; Yeboa-Dankwa [31]; Oppong [32], and Kwaku, [33], are translated literally into English and such anglicised names have come to stay as family names. This phenomenon is also prevalent with the Fantes (one of the major Akan subgroups). The Fantes, being the first to come in contact with the Europeans therefore had the opportunity of westernised influence, and thus having such anglicised transformational names. These include:

- a. *Nyameba*, meaning son of God now becomes “Godson”.
- b. *□bo*, meaning stone (a strong person) now becomes “Rockson” or “Livingstone”
- c. *Akor□ma*, meaning hawk (an agile person) now becomes “Hawkson”
- d. *Kuntu*, meaning blanket (cold protector) now becomes “Blankson”
- e. *Kumiba*, meaning child of kumi (a goddess) now becomes “Kumson”
- f. *Dua*, meaning tree/board (a shady tree) now becomes “Woodson”, and several other examples.

Conclusion

Naming in a sociolinguistic practice whereby names are given to identify people, communicate or pass information to people. Names can be used to trace the history of lineage and to trace historical and linguistic changes that have taken place over the years, both diachronically and synchronically. These are names derived from war, migration, day names, peace, conquest, religious conversion, chivalry, powers, business acumen, spiritual uprightness, idiocy, idiosyncrasy and intellectual prodigiousness.

The study has shown that naming has a root in anthropology; names are also according to the religious and socio-cultural beliefs of the parents, etc. People bear names after God, gods, goddesses, deities, shrines priests, etc. Also anthropomorphism in Yoruba and Ashanti traditions is an influencing factor in naming. Use of cognomen, reincarnation, semiotics and ethnography all home a place in naming for instance names that are derived from ritual, spiritual, physical, socio-cultural, signs and symbols. These names fall under the purview of theosophoric YPNs and APNs. In the Ashanti name system, Anglicised names with English orthography and Anglicisation through translation were also found. It was therefore, concluded that the two ethnic groups, though not from the same country, share certain common ethnographic and ethological traits such as name practices and name re-engineering between the two traditions of Yoruba and Ashanti are very intriguing and revealing .

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**There are no conflicts of interest****References**

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