



Research Article

SOCIAL IMPLICATION OF YORUBA INDIGENOUS NAMES

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ABSTRACT

Name is very important in Yoruba culture. Apart from being useful for identification purpose, it is used to differentiate one clan or family from others. It is also used to mark a period of events and to promote moral in the Yoruba setting. That is why Yoruba put some factors into consideration during naming. This paper focuses on the local names that are peculiar to a specific clan.

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INTRODUCTION

Apart from language and oríkì, name is also recognized to have identification effect. Scholars such as Adeoye (1972), Ogunbowale (1966), Daramola and Jeje (1977) and Abiodun (1996) who have worked on names in Yoruba claim that Yoruba put the following factors into consideration before giving their children names:

- The circumstances surrounding the child's birth and the belief of the parents,
- Occupation and position of parents in the society.
- Events during the pregnancy and immediately after birth.

Idea of naming is in two folds in Yoruba society. There are names that are common among the Yoruba, such as **Akin, Olú, Adé, Oyè and Ayo** on one hand, on the other hand, there are some names that are peculiar to particular clans or communities. These names can be referred to as local names. What we mean by the term local names are names that are peculiar to a particular clan or a community. The local names differ from community to community and hardly can we find two communities sharing the same local names except through interaction or history. Our focus in this paper is on the local names and why these names cannot be found in any other community or clan.

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The paper is divided into three sections. In section one; we discuss indigenous names as a mark of an identity. Section two considers names that are personal to a family or community. Section three is the conclusion.

Indigenous Names as a Mark of National Identity

Apart from using names as a means of personal identification, names can also be used to recognize the community in which a person is from. This shows that every community can be identified with a particular name. Oduyoye (1972) explains that there are some morphemes which betray the names individual communities bear. For instance, the morpheme *ùgà* 'fame' occurs in names that are identified with Ìjèbú.

1. Adénúgà
Òsinnúgà
Oyènúgà
Òkúnnúgà

The D- structures of the above names are;

2. Adé + ní + ùgà _ Adenuga
Osin + ni + ùgà _ Osinnúgà
Oye + ni + uga _ Oyenuga
Okun + ni + uga _ Okunuga

Ìjebú dialect belongs to a dialect group where /u/ is attested in the word initial. In the example (2) above, there is a deletion process in which the vowel of the verb **ni** is deleted. Apart from this, /n/ and /l/ are in complimentary distribution that is where /n/ appears /l/ cannot appear (Awobuluyi 1995). But /n/ is attested in Ijebu instead of /l/. Egbá names are identified with /li/ initial as illustrated in the examples below.

2. Lí àbí
Lípedé
Lìjádù
Lítàn

If we are to analyze the above names, we can explain that the above names are the fusion of the prefix **oni** and verb phrases. But they are derived by deleting the initial vowel /o/ of the prefix **oni** unlike Ijebú dialect, the allomorph /li/ is preferred in Egbá. The real renditions of the above names are stated below.

3. Olísàbí
Olípedé
Olìjádù
Olítàn

In addition, religious names are also another ingredient to be used as another feature by which a particular community can be identified. Hence, all the names that begin with **ó** can be traced to Ègbá or Ìjebú

4. Sóyinká
Sólàrin
Sólàrà
Sóméfun
Sóbòwálé

As we analyzed Ijebu's names, Yoruba names do not start with consonant initial. The names in examples (4) above occur at the surface level. What occurs as earlier said is that the initial vowels of the names are deleted. The names in examples (4) are related to religion. These names are born by the deity's worshippers, the names do not have anything connotation with **osó** cult Adeoye (1972) rather, **òrìsà- oko** 'the god of the land' Ikotun (n.d.). It is common among Oṅdó and Ìdànrè people to begin their names with

Akin

5. Akínkúnmi
Akínkùòtù
Akínjàgunlà
Akimnrinlolá
Akíngbèsótè

The names that start with **Akin** occupy a greater position among other names in Oṅdó community. At least, nothing less than seventy percent of the indigenes bear them. We want to add that the name **Akin** born in Oṅdó is not different from the one born in other parts of Yoruba. The difference in these names as marks of identity are the verb phrases that are attached to **Akin** as analyzed below.

6. Akín + kúnmi
Akín + kùòtù
Akín + jàgunlà
Akín + rinlolá
Akín + gbèsótè

According to Adeoye (1972), these names do not reflect status or position but show the heroic deeds of the progenitors. The communities with /u/ word initial have this reflected in their naming system, especially Èkìtì, Oṅdó, O un, Àkókó and Àkùre.

7. Fáluyì – Ifá + ni +uyì 'ifa has honour'
Fásúbà – Ifá + e + ùbà 'ifa makes homage'
Fásurú - Ifá + e +urú 'ifa makes difference'
Ajíbùlù - Ají + bá +ùlù 'awake to meet drum'
Adéuyí - Adé +uyì 'the crown of honour'

These names show the belief and love the devotees of **ifa** divination have to their god and the names are derived by deleting the vowels of the verbs such that there is a contraction between *verbs* and Nps. However, these names are not peculiar to only Èkìtì community, they can also be found in other communities. The point we are trying to make here is that this does not mean that Èkìtì people do not have names they can be identified with.

Names Peculiar to Clans

According to Longman Dictionary (2000), clan is a large group of families that often share the same name. Following the above definition, there are some names that can only be found within individual families as marks of identity. Some of these names are extracted from the oríkì of the bearers as we know that oríkì in Yorùbá society is different from one clan to another. It is possible to find the elements of the oríkì of one particular clan in another clan, the two clans may be said to have shared the same origin. For instance, the women from the royal family in Adó are called **Ojà**. After marriage, they will still be referred to by this name in their matrimonial homes. Our observation is that no other person outside the royal family bears this name. In some places, the clan name born by males differs from that of the females. For instance, in a particular clan in Ìkolé – Èkìtì, the males bear **Bamì í** and the females bear **Yemì í** or **O úwe**. If the names are born by another person elsewhere, the origin can be traced to Ìkolé.

The origin may be through marriage or migration. This peculiarity is also discovered in Egbè –Èkìtì. The males are called **O o** while the females bear **Ìwe**. Today we have people bearing **O o** as a surname. This infers that some people prefer maintaining their clan's names as surnames. Scarcely can we find people bearing **O o** as a personal name today. The reason is that people look at the name such as **O o** as being old. The implication of the clan names is to protect the members of the family to avoid the mistake that can tarnish the image of the clan. For instance, a woman and man who are from the same family cannot marry each other. If they do, immediately they get to know that they are from the same clan, they will separate. If the man makes a mistake to impregnate the woman and the family gets to know, they will either abort the pregnancy or allow the lady to deliver the baby after which they will separate. Such a child is called **Ìbídàpò**. Another names to be considered here are the names that occur with **Ùsì** meaning popularity or fame and **ùà** meaning ceremony.

7. Obálúsi Àgbélúsi Ifílúsi
Aríbalúsi Adélúsi Ósálúsi
Ùsíbàkà Oyélúsi Osesusi
Olónilúsi Ògúnlúsi Awólúsi
Adéùsi Fásùsi Òrélúsi
Adéparúsi Fágorúsi Òròùsi

8. Akúàj

loní ùà
 O àdúà
 Ò ámilúà
 Adégbúàró
 Amúàgún

Ùsì is purely dialectical which can be interpreted as fame in Yoruba standard form. The popularity may be in terms of position, religion and human value. Hence, the names under example (7) will be arranged under three groups.

9.	A	B	C
	Position	Religion	Human value
	Ùsìbàkà	Ògúnlúsi	Orélúsi
	Adélúsi	Fálúsi	Olónilúsi
	Agbélúsi	Ifílúsi	Aríbalúsi
	Oròùsi	Òsésùsi	Ùbílúsi

The names under group 'A' have to do with the fame that the owner acquires through position in the community. The position may be in terms of wealth and power. **Ùsìbàkà** means a person who is popular because of being brave or generous. **Adélúsi** and **Adégbúsi** are ambiguous in reading. Two readings can be given to them; first, it may have meaning relating to the value attached to a crown. Two, the circumstances surrounding the birth of the bearer of the name or possibly, his advent in the community warrants him such fame. **Adéparúsi** means a person that crowns the fame of the family. This means that the family is already famous, but his deed brings the final fame to the family and such afame cannot be competed with. **Obalúsi** is pointing to the position of the king in the society. Yoruba give a high regard to their king, and being the number one citizen, he has the final authority. Another names similar to this in meaning are **Oyéùsi** and **Oyélúsi**. **Oròùsi** shows the power and importance of speech in the society. Utterance is carefully selected because of its effect on the addressee.

The names under group 'B' point to the position of the deities or gods in the society. These names demonstrate the love and fear that Yoruba have for their gods. **Awósùsi** or **Awólúsi** refers to the value or importance that the diviners attach to their profession. The names under group C define the importance of inter-relationship in the society. Men depend on one another to move the society forward. The inter-relationship extends from parents-children relationship, extended family and friends relationship. These have influence on our daily activities. *ni* means human being. The name **lonilúsi** means that when you have many people around you, this will make you to be popular. **Orélúsi** shows the role played by friendship in a person's life. This points to the positive impart that friendship has in one's life.

The word **ùà** has a social meaning associated with it. This has to do with ceremony as shown in example (8) above. It has nothing to do with **iwà** 'behaviors', in Èkìtì dialect, **iwà** 'behavior' is referred to as **àdìn** out of which a name such as **Àdìnl wà** is form. The names that are associated with **ùà** show the importance of social occasions in Yoruba society. Yoruba like celebrating themselves in terms of achievement, recovery from a long- standing and serious sickness, marriage and other social occasions.

They are not always happy if they have not had a social occasion in life in which people come together to rejoice with them. This brings about the prayers;

10. **wà á lúà** 'you will have your own day of celebration that people will rejoice with you.

wà á ùà 'you will be celebrated'

The importance attached to social ceremony gives rise to such names like **Akúàj** which means a person that presides on a ceremony and makes it to be successful. **Akinlua** means a hero has his own period of celebration. The interpretation of the name is that there is celebration after an outstanding victory, there will be a period of celebration. **loní ùà** means a person that has many followers enjoys the best ceremony. **Adégbúàró** means a person that comes to stabilize ceremony. The names discussed above are peculiar to Èkìtì.

The question is, Is it not possible for the negative implication in our social inter-relationship to reflect in our names? Abiodun (1996) answers the question by explaining that the names that suggest unpleasant connotations or that are regarded as anathemas socially are normally not so used. The system of naming in Yoruba society today does not follow the way names were given in those days. As already mentioned in section one, the indigenous names do not occur as first names but as surnames. Even those that bear the names do not know the meanings. They do not bother to know either because they do not attach any value to the names or they see the names belonging to their great ground fathers and since years have gone over them, it is a mere waste of time asking for their meanings. Some of these names have been mutilated or reformed due to the new religion or civilization. For instance, the new converts from traditional religion to Christianity misinterpreted the names associated with deities as being cursed. They therefore changed the names to suit their new religion as illustrated below (Ajiboye 2009, Ikotun and Aladesanmi 2012).

11.	Ifílúsi	becomes	Olúwálúsi
	Ògúnlúsi	becomes	Olúwálúsi
	Fálúsi	becomes	Jésùlúsi
	Awo ùsi	becomes	Olórùnsùsi

At times, some drop the names to take new ones. The implications of this attitude are, if care is not taken by the time this generation dies and a new generation emerges, the names will no longer exist and the existing names will even lose their sources. Our identity in terms of names will be lost to the modern religion on the ground that they are pagan and our culture will also be affected.

Conclusion

We have considered some indigenous names in this paper. There is evidence that some names are confined to a particular community. The reason for this is because of their cultural setting and no other person or community can bear them except by inter-relationship which may be in terms of inter-marriage. This paper has also highlighted that apart from oriki and language, name is another mark of identity. It also explains cultural influence on the name we bear and the effect of civilization on Yoruba names, particularly, indigenous names.

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