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# THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF NAMING SYSTEMS AMONGST THE YORUBA OF SOUTH WEST NIGERIA

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Personal naming practices amongst the Yoruba of the south-west region of Nigeria are of diverse cultural importance and have significant implications for an individual's place in society, role in the community and course of life. The cultural dynamics involved in the naming process include aligning the person's name with the context of their birth. For example, the name of a child may have its origin in the seasons (i.e., planting seasons), important days (i.e., market days), critical historical events (i.e., Nigerian civil war), the order of birth patterns and occupation of the child's relatives. The naming of a child could influence the rest of his or her life. In this context, there are cultural beliefs that the name of a child may predict childhood and adult behaviour. For example, names with negative connotations may negatively impact the entire life of that child. The names given to children within the Yoruba community of South West Nigeria are mostly culturally significant. While the onomastics of diverse communities have been explored in the African context, this article seeks to review literature published on the cultural context of the naming processes amongst the Yoruba of South West Nigeria. The author provides information gathered from independent interviews with individuals and the study was undertaken in different locations in Ibadan, Nigeria. The participants were selected through purposive sampling and semi-structured interviews were used which led to participants discussing the topic in more detail.

**Keywords:** Christianity, cultural beliefs, naming ceremonies, personal naming, predictive significance, Yoruba traditions

## **Die kulturele praktyke van naamgewingprosesse in die Yoruba-gemeenskap van Suidwes-Nigerië**

Persoonlike naampraktyke onder die Yoruba van Suidwes-Nigerië is van uiteenlopende kulturele belang en het beduidende implikasies vir individue se plek in die samelewing, hul rol in die gemeenskap en die verloop van hul lewe. Die kulturele dinamika betrokke by die naamgewingproses sluit in om die persoon

se naam in verband te bring met die konteks waarin hulle gebore is. Die naam van 'n kind kan byvoorbeeld afkomstig wees van die seisoene (byvoorbeeld plantseisoene), belangrike dae (byvoorbeeld markdae), kritieke historiese gebeure (byvoorbeeld 'n Nigeriese burgeroorlog), die volgorde van geboortepatrone en beroep van die kind se familieledede. Die naamgewing van 'n kind kan 'n lewenslange invloed op die kind hê. In hierdie konteks is daar kulturele oortuigings dat kinders se name hul kinder- en volwassenheidsgedrag kan voorspel. Name met negatiewe konnotasies kan byvoorbeeld die lewe van daardie kind in sy/haar kinderjare en tot in volwassenheid negatief beïnvloed. Daarom het die name wat aan kinders gegee word 'n kulturele betekenis binne die Yoruba-gemeenskap van Suidwes-Nigerië. Terwyl die naamkunde van diverse gemeenskappe in die Afrikakonteks ondersoek is, poog hierdie artikel om bestaande literatuur oor die kulturele konteks van die naamstelsels onder die Yoruba van Suidwes-Nigerië in heroënskou te neem. Die skrywer verskaf inligting wat versamel is uit onafhanklike onderhoude met individue in die Yoruba-gemeenskap en die studie is op verskillende plekke in Ibadan, Nigerië, onderneem. Die deelnemers is deur doelgerigte steekproefneming geselekteer en semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude is gebruik wat daartoe gelei het dat deelnemers die onderwerp in meer besonderhede bespreek het.

**Sleutelwoorde:** Christendom, kulturele oortuigings, naamgewingseremonies, persoonlike naamgewing, voorspellende betekenis van name, Yoruba-tradisies

## Introduction

In the Yoruba culture, naming ceremonies are culturally significant. Naming a child is as important as bearing the child.<sup>1</sup> In fact, if you don't have a name, you're unknown. This is because a name is an important form of identity and self-expression, as well as a predictor and record of the child's life. In independent interviews, two respondents told the author that Yorubas believe that a person's name dictates the way he comports himself, and that Yoruba names are prophetic (participant two).<sup>2</sup> Names are believed to be prophetic and bring blessings on carriers. They also reflect the status of the family or situation of the family or land at the time the names are given (participants two and three).<sup>3</sup>

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- 1 B Rasak, Naming ceremony: comparative analysis of the Igbo and Yoruba culture in Nigeria, *Continental J. Arts and Humanities* 2(1), 2010, pp 7-16.
  - 2 AE Kayode, personal collection. Interview: participant two (AK), public servant, interview conducted personally on 16 March 2022, Abadina residence, Campus, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
  - 3 AE Kayode, personal collection. Interview: participant two (AK) and participant three (IA), public servants, interviewed telephonically on 17 March 2022, Abadina residence, Campus, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Yorubas are not named randomly, and names must be meaningful to the bearer (child) and the giver (parent). Giving personal names identifies individuals according to gender and provides information about circumstances before or after the child's birth. As participant three explained, the Yoruba people decide on the name of the child depending on the situation surrounding its birth. Aspects that are important during child naming are – honey, cola nut, sugar cane, salt, sugar, water, and anointing oil.<sup>4</sup>

Some names are given to reflect the circumstances in which the baby was born. For example, a male child that was born with the umbilical cord tied around his neck would be called 'Ojo' and a female child, 'Aina'. Additionally, the family's tradition is considered before children are named. Attention is given to religion, royalty, and the family's genealogy. In some parts of Yorubaland, names are given on the sixth day after the child's birth and another round of the naming ceremony is done on the eighth day (participant five).<sup>5</sup>

Although most Yoruba naming ceremonies are similar, individual communities and families deviate from these practices and traditions resulting in many of them becoming lost – either through change or abandonment – due to modernisation. Participant five commented that his religion considered traditional naming unnecessary. Influenced by modernisation, some Yoruba names have been, and still are being bastardised through strange spelling and pronunciations, i.e., 'Bayoh' for 'Bayo'.

The traditional names such as, bitter cola, honey, sugar cane, cola nut, sugar and water have given way to the traditions of some Christian Yoruba's who only pray with their pastors before giving new names. According to participant two, many modern-day Christians and Muslim believers use the Bible or Quran (Koran) to pray during the naming ceremony. According to participant four, a child that is born on Christmas or New Year's Day is named 'Abiodun', 'Abodunrin' or 'Abodunde'.<sup>6</sup>

The Yoruba people's concept of names can be readily understood through various traditional proverbs linked to naming, for example:

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4 AE Kayode, personal collection. Interview: participant three (IA), public servant, interviewed personally on 20 March 2022, Akobo Estate, Akobo, Ibadan, Nigeria.

5 AE Kayode, personal collection. Interview: participant five (OS), public servant, interview conducted telephonically 23 March 2022, Christ Life Church, Agbowo, Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria.

6 AE Kayode, personal collection. Interview: participant four (IO), self-employed – business, interview conducted personally on 26 March 2022, Moniya Estate, Ojoo road, Ibadan, Nigeria.

1. *Ile laa wo ka to somo loruko* - before naming a child, one considers the family's background.
2. *Oruko omo ni ro omo* – what a child becomes or does is determined by his name.
3. *Oruko omo ni ijanu omo* – the name of a child warns him against doing evil deeds.

### Concept of personal names and naming

A name is a term or phrase that identifies someone or something and distinguishes them from other people or things.<sup>7</sup> Yoruba people believe that the name given to an individual reveals his or her personality and character. The significance of personal naming, and its relationship to the character and destiny of a child, is recognised by diverse communities across the world.<sup>8</sup> For the Yoruba, the circumstances or any incident that occurred before the child's birth determines the name to be given to the newly born. One of the most important functions of personal naming is constructing an identity for the child and distinguishing the individual from others.<sup>9</sup> In this context, personal naming provides diverse types of identities such as gender identity,<sup>10</sup> social identity,<sup>11</sup> religious identity and national identity.<sup>12</sup>

As participant four commented – the name of a child identifies him or her with their family. Participant two explained this by way of the adage that says, 'a son of a lion is a lion'. Every family gives their children the name that is synonymous with their family, even links to the community. According to participant three, the name given to the child provides an identity and pride in being part of a particular

7 A Olatunji, M Issah, Y Noah, AY Muhammed & AR Sulaiman, Personal name as a reality of everyday life: Naming dynamics in selected African societies, *The journal of Pan African studies* 8(3), 2015, pp 72-90.

8 Z Mkhize & J Muthuki, Zulu names and their impact on gender identity construction of adults raised in polygamous families in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, *Nomina Africana: Journal of African Onomastics* 33(2), 2019, pp 87-98; RO Caesar, A morphosyntactic analysis of Dangme allusive names, *Journal of Universal Language* 20(2), 2019, pp 53-93.

9 SD Walsh & L Yakhnich, "Maybe one day I will also be Almito": Ethiopian Israelis, naming, and the politics of immigrant identity, *International Migration Review* 55(3), 2020, pp 873-901.

10 JP Wappa & RS Wada, Kamuə female personal names and identity in cultural contexts, *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics* 9(2), 2019, pp 1-11; Also see L Betiang, Naming and the reconstruction of female identity in Bette-Obudu, *Sociolinguistic Studies* 13(2), 2019, pp 1-7; and M Viriri, "Naming, identity and gender constructions: A phenomenological study of Zezuru personal names" (PhD thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal), 2019.

11 P Solomon-Etefia & A Ideh, Naming and social identity: A case study of male praise names in Awgbu Igbo, *Sociolinguistic Studies* 13(2-4), 2019, pp 1-9.

12 A Choleva-Dimitrova & N Dancheva, Are contemporary Bulgarian personal names still indicative of a Bulgarian identity? *Journal of the International Council of Onomastic Sciences* 55(1), 2020, pp 247-267.

family in the Yoruba community and is associated with family culture as they become adults. The name also reveals many things about the child.<sup>13</sup>

In the Yoruba culture, although mostly similar, individual communities and families have developed their own traditions. Furthermore, some of these traditions have evolved over time, while others have been completely abandoned due to modernisation. These naming traditions, rituals, and patterns have emerged among the Yoruba, and many other African ethnic groups, to express the beliefs, expectations, and circumstances surrounding new births. At the formal naming ceremony, a child may be given as many names as contributed by family members and the officiator – a pastor, an imam, or a traditional priest. The names will be called out loudly by all the family and friends at the event. Usually, the parents will choose one or two names for the child, and then concur with the grandparents and older family members for a final decision.

Personal naming has been associated with social identity, which refers to the self-concept derived from their knowledge of being part of a particular social group and its associated values.<sup>14</sup> Researchers have stressed that personal naming reflects and identifies a person as a member of a particular social group (i.e., a tribe) and their customs.<sup>15</sup> In this context, personal naming would, apart from identifying the person with a particular social group, symbolise diverse aspects associated with the name in that particular social group.

As noted by participant one, naming a child identifies her or his status. Naming ceremonies are a way of presenting the child to the community one week after birth and formally announce that child's birth to a family. The parents also use the occasion to thank God for the gift of the child (participant six).<sup>16</sup> Naming ceremonies are considered good cultural practice – events where family and friends gather to rejoice (participant three);<sup>17</sup> and these ceremonies are important in order to sustain heritage in Yoruba land (participant five).<sup>18</sup>

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13 AE Kayode, personal collection. Interview: Participant three (1A), public servant, telephonic interview on 28 March 2022, Christ Life Church, Agbowo, Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria.

14 K Cooper, LG Smith, & A Russell, Social identity, self-esteem, and mental health in autism, *European Journal of Social Psychology* 47(7), 2017, pp 844-854.

15 P Solomon-Etefa & A Ideh, Naming and social identity..., *Sociolinguistic Studies* 13(2-4), 2019, pp 1-9.

16 AE Kayode, personal collection. Interview: participant six (GA), public servant, personal interview on 1 April 2022, Ire-Akari Crescent, Arola Apete, Ibadan, Nigeria.

17 G Fakuade, J Friday-Otun & H Adeosun, Yoruba personal naming system: Traditions, patterns and practices, *Sociolinguistic Studies* 13(2-4), 2019, pp 251-271.

18 AE Kayode, personal collection. Interview: participant five (OS), retiree, e-mail interview and a WhatsApp call on 30 March 2022.

Personal naming is also used to confer gender identity and associated roles in the community. Depending on the social-cultural context of the parents, names may also convey religious identities in religiously divided communities or social and national identities in areas with multicultural inhabitants. Thus, personal naming is crucial for displaced communities and refugees who wish to identify themselves with their areas of origin. In this context, personal naming conveys a sense of identity and solidarity amongst members of displaced communities and connects them with their heritage and places of origin.<sup>19</sup>

Personal naming improves communication by referring to the person by name during conversations.<sup>20</sup> This makes conversations easy to follow and uniquely identifies the subject of the conversation.

### **Cultural context of naming among the Yoruba**

The Yoruba people form one of Nigeria's three major subgroups.<sup>21</sup> There are also diverse Yoruba dialects, including Ekiti, Ijebu, Egba, Owe, and Ikalẹ.<sup>22</sup> The Yoruba people are dispersed over the southwestern states of Nigeria, namely, Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, Delta, Edo (south), Kwara, and Kogi (middle-belt).<sup>23</sup> The Yoruba are the main ethnic groups in Ekiti, Lagos, Ondo, Osun, Ogun, and Oyo states in the south-west of Nigeria.<sup>24</sup>

Studies reveal that within the context of the Yoruba people, names are used for more than mere identification purposes.<sup>25</sup> They are also used to convey the philosophy of the people and to give meaning to past events that were significant to the community. The personal naming process also distinguishes one clan from another.<sup>26</sup>

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19 SD Walsh & L Yakhnich, "Maybe one day...", *International Migration Review* 55(3), 2020, pp 873-901.

20 JP Wappa & RS Wada, Kamuə female personal..., *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics* 9(2), 2019, pp 1-11.

21 I Odebode, Naming systems during Yoruba wars: A sociolinguistic study, *Names* 58(4), 2010, pp 209-218.

22 G Fakuade, J Friday-Otun & H Adeosun, Yoruba personal naming..., *Sociolinguistic Studies* 13(2-4), 2019, pp 251-271.

23 I Odebode, Naming systems during..., *Names* 58(4), 2010, pp 209-218.

24 G Fakuade, J Friday-Otun & H Adeosun, Yoruba personal naming..., *Sociolinguistic Studies* 13(2-4), 2019, pp 251-271.

25 G Fakuade, J Friday-Otun & H Adeosun, Yoruba personal naming..., *Sociolinguistic Studies* 13(2-4), 2019, pp 251-271.

26 G Fakuade, J Friday-Otun & H Adeosun, Yoruba personal naming..., *Sociolinguistic Studies* 13(2-4), 2019, pp 251-271.

The Yoruba people follow a defined process in naming a child.<sup>27</sup> The child is named on the seventh day if it is a female and on the ninth day if it is a male. The eighth day is used for naming children who are twins of either gender.<sup>28</sup> The personal naming of Yoruba children is associated with several cultural rites and implications, and naming is considered to have a remarkable influence on the child's entire life and is, therefore, sacred in nature.<sup>29</sup>

Participant one believed the name given to a child in a particular family influences his or her attitude, i.e., a child from a royal family.<sup>30</sup> The name given can influence their behaviour as they grow up positively or negatively (participants four and six).<sup>31</sup> The first three participants all commented that their names have influenced them positively.<sup>32</sup>

### **Ìkosè w'áyé (Stepping into the world)**

This is the first personal naming ceremony performed within the Yoruba cultural context.<sup>33</sup> In the room where the naming ceremony takes place, honey, sugar, salt, palm oil and 'adun' are customarily arranged in bowls. Anyone who wishes to name the baby puts money in a bowl for the new-born child. The ceremony is undertaken on the morning.<sup>34</sup>

From the Yoruba cultural viewpoint this *stepping into the world* ritual is a crucial ceremony of the relationship between the unborn, the living and the dead. In this world, there are two realms of life, that is, "*aye* (the visible, tangible world of the living) and *orun* (the invisible, spiritual realm of the ancestors, gods and spirits)".<sup>35</sup> The ceremony has several functions that serve to provide a name for the child based

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27 L Balogun & S Fasanu, Complexity and politics of naming in Yoruba tradition: A dramatic exploration of 'Once Upon an Elephant', *Genealogy* 3(2), 2019, pp 18-25.

28 L Balogun & S Fasanu, Complexity and politics of naming..., *Genealogy* 3(2), 2019, pp 18-25.

29 A Olatunji, M Issah, N Yusuf, AY Muhammed & AR Sulaiman, Personal name as..., *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 8(3), 2015, pp 72-90.

30 AE Kayode, personal collection. Interview: participant one (AO), public servant, interview conducted via WhatsApp call on 4 April 2022, Ire-Akari Crescent, Arola Apete, Ibadan, Nigeria.

31 AE Kayode, personal collection. Interview: participants six (GA) and four (IO), public servants, personal interviews conducted on 2 April 2022, Church Premises, Agbowo, Ibadan Nigeria.

32 AE Kayode, personal collection. Interview: participants one (AO), two (AK) and three (IA), public servants, interviewed conducted via Zoom online on 9 April 2022, Ibadan, Nigeria.

33 L Balogun & S Fasanu, Complexity and politics of naming..., *Genealogy* 3(2), 2019, pp 18-25.

34 IA Kanu, An Igwebuiké approach to the study of African traditional naming ceremony and baptism, *Journal of Religion and Human Relations* 11(1), 2019, 25-52.

35 L Balogun & S Fasanu, Complexity and politics of naming..., *Genealogy* 3(2), 2019, pp 18-25.



on the clues inherent in the interpretations of the texts undertaken by the diviner during the rituals.<sup>36</sup> For example, names such as *Esubiyii* and *Ogunbiyii* could be given in honour of deities like *Esu* and *Ogun*, respectively. The ceremony is also used to detail the behaviour of the child and their wishes in life; and to formally mark the child's entry to life on earth.<sup>37</sup> Broadly, the purpose of the ceremony is for the children to discover themselves in the world.<sup>38</sup> In this context, the purpose of the child's life is discovered through the *Ifa* prediction.<sup>39</sup> The mother's biological and spiritual connections to the child are emphasised during the ritual. *Akosewaye* or *ikosewaye* is a means of looking into the future of the new-born child, and what the child is likely to become in future.

Yoruba wisdom states that 'A child's name controls the child',<sup>40</sup> as echoed in some of these responses, while others indicate a growing criticism of the fatalism of this traditional wisdom. On this issue of a name determining one's destiny, the participants were divided. Participant one felt that it sometimes did indeed determine what a person became. Participant three agreed that the name given to the child determines its destiny, which is why many families in the Yoruba tribe give good and positive names to their new-born children. According to participant two, however, everyone needs to work to achieve the purpose of giving the name. Participant four felt the issue was debatable, as there is no proof that a name determines destiny. However, people do tend to give names with positive connotations to their children; and many Yoruba elders do believe this to be so (participant five). Participant five also used her own name as an example. She is 'Adekunle', which literally translates into either: *The house is filled with crowns*, or *the person who comes and makes the house full by bringing others*. She explained that the second translation had bearing on her as she was followed by six siblings. Some believe that there is a darker side to this practice of influencing destiny. This happens when enemies of the child's parents, through diabolical (demonic) ways, influence events if they can participate in the rituals. Participant five, however, explained that protection can be achieved by using Orogbo, atare, a hot drink, palm oil, and through prayer.

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36 MT Drewal, *Yoruba Ritual: Performers, Play, Agency* (Indiana University Press, 1992), p 57.

37 F Field, The foundation years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults. Report of the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances, 2010.

38 OI Balogun, "A study of Shakespeare adaptations inspired by the Yoruba tradition" (PhD thesis, Victoria University of Wellington), 2017.

39 OI Balogun, "A study of Shakespeare adaptations..." (PHD thesis, Victoria University of Wellington), 2017.

40 OA Akinola, Communicative role of Yorùbá names, *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature* 2(9), 2014, pp 65-72.



## Ìmòrí (Knowing the head)

The second major naming ritual is the *Imori* ritual, which means knowing the head.<sup>41</sup> The *Imori* ritual is undertaken on the third month after the child's birth and is critical in naming the child<sup>42</sup> as it involves determining whether the child has descended from the mother's or father's lineage, or a deity.<sup>43</sup> The *Imori* also requires the parents to perform a range of important tasks to aid the child on her or his earthly journey.

*Imori* or *ipin (lati orun)* also refers to what has been 'written' regarding the child's future.<sup>44</sup> Yoruba people believed that this could not be altered or changed by anybody. Neither the child nor the parents know or discover this destiny. Although *Imori* cannot be changed or altered, *Akosewaye* or *Ikosewaye* can be changed, diverted, or altered and both parents must find a way of protecting the child – either through prayer or ritual.

## Naming based on special contexts

Unique contexts regarding childbirth or family circumstances also impact naming within the Yoruba society. Many scholars have noted that, while *Ikumolu* (death has taken its successor) is exclusively male-oriented, it could be used for female members if there are no male successors in a family lineage.<sup>45</sup> Other cultural contexts that influence naming include circumstances of birth, significant professions of family members, and the family's religious dynamics (*Orisa*).<sup>46</sup> Additional contexts that involve the circumstances surrounding conception, experiences during pregnancy and delivery, and the position and posture of the child at birth, influence the personal names given to the children.<sup>47</sup>

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41 MT Drewal, *Yoruba Ritual: Performers, play, agency* (Indiana University Press, 1992).

42 L Balogun, "Òtún we Osì, òsì we Otún": Gender, feminist Mirroring, and the Yoruba concept of power and balance, *Journal of Gender and Power* 7(1), 2017, pp 27-43.

43 L Balogun & S Fasanu, Complexity and politics of naming..., *Genealogy* 3(2), 2019, pp 18-25.

44 A Agwuele, The underpinning of the Yoruba view of hairstyle, in A Agwuele, *The symbolism and communicative contents of dreadlocks in Yorubaland* (Palgrave Macmillan, Cham., 2016), pp 95-150.

45 A Olatunji, M Issah, N Yusuf, AY Muhammed & AR Sulaiman, Personal name as..., *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 8(3), 2015, pp 72-90.

46 A Olatunji, M Issah, N Yusuf, AY Muhammed & AR Sulaiman, Personal name as..., *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 8(3), 2015, pp 72-90.

47 A Akinyemi, Names and naming characters in African-language dramaturgy: The Yoruba example, *African Identities* 14(3), 2016, pp 242-254.

These influences can be broadly categorised as follows: anthroponyms, temporonyms and manner of birth. The anthroponyms are derived from the place of birth, while temporonyms refer to the period when the birth occurs.<sup>48</sup> Examples of conditions and circumstances relating to the birth of the child that influence the name include *Adé sí nà* (child born after a long barren time), *Abí ó dún* (child born in festive period), *Ogungbemi* (child born during the *Ogun* festival), and *Abisógun* (a child born during a war).<sup>49</sup>

In the Yoruba culture child naming can be divided in three major categories including natural names, given names, and pet names. On the other hand, scholars indicate that the three major categories of names include:

- names given after birth (*Abiso*),
- names sent from heaven (*Amutorunwa*), and
- names suggesting a return of a dead child (*Abiku*).<sup>50</sup>

### **The use of a prefix in naming in the Yoruba culture**

The prefix is often utilised within the context of the Yoruba personal naming systems. Prefixes are sometimes added before individual's names to signal the diverse social status of the child's background.<sup>51</sup> For example, prefixes such as *Ade*, *Ola* and *Oye* imply crown, honour, and royalty. These prefixes are part of the traditional culture of each family, especially when the child is of royal descent.<sup>52</sup>

### **The influence of Christianity on naming among the Yoruba**

The growing influence of modern religions on the naming process amongst the Yoruba is well documented. In this context, the first name to be given is the baptismal name, and often given in English or in a Yoruba translation of

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48 G Fakuade, J Friday-Otun & H Adeosun, Yoruba personal naming..., *Sociolinguistic Studies* 13(2-4), 2019, pp 251-271.

49 G Fakuade, J Friday-Otun & H Adeosun, Yoruba personal naming..., *Sociolinguistic Studies* 13(2-4), 2019, pp 251-271.

50 G Fakuade, J Friday-Otun & H Adeosun, Yoruba personal naming..., *Sociolinguistic Studies* 13(2-4), 2019, pp 251-271.

51 A Akinyemi, Names and naming characters..., *African Identities* 14(3), 2016, pp 242-254.

52 JO Falolu & OY Fadairo, Name as a designate of culture in traditional and contemporary Yorùbá society of Nigeria, *South African Journal of African Languages* 40(1), pp 2020, pp 40-46; Also see A Akinyemi, Integrating culture and second language teaching through Yorùbá personal names, *The modern language journal* 89(1), 2005, pp 115-126.

an English name.<sup>53</sup> Examples of Yoruba-based names inspired by the Christian faith include *Similoluwa* (rest on the Lord) and *Ooreoluwa* (gift of God).<sup>54</sup> Other examples include *ImoleOluwa* (light of the Lord) and *IbukunOluwa* (blessing of the Lord).<sup>55</sup> These names (also in English) can be used as baptismal names.

The Yoruba indigenous naming system performs the cultural function of distinguishing one clan from another. However, the relationship between the Yoruba naming traditions and changes in these traditions, patterns, and practices because of external circumstances must be considered.<sup>56</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this article has reviewed some of the literature related to the study of names and the naming system among the Yoruba people of South West Nigeria. Some of the different contexts that influence or determine Yoruba naming have been discussed. This article also discusses aspects of the Yoruba naming ceremony and the significance of this ceremony in Yoruba traditions. These traditional practises include family members and neighbours who come together to name the child after birth.

In summary, personal naming is an essential component and practice amongst diverse communities across the world. One of the functions associated with personal naming is constructing the identity of the child being named. These identities include gender, social, religious, and national identity.

Within the context of the Yoruba people, names are used for more than identification, i.e., names convey the people's philosophy and give meaning to past events of importance to the community. The personal naming process is also used to distinguish one clan from another. Diverse cultural aspects come into play when undertaking naming with respect to the Yoruba people. These factors include

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53 OC Omobola, Influence of Yoruba culture in Christian religious worship, *International Journal of Social Science and Education* 4(2), 2014, pp 584-595.

54 G Fakuade, J Friday-Otun & H Adeosun, Yoruba personal naming..., *Sociolinguistic Studies* 13(2-4), 2019, pp 251-271.

55 AO Samuel & OG Adekunle, Endangerment of Yoruba? Individual names: Implication on Yoruba? True identity, *Journal of Language and Literature* 20(1), 2020, p 131; See also RO Ikotun, New trends in Yoruba personal names among Yoruba Christians, *Linguistik Online* 59(2), 2013, pp 67-85.

56 OS Akintoye, Social implication of Yoruba indigenous names, *International Journal of Information Research and Review* 2(1), 2015, pp 252-255.

naming based on contexts, use of prefixes in naming, and religious influences on the naming process. The influence of context is particularly profound among the Yoruba. These cultural contexts include circumstances of birth, significant professions of family members, and religious dynamics of the family. There are three major categories relating to the naming of the children based on birth context – anthroponyms, temporonyms, and manner of birth.

Unfortunately, the erosion of Yoruba naming traditions and ceremonies in the face of growing modernity and globalisation is evident in the literature and in the interviewee's responses. The revitalisation and conservation of these traditions would benefit from adequate documentation and education and awareness campaigns.