Naming of Children and Meaning of Names among the Akan of Ghana: Defining Identities?

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Abstract

This article examines the naming of children among the Akan, which as a form of identity, appears very complex to many across the world. The Akan are mostly located along the coastal and central regions of Ghana and the Ivory Coast, with some others in the diaspora who also claim ancestry. People who trace their roots and ancestry to the Akan continue to name children according to Akan traditions. The naming of children is of great importance in all Akan societies, as it is believed that the name given to a child can affect his behaviour and destiny. Besides, the family name that is given to the child the day the child is born is very significant as it actually becomes the first name of the person. The qualitative method of enquiry was used to gather data from respondents by means of interviews and observations on the significance and processes of naming children from four Akan communities in the Brong Ahafo and Ashanti Regions of Ghana. The findings shed light on the processes, significance, and meaning of a number of Akan names that are given to people in general, and children in particular.

Keywords: Akan; ancestry; community; culture; family; names

Introduction

The reader may have come across names such as Kofi Annan (the immediate past Secretary General of the United Nations), Osagyefo Dr Kwame Nkrumah (the first post-independence Prime Minister of Ghana), Otumfuor Osei Tutu (the current Asante monarch), John Agyekum Kuffuor (former president of Ghana), Professor John Evan Fiifi Atta-Mills (late former president of Ghana), Nana Addo Dankwah Akuffo-Addo (the current president of Ghana) and Nana Yaa Asantewaah (the queen mother of Ejiso who lived near Kumasi, and who took up arms against the British colonial

government, which had defeated the Ashanti and exiled the king and his government in 1900). All the people mentioned above are from Ghana, but the names are Akan. The Akan people of the present-day live mainly in the West African sub-region in the central areas of Ghana, the Ivory Coast, Togo, and Burkina Faso. There are other groups in the Americas and the Caribbean who trace their roots to the Akan. These are the people who were transported to the Americas and the Caribbean through the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Citing Devonish (2005), Arko-Achemfuor (2013) notes that a number of ethnic groups in Latin America such as Surinam, Guyana and Carriacou, Coromantee, and Jamaica appear to be culturally and linguistically Akan in origin.

The Akan have a rich history and culture, which they have maintained and observed over centuries. Worldwide weaving and dressing in Kente clothes, telling folk stories, popularly known as Anansesem or Ananse stories, the practice of the matrilineal system of inheritance, and the unique ways of naming children after the days of the week are just a few of the unique traditions that have been conserved over generations. This article examines the naming of children among the Akan as a form of identity which appears very complex to other communities across the world. The Akan are mostly located in the coastal and central regions of Ghana and Ivory Coast and many people from other communities in the diaspora (mostly in the Americas), trace their ancestry to the Akan. Of the 10 regions in Ghana, five of them—namely the Eastern, Central, Western, Ashanti, and Brong Ahafo are Akan areas. Akans, according to Agyekum (2006), have different dialects, which are mutually intelligible, including Asante, Akuapem, Akwamu, Twifo, Asen, Fante, Brong, Denkyira, Akyem, Assin, Twifo, Wassa, Buem, Ahanta, Kwawu, and Ahanta. The people who trace their roots and ancestry to the Akan continue to name children according to Akan tradition. The naming of children is of significance in all Akan societies as it is believed that the name given to a child can affect his/her behaviour and destiny in different ways. This view is shared by Obeng (1998, 163) who observes that:

> names in Akan, as in other cultures, are pointers to their users' hopes, dreams, and aspirations; they may reflect their users' geographical environment as well as their fears, religious beliefs, and the philosophy of life and death.

Similarly, Agyekum (2006) concurs to some extent with Obeng (1998) that African and Akan names are different from Western names, where people take their father's last names. He adds that while western names are generally predictable—because they are begotten from their fathers, African, and Akan names in particular, are not predictable. As mentioned earlier in this article, children's names may even provide insights into important cultural or socio-political events at the time of their birth. Besides that, the family name that is given to the child, the day the child is born, which is actually the first name of the person in Akan tradition and culture, is very significant. Some of the Akan groups, most especially the Ashanti and Brong, do not have one unique family name or surname as is the case in most ethnic and cultural

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groups across the world. Every child or person is given a surname mostly from a prominent past or living member of the man's family. A child can also be named after other people in the family. The qualitative method of enquiry was used to gather data from respondents. Interviews and observations were the main instruments used to elicit data on the significance and processes of naming children from four Akan communities in the Brong Ahafo and Ashanti Regions in Ghana. The findings shed light on the processes, significance, and meaning of some Akan names that are given to children.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This article is underpinned by the theory of onomasiology and Suzman's "names as pointers" approach. Onomastics, according to Algeo (1992), deals with the study of proper names, their forms, and use. Agyekum (2006) adds that in the cultural context, we name in order to differentiate, recognise, and finally know. Vilakazi (2002) adds that onomastics covers a wide range of fields, which include place-names, personal names, ethnic names, brand and trade names, names of animals, and corporate groups. Citing Herbert (1995), Vilakazi notes that changes in onomastics, which are called dynamic onomastics, deals with the influence of certain factors such as urbanisation, religion, westernisation, and in recent times in Africa, Africanisation and African identity. A determining factor on the first names of children during colonial times to a large extent, and up untill now, has been Christianity, but the trend appears to be changing, with people and parents reverting to common names from a "common stock" of names available from one's group referred to by Herbert (1995), and cited in Vilakazi (2002, 6) as "name repertoire." Suzman's (1994) "names as pointers" approach similarly states that in African societies, name givers traditionally chose personal names that pointed to a range of people and circumstances that were relevant at the time of the child's birth. Suzman adds that children are often named after some historical event or specific circumstances at birth and, among the Akan, or somebody: a name according to Vilakazi (2002), which will remind the parents or relatives or even the society of that particular event or person. The two theories are applicable and relevant to this article. The literature review and the empirical study will reveal that Akans, in their naming practices and culture, give names to people in order to differentiate, recognise and finally know, as pointed by Agyekum (2006). Naming of children after the days of the week, naming twins, naming about death situation, the number in line of birth among others fall to a large extent under "names as pointers."

Although the Akan are Africans and many of their traditions, practices, and culture are similar to those of other Africans on the continent as well as those in the diaspora, they have certain practices which are unique. Citing Adu-Boahen (1966), Kissi and Van Eck (2017, 3) note that the naming of people, the matrilineal system of inheritance, and the monarchical system of governance in addition to their language are cultural traits common among the Akan. This article sheds light on the Akan

names as many people across the world do not understand how siblings, for example, can have different surnames and family names as others call them. Some even question the practice of naming a person after the days of the week, most especially where one has two children of the same gender born on the same day of the week. In South Africa, for example, some Akan parents often experience difficulty at the Department of Home Affairs when applying for identity documents for their children if they have a different surname to that of the parents.

The Akan speak the Twi language and *din* means name and *to* or *toa* means to adjoin. In effect, *din to* is a process through which the name is ritually joined to the spirit of the child. This view is supported by Mandende (2009) who intimates that traditional African societies believe that there is a close connection between the soul and the name of a person. Similarly, Akhan (2012, 1) adds that "the Supreme Being defines our unique purpose and this purpose, our destiny as a function we are to execute in this world before birth." The name we are given, according to him, is the power-carrying indicator of our divine function, has been and continues to be most sacred to us. Agyekum (2006) notes that the Akans attach great importance to naming and naming practices. He adds that Akan names give insight into Akan culture, philosophy, thought, environment, religion, language, and culture.

The naming ceremony called *din to,* according to Akhan (2012), is performed on the eighth day after the birth of the child and he/she is kept indoors until that time. The ceremony is carried out at dawn or very early in the morning with close family members gathered around, the first name, *Kradin* and the formal or good name/ideal name, *din pa* are given to him or her. The first name, according to Obeng (1998) is based on the day of the week on which the child was born. The following are the names for males and females respectively—Akwasida -Sunday (Akwasi/Akosua); Dwoada - Monday (Kwadwo/Adwoa); Benada - Tuesday (Kwabena/Abenaa); Wukuada - Wednesday (Kwaku/Akua); Yawada - Thursday (Yaw/Yaa), Fiada - Friday (Kofi/Afia); and Memenada (Kwame/Amma). The formal names according to Obeng (1998), are not merely labels that indicate which person (in particular, which father) is responsible for the birth of the child as it is mostly in western societies, where the father's surname automatically becomes his or her child's surname, but rather the close connection between the name given to him or her and the name-giver's overall experiences. Akhan (2012) adds that the formal name *din pa,* which is given to the child, defines his function in the world as it relates to his or her specific ancestral clan and his or her potential for manifesting wisdom and influence. Akhan adds that the *dip pa* carries the vibrations that will empower the individual to properly incorporate divine balance throughout his or her life according to ancestral protocol.

The naming ceremony takes place in the house of the father in the presence of close family members. The spiritual and religious aspect is evident where, according to

Akhan (2012), the elder giving the name invokes *Nyame* (God), and pours libation to *Asaase Yaa* (Mother Earth), the *Abosom* (Divinities, Forces, Nature), and *Nananom Nsamanfo* (Honoured Ancestral Spirits) to assist and bless the naming of the child. Akhan adds that the name is given to the child and after acquiring the name, he/she is given to an elder from the father's family who announces the *Kradin* and the *din pa* to the family for the first time. Akhan intimates further that the ritual involves the elder performing the ceremony using two cups, one containing alcohol and the other water, where he dips his finger in the water and places it in the mouth of the child and calls the names he or she has just been given; for example, Kofi Kyere saying "Kofi Kyere, *se we se nsuo a nsuo* ("Kofi Kyere, if you say it is water, it should be water"—and does the same with the alcohol, again saying Kofi Kyere*, se we se nsa a nsa* ("Kofi Kyere, if you say it is alcohol, it should be alcohol"). This ritual is repeated three times. This he adds, is done to instil within the child a consciousness of morality—the necessity of always living in harmony with the truth throughout his or her life, irrespective of the consequence of whether the truthfulness leaves a pleasant taste in the mouth (water) or a bitter taste in the mouth (alcohol)—nevertheless, truthfulness must be upheld.

Mandende (2009) confirms that the personal names of Africans play an important role in society, most often reflecting what normally happens in daily life and as a consequence follow certain patterns. Koopman (as quoted by Mandende 2009), intimates that the pattern of personal names followed by the AmaZulu in South Africa comprise:

1. Names referring to the structure of the family;

2. Names referring to the role of God in birth;

3. Names referring to the conceived relationship between parent and child;

4. Names referring to the circumstances of parents; and

5. Names referring to the wider clan.

Similarly, Agyekum (2006) sheds light on a similar pattern with the Akans, indicating that the circumstances and social contexts of the birth of the child may prompt the parents to name the child X and not Y. Coates (as quoted by Possa and Khotso 2015) concurs with Mandende (2009) and Agyekum (2006) that onomastics is the discipline, which seeks to answer the semasiological question ''why X is called X?'' Agyekum (2006) affirms that the circumstantial contexts that are considered first and foremost are the gender and socioeconomic situation of the parents, time of birth, and their social links with other people among others. Agyekum (2006) points to the typologies of Akan names as:

- Birthday names;

- Family names;

- Circumstantial names;

- Flora and fauna and physical structure names;

- Theophoric names;

- Honorific and title names;

- Insinuating, proverbial, insulting and nicknames;

- Gang, play and occupational names; and

- Innovative Akan names.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative method, and sought to shed light on the names and naming conventions among the Akan. Consistent with qualitative methods, observations and interviews were the main tools that were used for collecting data. Both primary and secondary data were used in the study. The secondary research was an intensive literature study by prominent researchers in the field of the study of names such as Suzman, Agyekum, and Vilakazi, just to name a few. The primary data collection involved personal interviews with five elders in one Akan community at Kintampo in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana, who were interviewed intensively in interviews lasting between 45 minutes and one hour per session. Permission was obtained for the interview to be tape-recorded, accompanied by a journal I kept to also record actions and events. The observations were both participant and non-participant. Two of the participant observations were from my family, while the non-participant observations were from different families in the other communities. I was given permission to observe and record the events with an electronic recorder, and I jotted down the activities, which could be observed during the observations. The data was analysed from the interviews and compared with the literature review to find if the patterns were consistent with literature. The typologies of Akan names are discussed below, with detailed examples in the following sections.

Birthday Names

Birthday names or *Kradin* literally translated as a "soul" name, which Akan beliefs suggest is the name the soul offers a person. That becomes the person's first name,

which according to Agyekum (2006), is derived from the names of deities and their particular days of worshipping. These are the seven days of the week, with their male and female versions respectively—Kwasi or Akwasi (Akosua - Sunday); Kwadwo or Kojo/Adwoa - Monday; Kwabena/Abena (Tuesday); Kwaku/Akua (Wednesday); Yaw/Yaa (Thursday); Kofi/Afia or Afua; and Kwame/Amma. Some of the prominent Akan personalities mentioned at the beginning of this article such as *Kwame* Nkrumah, *Kofi* Annan, and Nana *Yaa* Asantewaah all have birthday names. Kwame Nkrumah was born on Saturday and Kofi Annan on Friday. The Akan are one of the few known ethnic groups that name people in this manner, which identifies them as a group. The practice is so entrenched in the culture that deities, God himself, and the earth all have birthday names. The Akan believe that God created himself on a Saturday and it is common among the Akan to refer to God as *Oboo Adee* Kwame (Creator Kwame), *Twieduampong* Kwame (Almighty Kwame), *Ode ne ho* Kwame (Kwame who owns himself), *Osoro hene* Kwame (Kwame of the Heavens), *Odomankoma* Kwame (Kwame the one who gives grace), to name just a few. It should be noted that by assigning the male name to God implies that God is a male in Akan belief systems.

Conversely, the Akan believe the earth is a female, who was created by God on Thursday—and thus have the birthday name *Yaa* (female born on Thursday). She is popularly called *Asaase Yaa* (Yaa the Earth). Some of the common Akan deities have the days of their creation or coming into being, and a number of them have the birthday names as part of their names such as *Kwaku* Firi, *Kofi* Adade, Akonedi *Abena*, and Tano *Kofi*. Opokuwaa (2001) intimates that the Akonedi *Abena* is a female deity among the Lartey people in the eastern region of Ghana, who is consulted on all matters, and provides the final decision in difficult disputes related to chieftaincy, hierarchy, property, land, family, and other major issues.

Non-Akan speakers ask all the time in situations where one has two children born on the same day. That is simple to distinguish, because of the different surnames and where they have the same birthday names, they will be identified as *Panin* and *Kuma* (elder and the younger). For example, two brothers named their firstborn sons after their father Kyere. Both boys were born on a Thursday and both named Yaw Kyere; the elder is therefore referred to as Yaw Kyere *Panin* and the younger of the two, Yaw Kyere *Kuma*.

Family Names

Family names are clan names given to children by their fathers (Agyekum 2006). Although the westernised trend is for children to take the surnames of their fathers, every Akan child is given his/her own proper or surname (*dinpa)* at the ceremony called *dinto*. Agyekum notes that Akan clan names are based on the 12 patrilineal clans of the Akans, which are Bosommuru, Bosompra, Bosomtwe, Bosomnkatia,

Bosompo, Bosomdwerebe, Bosomkrete, Bosomayesu, Bosomakom, Bosomankosi, Bosomayesu, Bosomakom. Bosomafram, and Bosomsika. According to Agyekum, these were deities the Akan ancestors used to worship in the past. Most Akan family names have their male and female equivalents, for example, Poku/Pokuaah, Gyamfi/Gyamfiwaah, Twene/Twenewaah, and Osei/Sewaah. Children are named after prominent family members; although a parent can name his child after non-family members. Under family names, names may be categorised as markers of personal or group identity. Names, according to Agyekum (2006), are synonymously equated to their bearers and the child named after a person is expected to exhibit or emulate the life of the person, which is why, if the child lives contrary to that expectation—that is, in a shameful manner, people will say *wasee ne din* ("he/she has soiled his/her name''). In group identity, there are some names, which are peculiar to the different Akan dialect groups, for example Osei/Serwaah, Poku/Pokuaah, Prempeh, Konadu (Ashanti); Effa/Fakaah, Ameyaw, Kyereme, Kodom (Bono); Akufo, Ofei, Addo/Adobea (Akuapem). It should be noted, however, that some of the Akan names may have their origin in the different dialect groups, which is difficult nowadays to determine because of intermarriages and migration.

As has been noted above, Akan names are complex; and this is confirmed by Ansu-Kyereme (2000) who states that "Bono personal names and the naming system at large are prototypically Akan." The name assumes the characteristics of the wider Akan system and its principles. These include:

- name classification

- two-name format made up of din *pa* or *agyadin* and *akradin*

- *din pa or agyadin* that have no specific meanings

- gender determined or differentiated names

- multiple naming system

- dynamic naming system.

Ansu-Kyereme (2000) confirms that *din pa* or *agyadin* is characterised as a "proper name" which is chosen by the father of the child in consultation with his family. Brempong (1999) contrasts this practice of being "named after" among the Akan to the Western and Biblical term "begat". What is interesting here is the patriarchal nature of Akan society which is matrilineal where the child inherits from the mother's side but he/she is named by the father and mostly after his/her family members.

Circumstantial Names

Agyekum (2006) suggests that certain names are given to children because of the circumstances surrounding their birth. These are called circumstantial names, and may be grouped under *anthro-toponyms*—that is names that have been influenced by the circumstances of one's place of birth, for example, temporonyms such as Afia Tema (names that relate to the period of birth) and Fofie, Munufie, Addae, Fokuo, Dapaa—which are sacred days in the Akan calendar. There are also names such as Akwanbo, Fokuo (names relating to some festivals), Afriyie, Bosea, Adiyia, Ghana and many others (which are names that relate to the social, economic, or political circumstances and situation of the time and circumstances of the parents at the time the child was born). There is a sequential manner of giving birth—for example *Piesie* ("firstborn"), *Mensah* ("the third born")—especially if they are all boys—*Afra* ("mixture")—in the event where two or more who preceded the particular child happened to be of a different gender. There are also names such as *Ata/Ataah* ("twins"); *Tewiah* ("the one who comes after the twins"), as well as *Nyankomago* ("two after the twins"). Names to prevent death and ensure survival (*awomawu*) are also given to children whose mothers suffer perpetual loss of children to scare death. Some of those names are *Mosi* or *Donkor* ("two previous deaths and this child being the surviving third"), and *Bagyina* ("the child who stands firm"). Bariki (2009) supports Agyekum's (2006) assertion that the circumstances surrounding one' 's birth—for example, the social context prevailing at the time of birth dictates the name he/she may be given. He adds that most African names have attributes as well. It is clear from the few Akan names discussed above that they are all circumstantial.

Flora and Fauna and Physical Structure Names

These are names that originate from flora and fauna and physical structures. Typical examples are *Odum* ("mahogany"), *Bodom*, *Onyina* ("the kapok tree'') (names of popular trees), *Kodee* ("Eagle"), *Sono* ("Elephant''), *Nhwireng* ("Flower"), *Tuntum* ("the Black"), and *Duah* ("Tree")—and the resulting names are typically Kofi Dum/Odum, Afia Kodee, Kwaku Duah, Afia Nyina, and Yaw Tuntum. Agyekum (2006) and Ennin and Nkansah (2015) refer to these names as flora and fauna and physical structure names.

Theophoric Names

These are names given to children, which are based on the Akan's beliefs in the supernatural being, and this supernatural being's ability to bless parents with children. Based on the belief systems of parents, in respect of where the blessing came from, the child may be named after a god or a deity. These are names such as *Nyamekye* ('God's gift'') or *Nyameama* (*"God has given''*). Names such as *Kunsu, Gare, Firi, Ntoa, Gyambibi* signify that such children are gifts from deities.

Honorific and Title Names

Honorific and title names are very common among the Akan. These are names other than one's given birth names, and are earned as a result of one's occupation, zeal, age, royalty, or stool names—when a person is enthroned (Agyekum 2006). Akan kings and chiefs occupy stools as the symbols of their power, unlike some other ethnic and cultural groups in Africa and elsewhere, where skins are used when the chief is being crowned. In Akan tradition, a Chief or a Queen mother is enstooled. These names must be observed, especially for royalty and for the elderly, and are not to be to be called randomly. Also, chiefs or the elderly are not supposed to be referred to directly by their names without the title *Nana* (Chief or a Grandparent). Failure to do so is perceived as ill-mannered or disrespectful. Professional people are regarded as noble and are referred to by titles that relate to their professions such as *Osofo* (*"Priest''*) or *Komfoo* (''traditional priest"). Some of these titles are *Osagyefo* (''Redeemer from war''), *Daasebre, Nana* (''King/chief/royalty''), and a grandparent, (*Katakyie* ''Strongman''). For example, the late former president of Ghana was referred to as *Osagefo* Kwame Nkrumah (possibly for redeeming Ghana from colonial rule). The current Asantehene acquired the stool name *Osei Tutu* and the title *Otumfoo* (''Almighty''). In the same vein, one of the coup leaders who toppled Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah's government, Lieutenant General Akwasi Amankwah Afrifa acquired the title *Katakyie* (''Strong or brave man''); as President Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah was then regarded as invincible.

Insinuating, Proverbial, and Insulting

Agyekum (2006) intimates that insinuating, proverbial, insulting, and nick names are sometimes given to children by their parents, and pertain to prevailing situations and relationships between the parents, and some family members or neighbours at the time of the birth of the child. These are mostly conflict situations but can also be in harmonious relationships. Some of such names are *Agyegyesem* (''tempter or troublemaker''); *Kaedabi* (''remember the past''); *Nyasemhwe* (''get into trouble and see''); and *Sunkwa* ''Pray for life.''

Nick, Play, and Occupational Names

These are names coined by group members and peers and are given to other members of the group, which come to be accepted by the members in question, as well as members of the community. People who enter certain professions and occupations and do well in them also acquire occupational names, which tend to cover their personal names. Some of those names are *Sikani* (''Richman''); *Fita* (''Mechanic''); or *Tikya* (''Teacher'').

People use the physical attributes of others, such as one's complexion, height or size, or a person's behaviour to give him/her a name (Agyekum 2006). Nicknames are

given to people who may or may not be family members, such as *Mmaawa* (''Womaniser''); *Ahenkwaah* (''the chief's servant''); or *Okyeame* (''the linguist''). They may not like the names given to them, but members of the community will address them in that manner regardless.

Innovations in Akan Names

In today's world, parents and individuals have names which are inspired by westernisation, Christianity, education, and urbanisation. Every Akan child is given a personal name (surname) and it has become common practice for people to combine their own personal names and that of their fathers and praise names as well. Many people are given Christian names while others discard them and take African names, for example—a man named Agyekum, whose father's personal name is Kufuor, gives rise to the person calling himself Kwaku Agyekum-Kufuor. Another example is the name of the sitting president of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwah Akuffo-Addo—his father was former President Akkufo Addo of Ghana during the Second Republic under Professor Kofi Abrefa Busiah administration. He is known to be from a royal family among the Akyem group, and might have been named after prominent chiefs or family members.

Discussion

As discussed in the literature and theoretical framework in this article, people from various cultures have their own unique ways of giving or acquiring names. For most westerners and people from other cultures, personal names or surnames are begotten. Obeng (1998) shows the contrast of how African and, most especially, Akan names are acquired or given. Obeng (1998) adds that while western names are generally predictable because the proper names or surnames are begotten from the father and his family, in the Akan and some other African cultures, names do not follow the same pattern. Kissi and Van Eck (2017) confirm that a common practice among the Akan is the naming during the naming ceremony of children, which according to him, defines their identity to a large extent. The importance of the names given to children and people as alluded to earlier in the literature, in all Akan societies is confirmed by Obeng (1998, 163) who observes that:

> names in Akan, as in other cultures, are pointers to their users' hopes, dreams, and aspirations; they may reflect their users' geographical environment as well as their fears, religious beliefs, and the philosophy of life and death.

African names are not predictable; children's names may even provide insights into important cultural or socio-political events at the time of their birth. Many Africans, including some of the cultural and linguistic groups in Southern Africa have automatic surnames or personal names from the families they are born into. The person is then given a first name. Ansu-Kyereme (2000) (as quoted by Ennin and Nkansah 2015),

confirms that Bonos (one of the Akan groups) have a two-name system, which comprises the ascribed and given names. The ascribed name is derived from the birthday of the child and the given name is the name given by the father of the child. Ansu-Kyereme (2000) adds that in order to always satisfy the two-name system, substitutes are provided for given names through names given according to birth months, birth-order names, nicknames or appellations, circumstantial names, and even the adoption of Christian and Islamic names.

From the interviews and the observations that were made during the empirical studies, the sacred nature and importance given to the *dinto* ("naming ceremony") among the Akan came out very clearly. In all cases, the first names are clear as they are determined by the day of the week when the person was born—whereas the personal/surname or proper name is properly chosen and given. In one of the cases, where one of the children, who was being named had lost his father before birth, he was named *Anto* (''did not come to meet'')—but was still given a proper name.

Conclusion

As discussed in this article, one can appreciate the importance and complex nature of names, and how they are given and acquired among the Akan. What should be borne in mind is that each person, through the *dinto* ceremony, is given a personal name. Although one may not ever be called by that name, people in the community, apart from close family members, may not know one's personal name unless he or she is told or asks for it. A personal name is used when a person dies or on very serious occasions and matters. From the literature review and the discussion above, one can argue that names and the naming of children are very important phenomena, which go beyond the names that are given to a person—that is, the ascribed and the given names. The given name as alluded to earlier in this article, is the birthday name or *Kradin,* literally translated as "soul" name—which Akans believe is the name the soul gives to a person—thereby taking on a spiritual dimension. The proper or surnames on the other hand, according to Agyekum (2006), are synonymously equated with their bearers, where a child named after a person is expected to exhibit or emulate that person. Many other factors are taken into consideration when a child is being named, but the surname or proper name is mostly from a respectable family member who has passed on or may still be living.

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