Traditional personal names: an investigation into Songhay anthroponomastics

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ABSTRACT: Human beings have always been characterized by their names, naming ability and practices. Names are created and shaped by sociocultural values and serve to give an identity to their bearers. They tell about the place and period of birth of the bearers, their social status, gender, the birth order in the family, etc. The Songhay society of Northern Mali makes use of the same naming devices in that it describes and names its sociocultural environment, expressing by the same token, the Songhay philosophical thought and vision surrounding those names and naming systems. In fact, most Songhay traditional names have faded away under the heavy weight of Islam and Christianity which have come to impose new names and naming practices. Research in African onomastics, Songhay onomastics included, is generally scanty. No serious study is known to have taken place specifically on Songhay traditional personal names. Therefore, this investigation is undertaken to fill this gap. The study focuses on the determination of the types of Songhay traditional personal names, the circumstantial meanings that induce their creation and attribution and their morphology. The participant interview was used to collect the data from Sognhay native speakers of Gao and Timbuktu living in Bamako. The name typologies (including the circumstantial meanings) uncovered by the study involve the kinship system, the period of birth (including the day, month or season), the social status of the name bearer (slaves), protection and/or survival, blessing, beauty, complexion, etc. The morphological typologies basically display simple nouns with 44.08% of frequency rate, followed by noun-adjective combinations, 26.88%, and two noun combinations, 15.05%.

KEYWORDS: *Songhay, personal names, anthroponomastics, onomastics.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The study of proper names is a multi-disciplinary field that has caught the attention of language philosophers, anthropologists, linguists and ordinary people. Onomastics is the science of proper names including the study of their forms and use and of the varieties of naming practices (S. Ngubane, 2000). It investigates both anthroponomastics (anthroponymy) dedicated to the study of personal names (J. Algeo, 1992, p.727) and toponomastics (toponymy) devoted to the study of place names (V. Prabhakaran, 1997, p.1).While these two sub-fields look distinct, they are intimately related as anthroponyms are sometimes used as toponyms and vice versa (R. Guo, 2002).

Songhay is a Nilo-Saharan language (J. H. Greenberg, 1963; L. Bender, 2000; and C. Ehret, 2001) spoken along the borders of the Niger River in Mali, Niger and Benin, but also in Togo and Burkina Faso. Speakers of the language have specific ethnic group names in their respective areas: *Dendi* in Benin, *Zerma* in Niger, or *Koyraboro* in Mali. The name *Songhay* itself is controversial. Most early texts written in French rather read *songhoi* or *sonrhay*. Of course, the source of such vocabulary is Arabic language since the first scholars interested in African history were Arab geographers such as Ibn Batuta. Phonologically, what native speakers recognize is *soŋay* according to the informants for the study. The deformation of the word was due to poor transcriptions in Arabic and French texts because the velar sound /ŋ/ exists neither in the Arabic nor in the French sound systems. The same poor transcription of the /ŋ/ sound can be noticed with the word *Ghana* when referring to the name of the Empire of Ghana.

Referring to the far origins of the Songhay people, their beliefs and their historical background, it is noticeable that though Islam and Christianity have strongly influenced the naming practices in West African countries, some traditional personal names do still exist among the Songhay speaking communities, particularly among the elderly. The need to investigate in such an onomastic topic can therefore be justified by the obvious fact that most of Songhay traditional personal names are unknown to younger generations; worse, most of such

names have simply disappeared under the strong islamization undertaken since the turn of the tenth century, but more specifically under the last two dynasties of the Songhay Empire, that is, the very powerful Sonni and Askia dynasties. It is worth noting that the roots of Islam-oriented Arabic have become so deep in West Africa that communities tend to systematically reject non-Islamic oriented personal names.

As pointed earlier, Anthroponomy is an interdisciplinary field related to genealogy, sociology and anthropology, to cite just a few. In the eyes of L. Mphande (2006, p.106), names should be perceived as the most meaningful constituent of a language vocabulary, and naming therefore appears as a process whereby speech communities organize and classify their social and cultural milieu (M. Minkailou, 2018, p.400). Naming practices include negative names with the use of ugly or low-priority names intended to stand as protective shields against harm that may threaten individuals, a strategy often adopted to fool evil spirits which are believed to hide behind most death cases; there are also secret or underground names meant to ensure the protection of their bearers, especially in areas where cultures may be threatened or where there may be more direct threats of violence to individuals who resist to assimilation from the dominant society; last, there is renaming (with the creation, adoption and use of second names) used during illness or danger that usually takes place where danger is rampant and life rather fragile.

In African societies, names are often used to give an identity and define the name bearer (O. Nyambi et al, 2016); they equally tend to be carriers of a symbolic and less transparent meaning (M. M. Bagwasi, 2012, p.123). More, they seem to have a strong communicative value in that they appear allusive in terms of the feelings and opinions they carry (A. Batoma, 2009). In this particular sense, they can be ontological, capturing and expressing the ontological identity of the name bearer; they can equally be pedagogical, expressing the plurality of their social and cultural identities; finally, they can be allusive, carrying out messages in an indirect way, particularly to conflict protagonists.

Names and naming systems help depict social and cultural groups. A study by K. Agyekum (2006) examines the personal name typologies in the Akan society of Ghana. The research gives insights into Akan culture, philosophy, thought, environment, religion, language and culture in an analysis that combines both philosophical and anthropological notions. The paper considers naming as an important aspect of the Akan society. It looks at Akan names as not being arbitrary labels, but sociocultural tags that have sociocultural functions and meaning. The study reveals the following typologies of Akan names: proper names, family names, circumstantial names, achievement names, stool names, religious names, occupational names, insinuating and proverbial names, bodily structure names and kinship names. The proverbial name typology in particular has equally been stressed by L. Makondo (2009) as a principal characteristic feature of East African communities who usually draw most of their names from proverbs.

A further research in this sense is M. Minkailou (2018) that investigates Bamanan traditional personal names in Southern Mali. The study is a qualitative research depicting the cosmogonic nature of names in the Bamanan society of Mali. It uses philosophical and sociocultural notions in the analysis of the different typologies of names by pointing out the dimensions that condition the context and circumstances under which these names are created. The personal name typologies displayed pertain, inter alia, to the death of parents, the order of birth in the family, the days of the week, the months, the seasons, the places, the flora and fauna, the fetishes, complexion, survival desire, promises, and the social status of the name bearers.

The Akan and the Bamanan naming systems do not differ so much from any of the neighboring West African societies in that they show similar characteristics with respect to the naming conditions and circumstances. Though Akan and Bamanan people are different, the naming typologies in these studies show similar morphological descriptions that are relevant to the current analysis of the Songhay names in this study.

Literature on Malian onomastics is definitely scanty (or even non-existent) in that there is some literature related to other fields of knowledge that may make slight reference to names and naming practices (M. Minkailou, 2018, pp-401-402). Thus, this research becomes a necessity and holds a high significance at least in the sense that it will contribute to expand knowledge in Malian sociology, anthropology, and (socio)linguistics. The scope of the study includes the Songhay traditional personal names, and their origins and meanings in the regions of Gao and Timbuktu in Northern Mali.

The principal objective of the research is to ensure the revival and maintenance of African traditional personal names. The study specifically aims to determine the Songhay name typologies, their meanings (circumstantial use among the Songhay speech community) and their structures.

The study is carried out to answer the following guiding research questions: i) What are the Songhay traditional personal name typologies? ii) What are the circumstances that induce their creation and use and determine their meanings? And iii) What are the structures of those names?

METHODOLOGY

The instrument used to gather the data for the study is the conversational interview. Thirty (30) informants have been purposely selected from the regions of Gao and Timbuktu: ten (10) from Timbuktu and twenty (20) from Gao. All are residents of Bamako, and are aged between forty (40) and ninety-two (92). Most of the interviewees, especially from Timbuktu, are retired civil servants. One of them, Sidije Umar, now aged 92,is

still living in Badalabugu in perfect health conditions: he does not need to wear any glasses to read the Quran. He is a specialist in the field for having participated since 1964 in the very first tentative works on the Songhay language.

The two researchers conducted the conversations with the interviewees in their respective homes on scheduled appointments. But in some cases, given distance and time constraints, the WhatsApp medium was used to collect the data. The conversations conducted with the participants basically pertain to the Songhay traditional personal names and name typologies, and their meanings including the circumstances under which they are attributed to their bearers. The cellphone is the material used to record the data for transcription and analysis using tables. The names collected include both single personal names given right from birth and second personal names usually acquired in specific circumstances (war, illness, hunting, etc.) later in life. It is useful to underline that second personal names (generally positive) are distinct from nicknames (usually negative, and out of the focus of this research) which often disappear over time, especially when the bearers become 'important people'.

The study is grounded on the theoretical concepts of performance, indexicality and participation developed by A. Duranti (1997). A. Duranti proposed three central theoretical concepts for linguistic anthropology: performance, indexicality and participation. These three interrelated concepts are analytical notions that help understand the function of language in culture.

According to him, *competence* is the knowledge of a language that an ideal speaker has, whereas performance is the implementation of that knowledge in acts of speaking (A. Duranti, 1997, p.14). He assumed that the central idea in linguistic anthropology is the study of language in context with a focus on the performative aspects of language rather than the competence to speak a language.

In the same vein, rejecting the Saussurean metaphor of language as a conduit transferring ideas from the head of the speaker to the head of the listener, B. Malinowski (1935 p.7) asserts that *"the fact is that the main function of language is not to express thought, not to duplicate mental processes, but rather to play an active pragmatic part in human behavior"*.

The concept of indexicality concerns the social function of language and the intention speakers have when using it. A. Duarnti illustrates this concept with an example in which language is used to point out objects, to signal the social status of its speaker or listener. According to M. Silverstein (1976, p.27), indexes are signs that have some kind of existential relations with what they refer to (and that can be spatial, temporal, social or personal).In this respect, the Songhay naming system is an aspect of cultural indexicality which appears definitely applicable to Songhay names since they have sociocultural interpretation; some names refer to personal, temporal, spatial and social deixis.

The concept of participation is interested in those who make, use, receive and interpret linguistic utterances. Very clearly, this concept points to the fact that taking part in communicative events means being part of a social group with implications for the use of language (A. Duranti, 1997), and Songhay names and naming systems are part of that process.

This theory is relevant to the study in that the linguistic expressions of the Songhay personal names are connected to some aspects of the sociocultural context of the bearers of the names. The three concepts of performance, indexicality and participation are of great importance to this study in that they explain the data that have been collected from a speech community sharing specific rules with regard to language use. It can also be noted that these three concepts are part ofwhat D.H. Hymes (1972) has termed as the ethnography of communication.

II.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Songhay naming system shows different personal name typologies related to the names of the months, the week days, the kinship system, the sociocultural events, and some derived forms of contemporary Islam-influenced names. In this study, the majority of the names are those attributed right from birth; however, there are a few *second* names given to their bearers, later in life, following specific events and/or circumstances (good social behavior, hunting, war, hard work, etc.)

The findings on traditional Songhay personal names have been classified into typologies and presented into tables as follows:

Type 1: Names of week days as slave personal names

Songhay people tend to start their week with Sunday to end with Saturday (certainly influenced by Arab-Islamic culture). That is why in the table below, the authors have started with *Alhadoo* (Sunday) and finished with *Asabtu* (Saturday). Names of week days are all personal names attributed to individuals with the aim of imparting information about the temporal circumstances surrounding the birth of their bearers. For instance, *alhadoo* and *asabtu* as slave personal names are used to tell and remind society that the bearers were born slave on those respective days.

Table No.1: Names of weekdays used as slave personal names

Names		Circumstantial meaning
Male	**Female**	
Alhadoo (Sunday)	//	Names given to slave baby-boys born on Sunday
Attinin/Atinnoo (Monday)	//	Names given to slave baby-boys born on Monday
Atalaata (Tuesday)	Atalaatawoy (Tuesday-woman)	Names given to baby-slaves of either sex born on Tuesday
Alarba (Wednesday)	Alarbawoy (Wednesday-woman)	Names given to baby-slaves of either sex born on Wednesday.
Alhamiise/Alkamiisa (Thursday)	Hamiisa/Kamiissa/Alhamiisa (Thursday)	Names given to baby-slaves of either sex born on Thursday
Alzuma/Aljuma (Friday)	Aljumawoy/ Jumawoy (Friday - woman)	Names given to baby-slaves of either sex born on Friday
Asabdu/Asabtu (Saturday)	//	Names given to slave baby-boys born on Saturday

These personal names originate from the Islam-influenced Arabic vocabulary (borrowing). The vocabulary usually undergoes morpho-phonological adaptations before it is integrated into Songhay (see M. Minkailou, 2017). Often, a Songhay affix is appended to the stem as in the following instances:
Asab**d**u (from Arabic /as**s**ab**t**u/: the germination disappears and /**t**/ is voiced as /**d**/ under the influence of the preceding voiced /**b**/.
Table No.2: Other slave personal names

Other slave personal names unrelated to week days		
N'Cirŋi/Baanahari (rain)	//	Names given to slave baby-boys born on a rainy day or during a rainy season
Hanbarke/M'Baaraku/Hanbeeri (big day) Isabeeri (big river)	//	Names given to slave baby-boys born during a feast or by a big river
Harikaaray (literally: white water)	//	Name given to a slave baby-boy born in a year of bad harvest

Type 2**:** Names of special months and periods as personal names
In this second typology, the names of some months seen as special are given to children to inform, magnify and remind the community about the temporal birth circumstances, this time, the particularity of the month is emphasized. The table below gives illustrative examples.
Table No.3: Names of special months and periods as personal names

Names		Circumstantial meaning
Male	**Female**	
Šaaban (the name of the 8th month of the Islamic calendar).	//	Name given to a baby-boy born in the month of Sha'aban

Hawmee (fasting)	//	Name given to a baby-boy born in the month of Ramadan
Cipsi (the Songhay name for the last and 12ᵗʰ month of the Islamic calendar).	//	Name given to a baby-boy born during the Muslim Tabaski feast
Maharafa (Arafa Day) Almudu/Mudu (Maulud)	Arafa (Arafa day) Almuduwoy/ Muduwoy (Maulud-woman)	Names given to babies of either sex born on Arafa Day (during Pilgrimage), or Maulud Day (a Muslim feast)

The importance of these months in the Islamic calendar is so high among the Songhay community, converted into Islam more than a millennium ago, that people have come to prefer and adopt the names of those months as personal names for their babies, but also to indicate that the birth has occurred during a special month. The name bearer becomes a reminder of that special month and its importance in the community.

Type 3**:** Kinship-based personal names

The bearers of such personal names become reminders of the social and kinship ties linking the bearers and their families to the namesakes, who are usually older and sometimes, late parents or relatives. In short, these personal names may be used to remind the community that dead people are not dead; they are still alive, standing among the living.

Table No.4: Names based on kinship relationships

Names		Circumstantial meaning
Male	Female	
Baamoy (namesake of the father)	Ŋaa/Ŋaamoy (mother, namesake of mother)	Names of fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts, grandparents and other family elders, given to babies of either sex to express love and remembrance for those people
Kaahar/Kaamoy (grandfather, namesake of grandfather)	Kaawoy/Kaamoy (grandmother, namesake of grandmother/)	
Baaber/Baakayna/ (father's elder brother; father's younger brother)	Ŋaaber (mother's elder sister)/Ŋaakayna (mother's younger sister)	
Hasay (mother'sbrother -uncle)	Hawoy (father'ssister - aunt)	
Harber (old man or grandfather)	Woyber (old woman, grandmother)	

It is useful to point out that Songhay people clearly make a distinction among uncles, on the one hand, and among aunts, on the other hand. Actually, in the eyes of the native Songhay, uncles do not all hold equal importance and therefore are differently labeled; that can be noticed in the table above where we have *Hasay* (mother's brother), generally known to have true love for his nephews and nieces, and *Baaber* (father's elder brother) and *Baakayna* (father's younger brother), believed to show up to help their nephews and nieces only in times of real need (serious difficulties). Likewise, aunts are differentiated according to whether they are *Naaberi* (the mother's elder sister) or *Naakayna* (the mother's younger sister) who show up to help only in times of real need, and *Hawoy* (the father's sister) who keeps true love for her nephews and nieces.

Type 4**:** Survival-desire personal names

This group of personal names is given to babies to avoid their early death (to fool death) and therefore to ensure their survival. In plain words, such names (as illustrated in the table below) are used as protective shields against early death, but more significantly, against the evil spirits behind those early child deaths. In this sense, *Farka*

(donkey), *Dunday* (donkey excrements), etc. are all used as ugly names to tell death that people do not like those babies and that death may take them, convinced that death can only take the babies who are cherished. And since they were given ugly names to mean that they are not loved by their parents, early death would easily be fooled, and the babies would survive.

Table No.5: Names created to ensure the survival of the child

Names		Circumstantial meaning
Male	**Female**	
Bana(to pay) Banandi (a fine) Ɲaabana (s/he who replaces the mother)	//	Names given to baby-boys whose elder brothers and/or sisters regularly die at early age
Farka (donkey), Dunday (donkey excrements), Booši/Boosu (ash) Inaahongu (they did not think about him/her)	//	Names given to baby-boys whose brothers and/or sisters regularly die at early age, the aim being to deceive death

Type 5**:** Beauty, fortune, satisfaction and wish-related personal names

This category of personal names is mainly used to express wish, desire and the likes. In adopting such personal names, the parents of the name bearers wish their children to develop the specific wished behavior. *Boori* (beauty), *Aruhenna* (handsome man) *woyhenna* (beautiful woman) are adopted to wish that the name bearers will be handsome or beauti(-ful) in their physical appearance or their social conduct.

Table No.6: Names based on beauty, fortune, or satisfaction

Names		Circumstantial meaning
Male **Female**		
//	Boori (beauty) Woyboriya (beautiful woman), Woyboyro (beautiful woman)	Names given to baby-girls to wish them beauty, correct social behavior and kindness
Baŋŋa (male slave)	Koŋŋa/Koŋŋo (female slave)	Names given to babies of either sex to wish them good social conduct
Aruhenna (handsome man)	Woyhenna (beautiful woman)	Names given to babies of either sex to wish them beauty and good behavior
//	Wura (gold), Nzorfu/Njorfu (silver)	Names given to baby-girls to express love and beauty for them
//	Awasa/Awasagoy (It is sufficient/enough)	Names given to baby-girls to express the satisfaction of a wish
Fondo/Fondogumo (good route/journey, trip)	Fondo/Fondogumo (good route/journey, trip)	Names given to babies of either sex born during or after a trip
Boŋkaano/Aruboŋkaana (lucky, lucky man)	Boŋkaano/Boŋkan/Woy (yaa)boŋkan (lucky, lucky woman)	Names given to babies of either sex to wish them good luck
Gomni (fortune), Jangu/Zangu (hundred), Jenber (thousand)	//	Names given to baby-boys to wish them happiness, wealth, fortune, etc.

Ceegum/o/Ize**cee**gumaa/ Iguma (good one, son/daughter of good one)	Ceegum/o (good one)	Names given to babies of either sex to wish them good luck, happiness, fortune, etc.

Type 6**:** Complexion-based personal names

This typology generally makes reference to the true complexion or correct social conduct of the name bearer. For instance, as the table below illustrates, *Bibi* (black) and its variants *Arubiyoo* (the black man) *Woybibi* or *Woybiyoo* (the black woman) are used to refer to true dark complexion people, while *Karaa, Koray or Woykoray* (the white woman) and its variants *Arukaaraa* (the white man) *Woykaraa* (the white woman) may be used to highlight either real light complexion or the good social conduct of a dark complexion person.

Table No.7: Complexion-based personal names

Names		
Male	**Female**	**Circumstantial meaning**
Arubiyoo (black man)	Bibi/Woybibi/Woybiyoo (Black, Black woman)	Names given to babies of either sex because of their dark complexion
//	Kara/Koray/Woykoray (White, White woman)	Names given to baby-girls because of their light complexion or good social behavior
Haŋadunbu (s/he who cuts ears)	//	Name given to a man, usually in childhood because the bearer has actually cut the ear(s) of somebody; the name is kept for the rest of life.
Haŋadunbaa (s/he whose ears are cut)	//	Name given to a man, usually in childhood because the ear(s) of the name bearer has actually been cut off; the name is kept for the rest of life
Haŋakuku (s/he whose ears are long)	//	Name given to a man, usually in childhood because the ear(s) of the name bearer are exceptionally long; the name is kept for the rest of life

Other traditional personal names (second names in most instances) include names which pertain to strength, physical resistance or survival to death. For instance, *Guuruu* (iron) is a name given to a baby-boy to wish him iron strength; *Tondi* (a stone) and its definite variant *Tondoo* (the stone) are given to baby-boys to wish them stone like strength; and *Ajanbasaaray* (s/he who fooled the tomb) is given to a person of either sex who has survived to death.

Attributing specific names to twins is a rare traditional Songhay naming practice. In this vein, *Fune* (twin-boy) and its variant *Funewoy* (twin-girl) seem to be the only known Songhay twin personal names (especially used in Timbuktu), contrary to Bamanan culture where there are more (see M. Minkailou 2017). Even then, there is a high probability that these words have been borrowed from the Bamanan culture.

On the whole, the findings have evidenced that the Songhay traditional society draws its names from its culture and immediate physical environment. For names can relate to the bearer's complexion and/or social conduct, weekdays (especially for slaves) and special months and periods (Maulud or Tabaski feasts); they may equally pertain to kinship ties and the desire for the survival of the child (often to fool the evil spirits behind early deaths), but also to beauty, fortune, wish and satisfaction. R. Hussein (1997) reveals like features in the Jordanian names which relate to their social and religious beliefs and values their geographical locations, the natural phenomena and objects, wild and domestic animals, color and occupation.

4. The structure of Songhay personal names

Traditional personal names in Songhay have structures that go from simple words (nouns, adjectives and verbs) to full sentences.

4.1. Simple words as personal names:

In traditional Songhay society, most personal names are simple words that can have the following formats:

-Nouns: *Wura* (gold), *Nzorfu* or *Njorfu* (silver), *Fondo* (path), *Zangu* (hundred), *Boori* (beauty);
-Adjectives: *Bibi* (black) and *Kaaray* or *Koray* (white);
-Verbs without the *ka* infinitive marker: they are rare; *Bana* (pay) is an example.

4.2. Compound words as personal names:

They obey different structural combinations as follows:
-Compound of two nouns: *Ɲaamoy* (mother's namesake), *Baamoy* (father's namesake), *Kaamoy* (grandfather/mother's namesake), *Kaahar* (grandfather);
-Compound of a noun and an adjective: *Woyhenna* (good/beautiful woman), *Aruhenna* (good/handsome man), *Woymeeraa* (the ugly woman), *Aružeenaa* (the old man), *Woyžeenaa* (the old woman), *Fondogumo* (good path), *Haŋakuku* (s/he who has long ears); *Haŋadunbaa* (s/he whose ears are cut); of course, in *Haŋadunbaa,* **dunbaa** is the past participle of the verb *ka dunbu* (to cut), used here with *Haŋa (ear)* as an adjective.
Compound of a noun and a verb: *Haŋadunbu* (s/he who cuts ear);
-Compound of two nouns followed by an adjective: *Aruboŋkaanaa* (the lucky man); *Woyboŋkaanaa* (the lucky woman).

4.3. Full sentences as personal names:

This category of personal names provides a full picture of the socio-cultural events and/or circumstances that shape those names:
Inaahongu (from: *I na a hongu*: they did not think about her): it is a name given to a baby-girl to express love and surprise after her birth from a mother who took time before being pregnant.
Ajanbasaaray (from: *A janba saaray*: s/he deceived the tomb): it is a second personal name given to a person, usually after early childhood, when that person was initially considered dead, but has come back to life. *Awasa (from: A wasa:* it is enough/sufficient to express satisfaction*)* and its variant *Awasagoy (from: A wasa goy:* it is sufficient/enough as work) are two other instances which are all used to express satisfaction.

4.4. Unclassified constructions as personal names:

They are rare, but do appear in traditional names; in structural terms, they tend to be higher than the phrase and the clause, but lower than the sentence, and therefore look like incomplete sentences (a *noun* combined to a *relative clause*). *Arukaŋžen* (literally: *a man who is old*) as an illustration displays *aru* (noun) followed by *kaŋ* (relative pronoun) and*žen* (relative clause introduced by *kaŋ)*; while this example is structurally different from *Aružeenaa* (the old man), in semantic terms, there seems to be no difference; yet, society does not use them interchangeably.

A statistical representation of the structures of Songhay traditional names shows the dominance of simple nouns with 44.08% of frequency rate, followed by noun-adjective combinations, 26.88%, and two noun combinations, 15.05%. The remainder of structures, less significant, can be seen in the table below.

Table No.8: Statistical representation of the name structural typologies

General name structural typology	Specific name structural typology	percentage
Simple words	Nouns	44.08%%
	Adjectives	03.22%
	Verbs	01.07%
Compound words	Two nouns	15.05%
	Noun + adjective	26.88%
	Two nouns + adjective	03.22%
	Noun + verb	02.14%
Full sentences	//	04.30%

	Noun + relative clause	01.07%
Unclassified constructions		
Total		100%

CONCLUSION

Personal names, the socio-cultural events that induce their creation, their meanings in traditional society and their structure are all culturally-determined practices. Songhay traditional personal names are determined by a sociocultural description of the situational contexts and circumstances under which the Songhay naming system operates. Thus, the determinants of personal names include the kinship system, the period (including the day, month or season) of birth, the social status of the name bearer (slaves), protection and/or survival, blessing, beauty, complexion, etc. Names therefore are expected to correlate with the social status of their bearers, shape their future social behavior, and fulfill the wishes and expectations of the name giver. As to the name structures the study has displayed, they basically involve simple nouns with 44.08% of frequency rate, followed by noun-adjective combinations, 26.88%, and two noun combinations, 15.05%.

There are both similarities and dissimilarities between the Songhay and Bamanan societies and cultures in their traditional naming practices; while they both heavily rely on their specific cultures and environment to create and give names, they do not always display the same name typologies. Songhay people, unlike Bamanan people, did not give names of fetishes to their children, may be because of their early Islam influence, nor did they attribute names influenced by their flora and fauna, the death of the child's parents, the order of birth in the family, to cite just a few. The result is that Songhay traditional personal name typologies look much limited. However, both Songhay and Bamanan cultures dread death to the extent that they have developed strategies to fool it: the use of ugly survival-desire names. It remains unfortunate that most such traditional names (rarely found nowadays even in remote areas of the country) are being seriously threatened by either Arab-Muslim or Christian names, a danger that A. W. Q. G. Al-Zumor (2009) also finds to be threatening the traditional Yemeni names.

The list of personal names and their typologies in this paper should, in no way, be seen as exhaustive, and there may still be other names and typologies not covered by this investigation. Therefore, more research needs to be done in other Songhay speech communities.

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