



EXPLORING THE ISSUE OF NAMING IN SOME ETHNIC GROUPS WITH REFERENCE TO SELECTED ACHEBE'S AND ARMAH'S WORKS

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at pointing out how names are chosen and the different rites that Sanctify them in Africa. It also points out the genuine character of West African ways of naming through rites and how meaningful they are. It has reached the conclusion that if naming rites can be alleviated many reluctant Africans can adopt them and thus promote African values, another way to prove that Africa has always had a history and cultures. This paper is mainly based on three novels by Achebe and one by Armah. To reach this results socio-criticism theory and the qualitative, empirical and documentary methods of analysis have been used.

Key words: Naming; name; child; parents; rituals.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article vise à montrer comment les noms sont choisis et les différents rites qui les consacrent en Afrique de l'Ouest. Il montre l'originalité de la façon dont les noms sont donnés en Afrique de l'Ouest à travers des rites et les sens que revêtent ces noms. Il est aussi parvenu à la conclusion selon laquelle si les rites peuvent être allégés, beaucoup d'Africains de l'Ouest peuvent les adopter, une autre manière de prouver que l'Afrique a toujours eu une histoire et des valeurs culturelles. Cet article est basé principalement sur trois romans d'Achebe et un d'Armah. Pour atteindre ces résultats, j'ai utilisé la théorie sociocritique ainsi que les méthodes d'analyse qualitative, empirique et documentaire.

Mots clés : Cérémonie de baptême; nom; enfant; parents; rites

INTRODUCTION

According to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, 9th edition, "name is a word or words that a particular person, animal, place or thing is known by". In the framework of this article, name can be defined as a word or words that a particular person is known by. In other words, name is the word by which a given person is referred to. Animals, places and things are not concerned by this study. This is the reason why they are not taken into account by the working definition. Achebe, Armah, Nkrumah are names of known, well known people in actual or real life. Beatrice, Christopher and Efua are names of characters in novels such as *Anthills of The Savannah* by Chinua Achebe and *Fragments* by Ayi Kwei Armah. Before they are characters' names, these names are given to living people. Character naming is a prerogative of writers. It is usually different from naming a living person. In the same way, parents and relatives also know why they decide to name this or that child this or that way or why they decide this or that child should bear this or that

name. Some experienced people happen to know, without asking anybody, including the parents of a given child, why he or she is given this or that name. I have dealt with this aspect under the titles "Meanings of Names" and "Different methods of naming". As a matter of fact, almost all African names respond to specific requirements or prescriptions and these too vary from an area to another and from a religion to another. This paper is based on both fiction and real life. This means that naming in some ethnic groups such as the Yoruba, the Adja and the Fon in real life will be dealt with or taken into account. The novels under study are Achebe's *Things Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease* and *Anthills of The Savannah*, and Armah's *Fragments*. The tribes taken into account in real life are the Yoruba, the Fon, and the Adja. In a nutshell, this paper analyses both civilization and literature and will compare data whenever it is possible.

Naming is the fact of giving a name or names to a person, in the perspective of this research paper. The importance of naming a person resides in the fact that names enable human beings to identify with more or less precision their fellows because, without a name, a person does not exist, neither for themselves nor for others. Here below is a sketch of each of the three main groups taken into account by this study.

In the *Encyclopedia of African History and Culture* the Aja (also Adja) are a "West African ethno-linguistic group inhabiting southern parts of present-day Republic of Benin and Togo... The Aja are tied ethnically, culturally and linguistically to their EWE, Mina, and Fon neighbors, all of whom are descended from the Aja Kingdom which reached the height of its power in the 16th century." ... It is believed that the Aja were originally from old Oyo in NIGERIA ..." [Page (ed); 2005, Vol III; p.08] Nowadays, the Aja can be seen in Ghana, Côte-d'Ivoire and in Nigeria, even in small groups. According to the same book Yoruba is said to be a "general term used to describe the language, peoples, and kingdoms of YORUBALAND. [sic] The Yoruba inhabit parts of present-day NIGERIA, Republic of BENIN, parts of GHANA, SIERRA-LEONE [sic], and TOGO [sic]." [Page (Ed); 2005; Vol. II; p. 244] According to the *Encyclopedia of African Religion*, "the Fon people of present-day Benin are the people of the Dahomey Kingdom often referred to by Europeans as Dahomeans... In addition to their great historical legacy, the Fon are well known for their urban organization, the history of their warrior women, and their religion of Vodou." (Asante & Mazama (Eds); 2009; p. 270) As far as the Mina are concerned, they are neighbors of the Aja as stated in the definition of the Aja. They are people that can be seen in Benin, Togo and Ghana. They are cousins of the Aja, Fon among and other ethnic groups. They originated from the Aja Kingdom.

This paper aims first at pointing out how names are chosen and the different rites that Sanctify/sanction them in Africa, in real life as well as through fiction; then showing how meaningful African names are; and last proving that naming

ceremonies and rituals are not “weird ceremonies and unspeakable rites” but one of the important steps in the life of west Africans. (Achebe; 1960; p.96)

For a successful analysis I have used the theory of socio-criticism, and empiricism and the qualitative methods of analysis.

Like some literary terms and theories, sociocriticism is a controversial one. It emerged in the 1970s and its founding father is Claude Duchet. Some scholars state that it is neither a subject, nor a theory nor a sociology. Some other even go far by saying that it is even less than a method. It nevertheless offers two advantages. Firstly, it enables the researcher to deal with any type of text. Secondly, it suggests a socio-historical and cultural analysis of literary works. Sociocriticism also takes into account the social milieu of the writer. As such it has enabled me to well explore the message about naming as conveyed in the works by Achebe on the one hand and the one by Armah on the other under study.

Empiricism is a scientific method which is based on experience and observation. Its ‘father’ is Francis Bacon, an English philosopher (1561-1626). In the framework of this paper and others to come, I have attended some ceremonies including naming ones organized by some ethnic groups such as the Ibos, The Yorubas, the Fons, The Adjias, the Ewes and the Minas, to name just a few. As a matter of fact, I have never been a celebrant but usually a careful observer. This enables me not only to learn but also draw my own conclusions in relation with what narratives and books convey as messages concerning some African ceremonies including naming.

The second method which I have used is the qualitative research method. I have used it because it consists in describing phenomena in a narrative fashion not numerically. This paper being based partly on fiction on the one hand and real life or civilization on the other hand, has, above all, nothing to do with figures. As far as the documentary method is concerned, it takes into account all the necessary information drawn from documents of all sorts whether printed or electronic version.

The work is divided into six parts. The first part is “the origin of naming. The second part deals with the main different methods used to name in West Africa mainly the ones used by the Adja, Fon and Yoruba people. In it we have the religious method, the method taking into account parents’ occupation and the method that takes into account the place and conditions of birth. The third part analyses the naming rituals and includes receiving names and the most important products used during a naming ceremony. The fourth part is concerned with the meaning of names. The fifth part is about the desecration of naming and the sixth and last part deals with the protest or rebellion against Western names.

1. Origin of naming

1.1. Naming is as old as mankind.

People are named in order to be able to be referred to, as clearly as possible, in due time. For instance, in a group of people or simply in a place, you cannot call a person if he/she does not have a name. You cannot talk about a person to another person, no matter the reason why or the place you are or he/she is, if he/she does not bear a name or names. People name in order to convey a message. This means that African names also convey messages or are meaningful. The message may be either about the child himself/herself or his/her parents or relatives or any other person or event. Before dealing with the message or messages behind a name or names, it is worth saying who names the child.

Let's state clearly and at the beginning of this subpart that, in traditional Africa, the common rule or prescription is that the father names his child. Beatrice has told this to people who have attended the naming ceremony of Amaechina in order to account for what she has done and have her conscience free. She has even said it before the arrival of Elewa's uncle and her mother. The narrator reports: "In our traditional society," resumed Beatrice, "the father named the child. But the man who should have done it today is absent ...". This practice of having a child named by his/her father is similar to the one in *The Holy Bible*. As a matter of fact, Elizabeth, John the Baptist's mother, has tried to name him but people objected to her doing it saying that it is the father who names the child in their custom. *The Holy Bible* says:

And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they would have named him Zechariah after his father, but his mother said, "Not so; he shall be called John." And they said to her, "None of your kindred is called by this name." And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, "His name is John." And they all marvelled. (*The Holy Bible*; Luke 1: 59-64)

The naming as described in *The Holy Bible* is dealt with in detail in the section entitled "The Holy Bible as a source of naming."

Elewa's uncle confirms what Beatrice said about who names a child even though it is through irony:

True. Those as well. And while she is cracking her head you people gather in this Whiteman house and give the girl a boy's name ... That is how to handle this world ... If anybody thinks that I will start a fight because somebody has done the work I should do that a person does not know me. I only fight when somebody else eats what I should eat. So I will not fight. Rather I will say thank you. I will say whoever ate the foofoo let him mop up the soup as well. A child has been named. What else is one looking for at the bottom of the soup-bowl if not fish? Whenever the child sleeps let it wake up in the morning is my prayer ... My wife, where is that kola nut? I shall break it after all. (Achebe; 1987; 227)

Through this quotation the reader can deduce several things. First of all, it expresses the necessity or importance of naming. All human beings must be named in order to enable people to refer to them with more or less precision. In addition to that the

reader notices that things must be done according to some norms or prescriptions. As a matter of fact, although Beatrice is convinced, wrongly or rightly, that she can name Elewa and Ikem's child, together with Elewa, they invite old people namely Elewa's paternal uncle and her mother to come to do it, which has happened eventually, at least, the confirmation. This means that naming a child in traditional Africa is not just a child game or a joke where things take place haphazardly. In traditional Africa in general and in West Africa in particular, old people are not parked in asylums as it is the case in the so-called developed but they live with their sons or daughters and grandchildren hence enjoy human warmth and also play their part in the evolution of their society which is important for an old person. The second lesson to draw from this quotation is that Elewa's uncle symbolizes traditional Africa with its simplicity, tolerance and honesty in its relations with the external world. When Europeans came to Africa, they betrayed Africans while Africans were honest with them. It is not suitable to come back here on how Europeans cunningly snatched lands from Africans; nor is it suitable to come back on the destruction of African Gods who were peaceful and protective.

Elewa's uncle has been tolerant to those who have made more than a mistake by naming Elewa and Ikem's daughter and worse still by giving her a boy's name, which means *May the-path-never-close*, Ama for short. (Achebe; 1987; p. 222). The old man cleverly reproached Beatrice and 'company' (all the people surrounding her when he has come) with their deed by asking them whether they are the child's father, telling some of them and reminding others this way that it is the father who names his child. Besides, Beatrice herself is aware of that and has even confessed it before the arrival of the old man as stated before. Contrary to the blame he could pour on the people gathering in Beatrice's house, the old man congratulates them and praise their pragmatism. He says, "That is how to handle this world ... So I will not fight. Rather I will say thank you ... A child has been named. What else is one looking for at the bottom of the soup-bowl if not fish?" (Achebe; 1987; p. 227) The "soup-bowl here is the child and the fish is the name, the most important thing to do when a child is born, is to name him/her. Another lesson the reader must draw from Elewa's uncle's behaviour is the necessary collaboration between the different religions that is the policy of traditional Africa. He says: "But we have no quarrel with church people; we have no quarrel with mosque people. Their intentions are good, their mind on the right road." (Achebe; 1987; p. 228)

The state of Elewa's uncle's clothes symbolizes the traditional Africa, the village life where people do not have sophisticated soaps; they even lack water to wash regularly and conveniently their clothes or do not live in clean houses in contrast with Beatrice's place and the people who are present while Amaechina is receiving her name which is ironically and unfortunately a boy's name. Beatrice's uncle is in the perspective not to stop learning because life never stops teaching. The old man is

the symbol of progress, sincerity, tolerance and the will to learn from other people and cooperate with them. African wisdom is in vogue. Elewa's mother together with her uncle represent traditional Africa from which the new generation should be humble to learn. Elewa's mother represents the traditional African woman who obeys her husband for the progress of the family contrary to these women who, nowadays, contradict their husbands for contradiction's sake in the name of blind equality that can but destroy them. It is a good thing for a woman to contradict her husband or her in-laws when need be for, in contradiction thrives the truth, necessary for progress and development. So-called modern women should learn from that in order to avoid ~~them~~ useless and avoidable troubles or conflicts in their lives in general and marital lives in particular. The second source of naming in this study is *The Holy Bible*.

1.2. *The Holy Bible as a source of naming*

Naming also has its origin in *The Holy Bible*. As a matter of fact, during the creation of the world, God has asked "the man", Adam to name everything He has created and it is the names that he has given to the things submitted to his attention by God that have been accepted by the latter and these things still bear these names to date. *The Holy Bible*.

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of the ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the LORD had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "this at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." (Genesis 2 :18-23)

According to *The Holy Bible*, the names through which we call things nowadays have been given to them by Adam, the forefather of those who believe in *The Holy Bible*. Before children are named, they are introduced or presented to the Lord although the latter knows everything that is on the earth because nothing can exist without His will. The psalmist deals with this aspect in *The Holy Bible*. It is said: "Lo children are heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward". Children are rightly considered as presents and gifts from the Lord, the almighty God. (Psalm 123:3)

As far as the presentation of children to the Lord is concerned, three examples have been selected as illustrations. The first one is about Samuel who is presented to the Lord by his mother Hannah as shown in the New Testament. It is revealed:

And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, long with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine; and she brought him to the house of the

LORD at Shiloh; and the child was young. Then they slew the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. And she said, "Oh, my lord! And you live, my lord, I am the woman who standing here in your presence, praying to the LORD. For this child I prayed; and the LORD has granted me my petition which I made to him. Therefore I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD."

And they worshipped the LORD there. (1 Samuel 1: 24-28)

The second illustration of children presentation to the Lord is about John the Baptist. As a matter of fact, when John the Baptist was born, his parents presented him to the Lord so that he could be named. It is said in the Gospel of Apostle Luke:

Now the time came for Elizabeth to be delivered, and she gave birth to a son. And her neighbours and kinsfolk heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. They came to circumcise the child; and they would have named him Zechari'ah after his father, but his mother said, "Nor so; he shall be called John." And they said to her, "None of your kindred is called by this name." And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, "His name is John." And they all marvelled. And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. And fear came on all their neighbours. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea; and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him. (Luke 01: 57-66)

By showing their gratitude to God through their presentation of their son to Him, the way it is done in their area and epoch or time, the latter has blessed them once again. As a matter of fact, it is when John the Baptist's father is trying to confirm the name his wife wants to give to their child that the Lord has shown another "great mercy" to the couple and their child by opening the father's mouth and loosing his tongue". We can conclude that the worship and gratitude to the Lord through child's naming can give another opportunity to the child's family like the one John the Baptist's father has just enjoyed through the hence ability to talk the Lord has granted to him. It is certainly a way to tell people to fear God by following His principles no matter the religion.

The third illustration of children's presentation to God is the case of Jesus, the person who has become Jesus-Christ, Man-God with all the attributes of God according to the belief of Christians. He is also one of the three persons or elements of The Holy Trinity according to some Christians. My concern, as a researcher is not to say nor to prove that Jesus or Jesus-Christ is God and has or not the same attributes of or as God. In the same Gospel of Saint Luke, it is said about this presentation:

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

And when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons. (Luke 2: 15-24)

I have separated the two origins of naming for respect for non-Christians among whom some have their own belief, about the origin of the world in general and the origin of naming in particular. As a researcher, I should not impose or even give the impression to impose on them something else. This is not and should not be a goal or part of the goal of a researcher. My main objective is that this paper bring some light in the mind of any of those who will read it as far as naming is concerned.

2. The main different methods used to name in West Africa

Before a name is given to a child, it is chosen or must be so in advance. It is the methods or system of choosing the name(s) which is/are dealt with under this subheading.

First of all, I must recall that naming, in the light of this article is, mainly, giving a name or names to a new-born baby no matter the number of days after the date of birth but also teenagers. One or two examples of naming or renaming adults are given. As a matter of fact, one or two instances of the names people take or are given in their youth or adulthood in their old days on the occasion of their baptism, or after their marriage or in case they change religion or on their crowning as Kings, Queens or Chiefs and even initiated people are hardly taken into account. Here are several main approaches or methods used by black Africans mainly West Africans to name their children. Some researchers have already thought of the issue and found out some of the methods some ethnic groups use to name their children. Olagoke Ariwoola is among these researchers or authors who wrote about the methods used by the Yoruba people to name their children. He pointed out five methods that the Yoruba people use to name their children. Listing them, he wrote:

The first method is by giving the child a religious name. The second is by naming the child according to the nature of profession of his parents (especially that of his father). The third method is by giving him a name to depict his natural state at birth. The fourth method is by giving him a name to show the place or vicinity at which he is born. The fifth method is by giving them a name to portray the social standing of his parents. (Ariwoola; 1965; p. 42)

These are the five methods used by the Yoruba's to name their children as dealt with by Olagoke Ariwoola in his above-mentioned book, *The African Wife*. But some other tribes such as the Guin, the Goun, the Adja in Benin, Togo even in their host countries such as Nigeria and Ghana follow almost the same methods. There are also the Fon people in Benin

Some other tribes or ethnic groups in Sub-Saharan Africa also use the same methods as the Yoruba to name their children. Among such tribes or ethnic groups are the "Adja" of Benin and Togo, the "Mina" of Benin and Togo, the "Fon" of Benin. In addition to these five methods, these three ethnic groups from Benin and Togo also use other methods such as naming a child after a given person like his/her parents or people close to his/her parents such as his/her grandparents and parents' relations. These methods are developed, at least, slightly before dealing with another aspect of the topic.

2.1. First method: religious method

It is worth specifying that religious naming is not only Christian naming. Religious naming is naming done according to the rites of a given religion. It can be either Christian naming or vodun naming or Moslem naming or any other naming according to the prescriptions of other religions than those just mentioned. Whether a religious naming or not, it is usually done after people have gathered, a relatively large or a small crowd and after a ceremony.

In some Christian denominations, the child receives his/her name on the eighth day of his birth. On this occasion there is a mass, a Christian celebration. As a matter of fact, people attend the mass. Among them, apart from the celebrant and his assistants, believers or Christians attend the mass. The child's parents, relatives and close relations and invitees also attend. At a certain moment of the celebration, the name of the child is revealed to everybody, the public.

Before the end of the celebration, gifts are made to the celebrant. After the mass, there are usually feasting and rejoicing offered and organized by the child's parents. Most of the people who attend the naming ceremony and or the rejoicing and feasting which follow the mass give presents to the child through the parents who will, besides, enjoy the most of them.

Nowadays, the fact of naming children on the eighth day is, to some extent, contrary to some customary laws well observed in the past. As a matter of fact, in the past, male children used to be named on the ninth day and female ones on the seventh day almost everywhere. But few ethnic groups used to name their children on the third or fourth or even fifth day no matter the sex. In other tribes, children were named on the third day after the birth no matter the sex. Due to the fact that Africans like looking like Western people and all that comes from the West at any costs, they make allegiance to some Christian religious doctrines by naming their children taking into account the same number of days that is considered or taken into account in these Christian denominations. Concretely, what does the whole process look like?

From the day the child comes to life until the day when he is named, he/she is kept in his/her mother's room and usually in the bedroom and can go out, for the first time, only on the "D-day" of his naming. The mother herself is allowed to go out for things another person cannot do for her such as taking bath and going to toilets. Her domestic chores are done by other women. A special woman is dedicated to provide the new mother with special care mainly for her health due to her delivery. In most areas, the mother is forbidden to eat some foods in the period between her delivery and the naming ceremony proper. An important regulation to observe is not to refer to the child by any name before the naming proper. In actual fact, the name of the child is usually known to the parents of the child and some of their close relations. For twins, the situation is a little bit different because through their order of coming to life, most people know for each of them at least one traditional name. Why do the parents mainly the father usually know the name of the child before the D-Day?

Two main reasons explain the fact that parents and some close relations know the child's name before the naming ceremony proper. First of all, in traditional Africa, the name of a coming baby is checked through divination before or on the birthday or on the very first days which follow the birth. This is what customary laws recommend. In the case of imported religions and mainly Christianity where no divination is expected to be carried out (done) before or after the birth, the religious authorities and/or the celebrant always try to agree upon a name or names with the parents before the "D-day" to avoid misunderstandings during and after the ceremony. This possible misunderstanding can involve other people than the parents and therefore jeopardize collaboration and cooperation in the religion for relatively long or short time. In traditional Africa, a name always bears a meaning. So, names always convey messages. The meaning of names is dealt with in a part of this paper.

2.2. Naming according to the parents' occupations

Some children are named according to the profession of their parents' mainly the father's. This state of things can be noticed in some tribes such as the Yorubas, the Adjias, the Fons and the Minas in Benin. An Adja cabinet maker's child or carpenter's child can be named "Atchikpato" or "Tchikpato" in short. It means the person whose job is based on the wood or tree. A mina carpenter's or cabinet maker's child can bear the name "Atikpato" to mean the same thing as in adjagbé. Fon people will name a carpenter's or a cabinet maker's child "Atinkpato". A Yoruba hunter's child will be named either "Odelola", meaning "hunting is an honour" or "Odetunde" meaning "hunter comes again" (Ariwoola; 1965; p. 44).

2.3. Naming according to the natural state and appearance of the child at birth

In traditional Africa, the natural state of a child when he/she is born and his/her appearance are taken into account to name him/her.

In Adja area, when twins come to life, the former is called Deyi and the latter is Mègan, no matter their sexes. Deyi means the younger of the two. As paradoxical as it appears, Adja customs of mythology asserts that the elder of the two, Mègan, sends his junior to life to see or check whether the path and the destination are safe before coming himself/herself. In some areas of Adja region, the former of the two twins is also referred to as Sagbo and the latter Zinsou. These two names are borrowings from Fon ethnic group.

In the Yoruba tribe, twins bear different names than those given in the Adja tribe. This is illustrated in a book that a Yoruba writer, Ariwoola published. He wrote: "If a woman gives birth to twins, the first baby to be born is known as Taiwo and the one that comes immediately after this is known as Kehinde." These two names are given without regard to the sex of either of the twins. That is, these names do not show the sex of the bearer " (Ariwoola; 1965; p. 44). The belief that it is the elder twin who send his junior brother or sister to see whether this world is worth living is the same with Adja, Fon and Yoruba people. In this perspective, the first-born baby is the younger and the latter is the elder contrary to the Western conception.

Through the last quotation, we have evidence of the similarity between what is done in the Adja tribe on the one hand and the Yoruba on the other. As a matter of fact, there are a special name for the first-born twin and a special name for the second. Someone who knows well these two ethnic groups and their customs, when they hear these names, they know that they are names of twins and which one came first and which one the second. For a female triplet they are called Dolu, Yaya and Wumè in the Fon ethnic group and for a male triplet they are called Zinsou, Sagbo and Gbodja. A female child after twins or triplets no matter the sex of the latter is called Dossi. A male child after twins or triplets no matter the sex of the latter is called Dossou.

The position of coming to life of twins determines their names. Buchi Emecheta deals with such a reality in her *The Joys of Motherhood*. Although it is through a work based on pure fiction, this is true in most African communities such as the Ibo in Nigeria, the Fon and the Adjias. In *The Joys of Motherhood*, the narrator says:

The Owulum twins were very beautiful. They did not go to school, but they had learned to read and write in the few evenings they could be spared to attend lessons. They could sew, and had been taught through their mother's strictness to be very quiet. They were identical in appearance, but not in character; the one called Kehinde, 'the second to arrive', was much deeper than Taiwo, 'she who tasted the world first'. (Buchi Emecheta, 1979, p. 228)

Another important factor that is taken into account to name a child in several ethnic groups in black Africa is whether the child is born surrounded or covered with a membrane. For example, with Yoruba people "Salako is the name given to a child who is completely covered with a membrane at birth. Similarly, Ojo is the name

given to a male child who has the cord twisted round his neck at birth." (Ariwoola; 1965; p. 44).

2.4. Naming according to the place and conditions of birth

The place of birth of a child is also one of the important elements for the name(s) his/her relatives and parents will give him/her. In the Adja area, when a woman gives birth to a male child while going somewhere (is on her way to a place), no matter the place, the child is called either Mondjinou, or Monvi or Moevi. "mon" or "emon" means the way, the road, the path. "mondji" means on the way. "vi" or "evi" means child. Each of the names just mentioned means the child who is born by the road side or while his/her mother is on her way to somewhere. (Yébou; 2019; p. 146).

A Fon child born in the same conditions is called Alidjinou or Alitonou or Alihonou. Each of the three means something that is related to the road or the road side. "ali" means the way or the road. "aliho", on the way/road. "nu" means thing. When it is a female child, she is called Alihossi.

Among the Yoruba such a child, that is to say the one born while his/her mother is walking along a footpath or along a road, is called Abiona" (Ariwoola; 1965; p. 44). The next method used by Yoruba, Adja and Fon people to name their children is the one related to an event or some events in the life of the children's parents' life in general.

2.5. Names related to an event in a parent's life or to the relationship between parents or between a parent and a relative, and the past bravery of his forefather.

The marital condition of a child's parents when he/she is born counts in the choice of the name to be given to this child. For example, some conditions and the physical appearance of the child let people think that he or she is a deceased child who has come back or who is reborn. This child is named Abiku by Nago and Yoruba people. Yoruba people also call him/her either Molomo meaning "Don't leave us again" or Durotimi meaning "Stay with us" (Ariwoola; 1965; p. 45). Adja and Fon people are adopting this name. Adja people call him/her Mèkouagni. "mèkou" is the short form of "amèkou" or "amètchikou" means a person is dead or the person who is dead. "agni" means either regeneration or to regenerate or will regenerate. This depends on circumstances. The whole name Amèkouagni means the dead person has come back or a dead person has regenerated or a dead person can regenerate.

Achebe has dealt with the case of the children referred to as "Abiku" in Yoruba culture. As a matter of fact, in traditional Africa, when a woman loses several children continuously, this state of things leads people to think and say that it is the

first dead baby who has come several times and each time goes back again by dying. What Yoruba people call or name "Abiku", Ibo people refer to it as "Obanje". In *Things Fall Apart*, the narrator says about "obanje":

Ekwefi had suffered a good deal in her life. She had borne ten children and nine of them had died in infancy, usually before the age of three. As she buried one child after another her sorrow gave way to despair and then to grim resignation. The birth of her children, which should be a woman's crowning glory, became for Ekwefi mere physical agony devoid of promise. The naming ceremony after seven market weeks became an empty ritual. Her deepening despair found expression in the names she gave her children. One of them was pathetic cry, Onwumbiko-'Death, I implore you.' But death took no notice; Onwubimko died in his fifteenth month. The next child was a girl, Ozoemena - 'May it not happen again.' She died in her eleventh month, and two others are after her. Ekwefi then became defiant and called her next child Onwuma - 'Death may please himself.' The child died. (Achebe; 1958; p. 54)

When a child is born a few days or months after the death of his paternal grandfather he/she is called Babatunde if it is a boy and Iyabodé if it is a girl. Babatoundé means "Father comes back" and Iyabodé means "Mother comes back". (Ariwoola; 1965; p.45). Fon and Mahi people in the Republic of Benin will name such a female child Nondomè. "non" means mother in Fon and Mahi languages. "dome" means in the place of. The full name, Nondomè, means the daughter who has replaced my mother after the latter's death.

2.6. Names related to a specific event: the child's father's death for example

A male Adja child who is born after his father's death is called Houédou. "houé", the short form of "ahoué" means house and "dou" or "édou" as the complete form means "hole" allusion to an empty house in this context. In a word, Houédou means the child that has come to life in an empty house, empty house here means the house after his father has passed away. On the other hand, the female child born after her father's death is called Ahouétotougbe. The meaning of "ahoué" is already given. "totou", the short form of "towotou" means explicitly empty. Ahouétotougbe means the empty house (Yébou; 2019; p. 151).

Although there is no precise indication about that, Ibo people could name her Nneka which means mother is supreme. As a matter of fact, to pay tribute to his dead mother on the one hand and his maternal family on the other, the first-born daughter for Okonkwo in exile in his mother's village is named Nneka. The narrator says of this situation: "His [Okonkwo's] mother's kinsmen had been very kind to him, and he was grateful. But that did not alter the facts. He had called the first child born to him in exile Nneka - 'Mother is 'Supreme' - out of politeness to his mother's kinsmen." (Achebe; 1958; p. 115; square brackets mine).

In life, it happens that at the time of the birth of a child, his or her mother is in deep misunderstanding or conflict with the child's father or with one of the child's relatives. In this light, the child is given a name which reflects this bad atmosphere

between his/her parents or one of his/her parents and a relative of his/hers. This name connotes anger or fight or human conflict or simply a misunderstanding in the child's nuclear family and/or extended family. Yoruba people call him/her Fijabi. Fon people name him/her Abègnonhou, meaning it is better not to react. This name denotes anger but it is a call to tolerance which is positive. Fon people can also name such a child Adanmayikpohoué which means nobody can go to the panther's lair in anger. Otherwise, it will tear you and drink your blood and eat you flesh. This name denotes not only anger but challenge. It also hides wisdom and a call for patience, tolerance and collaboration.

A child can be named with the view to point out or emphasize the glory or fame of his grandparents and/or forefathers. If a child bears one of such names, he is necessarily told the truth about this name when he grows up. Very often, this child, usually a boy in this case, tries to keep the light on as long as possible in order to maintain the prestige which it brings and also brings his contribution to the promotion of both his nuclear and extended families. Such a child can be named either Akimbowale which means "Bravery returns home" or Akintola meaning "Bravery equals honour" in Yoruba areas. (Ariwoola; 1965; p. 45).

Some people holding high positions try to preserve this position from generation to generation. In this light, a king gives to his son a name related to the throne or kingship to show and/or prove present and future generations that he holds/he has held this position. This also can enable this prince to pretend to the throne in his turn. Such names are Ade-muyiwa or Oyelowo. A child can also be named after his/her parents.

2.7. Naming children after their fathers

Children can be named after their fathers. In this perspective and concretely speaking, a child bears either the same first name as his father or the surname of his father (his father's family name). To avoid confusion in such a condition, the son's full identity ends with the word "junior." A father whose full name is Olushegun Ramane, will name his son Olushegun Ramane Junior because the son bears the same first name as his father. Another father whose full identity is Mouraïna Moumouni, will name his son Moumouni and the son's full identity will be Mouraïna Moumouni Junior. There were two African intellectuals who led regional and international organizations and whose full identities are almost in the framework of children who bear almost the same identities as their fathers. Nevertheless, I give their identities. In their cases, one of the names, either the family name or the first name comes twice in their full identity. The former is Butros Butros Ghali, former Secretary General of the United Nations for one mandate (1992-1996) and later on the Secretary General of Francophonie (1998-2002). The second one is

Ahmed Salim Ahmed, former Secretary General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the mother organization of the current African Union (AU).

Children are also named after their deceased grandparents and also other relatives of their families. This is done for a few reasons. The first reason is the fame of the person after whom the child is named in the perspective that the child follow his path for the promotion and glory of the family. Another reason is that the child just has some physical traits or resemblance with that relative.

Sometimes male children are named after their parents or grandparents because of physical resemblance or other qualities such as politeness. It is also because their fathers and/or grandparents possess some well appreciated qualities that the father is proud of. Such qualities may also be bravery, strength, determination and perseverance. Some people name their children after them just to keep up with fashion. In other terms, they want to resemble other people. They simply want to do as people do. These people name their children just a few days after the birth no matter what will happen in the future.

2.8. Names related to the days of the week

Children who are born on Monday in all African ethnic groups have their names that enable people to identify them as such. This is the same case for the other days of the week. A male Adja son born on Monday is called Kodjo wheareas she is called Adjowa when she is a female one. A male Adja son born on Tuesday is called Komlan and his female counterpart is called Ablawa. An Adja male son born on Wednesday is called Kokou and a female one is called Akwa. For Adja people, the male child born on Sunday is named Kouèshi/Kouèchi. A female one is Kouèshiba or Kouèchiba. (Yébou, 2019, p. 139)

2.9. Names related to a period or a precise time

A male child born at war time in Adja area is called Ahouaga Ahouayito or Houayito in short. Fon people would call him Ahouangansi or Ahouansou. In Adja "ahoua" means war and "ga" means either chief or leader. In Fongbé, "ahouan" means war; "gan" means either chief or boss or leader. Ahouayito means either an army officer or a leader int the army; so does Ahouayito or Houayito in short. For a feminine child born in war time in Adja area is named Ahouashi/Ahouachi. (Yébou; 2019; p.140).

2.10. Names related to a season: the shorter rainy season

Seasons are not divided the same way everywhere. There are two seasons in West Africa: the rainy season and the dry one. The latter starts with a short rainy season.

In Fon and Goun areas, a male child born in the dry season is named Zossou and a female one is named Zossi. In Fongbé and Goungbé, “zo” means the second and shorter rainy season. “sou” is the short form of “assou” and it means male. “si” is the short form of “assi” and means female. (Yébou; 2019; p. 144)

2.11. Names related to the sun, sun as the symbol of day time

Children who are born at day time bear names related to the sun. Male children who are born at day time are called Houéssou, “houé” is the short form “éhoué” which means the sun. female children who are born at day time are called Houéchi/Houéshi. (Yébou; 2019; p. 145)

2.12. Names related to the night

For Fon and Goun people, a male child born at night is called Zannou. “zan” means night, and “nou” means thing. Zannou as a whole means (some)thing that belongs to the night. For Adja and Fon people, a female child born at night is named Zanchi/Zanshi and Zansi respectively. (Yébou; 2019; p. 145)

2.13. Names related to water

Water here is synonymous with running or stagnant water: sea, river, lake to name just a few. Adja and Fon people name a male child born on water, for example in a canoe or a boat, Todjinou. “to” means in general running or stagnant water and even the well. “dji” means on. Todjinou means something that happens on water or that can be seen on water. A female child born on water is named Tossi by Fon people and Tochi/Toshi by Adja people. (Yébou; 2019; p. 149)

2.14. Names linked to tenderness, love.

We have already shown that some children can receive (new) names in their teenage and even in their youth if their parents mainly their father notices some traits and characters such as bravery, courage and perseverance that seem to predestine them to some positions in the future. In the same way, some adults people are given some names to reflect their new positions. For instance, some affective names are given to both adults and children newly born or of a certain age. Our concern here is the case of adults. As a matter of fact, a husband can rename his wife by giving her an affective name. This is a kind of baptism or a new baptism. The main purpose behind his is to show tenderness or deep love and attachment to her. Sometimes, some women also rename their husband but the specificity here is that the fact is very rare and when it happens, it is usually, the woman and very few people who know about this but it is usually only the woman who refers to her husband with this new name and a very few people. Moreover, the rare people who call the husband by the

affective name given to him by his wife do it either to tease him or to flatter him in order to obtain a favour. Concretely speaking, an Adja husband can name or rename his wife Alodéfa. This name means the woman granted to me by my fate. A Fon husband can rename his wife Djèhami to say that this woman is the one that suit me. (Yébou; 2019: p. 134) A twi woman can call her fiancé or husband "Ode Yewu" meaning worth-dying-for love. Such names play an important role in the faithfulness in couples and their consolidation too.

3. Naming rituals and receiving names.

3.1. Products or items used during a naming ceremony

The most important products used during a naming ceremony vary from one area to another. The most commonly used are the following ones. First, there are drinkable water, that is to say water that people drink in the area, not necessarily running water nor mineral water; palm wine, sweet drink, hot or alcoholic drink, either local or imported but usually people bring both in order to show power; honey and red oil. Then, there are kola nuts. In *No Longer at Ease*, the narrator alludes to the importance of Kola nut saying "He that brings kola nuts brings life" (Achebe; 1960; p. 05) The same idea can be seen in *Things Fall Apart*. The narrator says: "He who brings kola brings life" (Achebe, 1958; p. 05); Elewa's uncle addresses her mother while confirming Amaechina's name: "My wife, where is that kolanut? I shall break it after all"; there are alligator pepper, a piece of white cloth, a piece of black cloth. Next, there are maize flour, some cereals, some palm nuts, some specific leaves, bitter leaf and a bitter fruit. And last, there are some money, a cock, a hen, a he-goat, a she-goat and some tubers. For what has become the confirmation of Amaechina's naming, her grand-mother has brought an alcoholic drink namely 'Snaps'. Since it is not going to be used any longer, she is obliging her brother-in-law to refund her its price. The narrator displays the woman's anger here: "'You will return me my bottle of Snaps and the fowl.'" Later, she comes back on it. The narrator reports: "'You will return my Snaps and the fowl,' she repeated obstinately." (Achebe; 1987; p. 226)

For the naming ceremony of Elewa and late Ikem's daughter, as dramatized in *Anthills of The Savannah*, Elewa's uncle comments about a few elements mentioned earlier. He says:

I did not hear of bride-price and you are telling me about naming a child. But I did not contradict my wife because I want fish in my soup [...] Do you know why I am laughing like this? I am laughing because in you young people our world has met its match. Yes! You have put the world where it should sit...my wife here was breaking her head looking for kolanuts, for alligator pepper, for honey and bitter-leaf ...
'And Snaps and agriculture chicken'. (C. Achebe, 1987, p.227)

The list of the items above is not exhaustive and this is clearly shown through the dots in the text and as it can be noticed at the end of the quotation.

During traditional ceremonies people are demanding about hot drinks that when they happen to miss, the ceremony can be postponed. This is the reason why Elewa's uncle expresses clearly his surprise and or disappointment when he has been served beer instead of hot drink after what can be referred to as a naming ceremony without a learned person in the field.

The rites of the naming have more sense if an elder person of the family mainly from the paternal family carries them out. It is not exactly the case here but what has been done by Elewa's uncle is far better than the 'joke of bad taste' Beatrice has proved to organize in the absence of an elder person. The list of elements mentioned for the naming in *Anthills of The Savannah* is so short mainly because it is a work of fiction in which the author puts the necessary items that are needed to convey his message. The most important message that Achebe wants to convey here is that even in towns, even educated and highly educated people like Beatrice strongly adhere (or sustain) the idea of naming a child according to the traditional standards. The author of *Anthills of the Savannah* purpots to show that even a born orphan, born from a mother of the low social class with both the mother and the child hosted by a benefactress, needs to be named and this must be done under some minimum conditions such as the presence of old people and after some items are available. I don't think Achebe wants his readers to know the exhaustive list of things or elements needed to name a child. The most important message in this episode is the importance of naming

3.2. *The use the items and name receiving*

The first of the rituals to be performed on the naming day is the cutting of the child's hair very early in the morning. This is done either by the child's mother or the woman who has been taking care of the child and his or her mother since the birth or a dedicated person to this task in the family or the community. The hair that is cut is put in a container which can be just an empty can prepared or kept for the occasion. This hair will be buried or thrown away at a specific place after the naming. The child's mother takes her shower very early in the morning and wears her most beautiful clothes sits quiet in a place usually on a mat keeping her child in her hands put on her lap.

A woman throws water on the child's mother's roof under which the child has stayed until the naming day. In the hands of a dedicated person usually a paternal aunt the child receives the falling drops of the cold water first on his/her head then the whole body. The expected result is that the child scream and then cry for, at least, a few minutes, to prove that he/she is a rightful or blood heir of this family or community. Whether the child cries or not, provided she/she screams, which is always the case, the attendants who are watching the rituals in progress express their joy with faith or not, hence welcome him/her into this world he/she is entering. Then the child passed to the master of ceremony almost as described in *Anthills of the*

Savannah: "Now all eyes turned to Beatrice. She had picked up the baby again, but instead of handing her to the old man who had set down his glass once more to receive it ..." (Achebe; 1987; p. 225)

The child is given back to his or her mother. In traditional Africa, naming ceremony takes place in the morning for three important reasons. First, to avoid heat that the sun yields from a certain hour in day time. Then to be sure to have some spirit that must be evoked and invited and implored which cannot be available from a certain hour of the day. The third and last reason why the naming ceremony is held in the morning is that the water which must be thrown on the roof must be cold because it is left outside for the whole previous night. If the ceremony is not held early in the morning not only will the water lose its necessary low temperature but also the roof will become hot too. In this condition, the expected result cannot be reached

Two slices of kola nuts and some grains of alligator pepper are put on the bare floor. Elewa's uncle insists on the necessity to break kolanut. He says: "I shall break it [kolanut] after all." (Achebe; 1987; 227; square brackets mine) The piece of the white cloth, the piece of the black cloth, the cereals, some palm nuts, the dedicated (or specific) leaves for such a ceremony or ritual are put on the bare ground or in a calabash or a clay pot. It depends on the ethnic group of the child on the one hand and the place or area where the ceremony is carried out and the weather on the other hand where the slices of kola nuts and the grains of alligator pepper have been put a moment earlier. The person leading the ceremony chews some kola nut and alligator, spits part of the chewed kola nut and the alligator pepper on the leaves that are on the floor and pronounce silently some words: it is an invocation of the spirits of all sorts needed for the success of the ceremony. Water, palm wine and hot drinks first. They are used for libation before the ceremony proper. They are also drunk during the ceremony and after if there is any remaining. One can speak of a preliminary ceremony or first step of the rites. Then come the other elements. It is the beginning

The child is taken from his/her mother anew by an elder person of the family and passed to another elder of the family who must lead and preside over the ceremony. This person leads the ceremony. The master of the ceremony will keep the child for a short while. If the child is female, it is usually an elder woman who leads and presides over the ceremony. When it is a male one, it is a male elder who presides over the ceremony. A male elder person can preside over the naming ceremony of both male and female children but this is not tolerated for an elder woman when it is a male child. Patriarchy is dictating its rule. The chairperson prays for the child and his/her parents and the public answers each time the way it is done in the area. Next is the use of the animals.

The animals are killed. When killing and after killing the animals, the blood which is pouring out, a part of it is taken in a clay pot and the other part pours out on the

leaves put on the soil or in a calabash or a clay pot containing some of the items needed for the occasion. As the blood is pouring the chairperson says repeatedly sentences like "it is on the occasions like childbirth that we can witness blood pouring out not during or after an accident or other bad events". The public replies in the appropriate way. These animals are killed in the place of the child to protect him/her from enemies. It is almost like the event in *The Holy Bible* where Abraham is sent a ram to be killed in place of his son Isaac. (Genesis 2: 12-13) I don't imply that African ways must look like the ones of other civilizations nor that African ways are of inferior quality or importance compared with those of other continents.

After the prayer, the libation and the divination within just a few minutes, the chairman announces the child's names one by one. As a name is announced, the chairperson prays on it and murmurs it to the child to keep it in order to be able to answer to it. This is repeated until the end of the ceremony. Before the naming proper starts, a dish containing water is put in front of the master of ceremony and in it will be put the money from the people who desire to give names to the child as a way to ask permission before being allowed to give their names as required by the tradition. Bank notes are given to the master of ceremony who puts them in a dedicated plate or bowl for the purpose. A child can be given several names and several people can give the names they wish or want to the child. Among these names, there is a principal one that most people use to refer to him/her from his/her childhood to death unless at a certain moment in his/her life his or her status changes.

The penultimate step of the ceremony proper is the moment when the child is lifted up and the name is pronounced aloud again for the public or audience. This is followed by an expression of joy by almost all the participants. Some men go to the father to congratulate him. So do some women to the mother. After the congratulations, any close relation to the child's parents who wishes, irrespective of their gender, can go either to the father or to the mother or to both to congratulate them. The latter pronounces the name aloud and this is followed by hand clapping and laughter. The names given by relatives and friends are also revealed to the public or audience by the master of ceremony. And they express their joy through laughter and applause and even teasing too. The names given by the father are checked before the birth of the child from the Bokonon. With modernity, the new trend is the combination of the naming and outdoor rituals in a way that the new generations do not always happen to notice the boundaries between the two. Otherwise, in the past, naming used to take place in a large sitting room whereas nowadays it is frequently done in plain air under ground sheets almost as the outdoor used to be

After having announced the child's names, the chairperson of the ceremony put in the child's mouth some of the food items such as water, honey and sweet drink,

alcohol drink, and bitter leaves or bitter juice. He will use them one after the other. First, water; then honey and sweet drink, both playing the same role; next the alcohol drink and finally bitter juice. When he/she takes the water, he/she says:

Here is water,
It is the first and necessary drink in this life.
May it go down easily.
May it never go the wrong way in your throat.
Drink it to become like those who did it before you.
Aside from drinking, water is also necessary in other important fields like farming.
You will never lack water.

Then, he/she takes the honey and the sweet drink and says:
Here is honey
It is sweet.
May your whole life be as sweet as honey. He/she does the same with the sweet drink.

Next to the honey and the sweet drink, he/she takes the alcoholic or hot drink and says:
This is alcoholic or hot drink.
It is neither sweet nor bitter but hot.
It gives courage and strength.
Take some.
Be strong and courageous for they lead to bravery

Finally, he/she takes the bitter juice and put it in the mouth of the child and says:
Here is a bitter drink and as such, difficult to drink and bear.
This is to show you that life is also filled with difficulties.
As a human being, you will be confronted with difficulties.
In this case be strong enough to overcome them.
You have been warned.

While each of the items is being given to the child followed by the comments and explanations by the chairperson, everybody says "Amen". Aside from the water which is given to the child with a small bowl, the chairperson of the ceremony puts his finger in each element and put it in the child's mouth each time. The chairperson prays, once again, for the child on the one hand and for the parents and the community on the other. The narrator reports here below how Elewa's uncle prays for everybody including himself but starting with the just-named child after his closing and confirmation of Amaechina's naming:

"Elewa's uncle has prayed for Amaechina at Beatrice's house, confirming thus the naming ceremony. The narrator describes him in the following terms:
"... he assumed a sacramental posture, picked up the kolanut in his thumb, palm up, to the Almighty. 'Owner of the world! Man of countries! The church people call you three-in-one. It is a good name. But it carries misery and insufficient praise. Four-hundred-in-one would seem more fitting in our eyes. But we have no quarrel with church people; we have no quarrel with mosque people. Their intentions are good, their mind on the right road. Only the hand fails to throw as straight as the eye sees. We praise a man when he slaughters a fowl so that if his hand becomes stronger tomorrow he will slaughter a goat.
'What brings us here is the child you sent us. May her path be straight ...'
'Isé!' replied all the company.
'May she have life and may her mother have life'
'Isé!'

'What happened to her father, may it not happen again.'
'Isé!'
'When I asked who named her they told me All of Us. May this child be the daughter of all of us.'
'Isé!'
'May all of us have life!'
'Isé!'
'May these young people here when they make the plans for their world not forget her. And all other children.'
'Isé!'
May they also remember useless old people like myself and Elewa's mother when they are making their plans.'
'Isé!'
'We have seen too much trouble in Kangan since the white man left because those who make plans make plan for themselves only and their families.'

After all this, there is an explosion of joy through one or two songs and few people can dance at that. This is illustrated in *Anthills of the Savannah* as follows:

"Agatha ... burst into one of the songs of her sect ... Agatha's hands freed meanwhile found more fitting occupation clapping her own accompaniment, and her waist swayed in slow dance.

Jehova is not a person anyone can deceive
Jehova is so great who is it can confuse him?
If Jehova wants to bless who will dare to raise a curse?
Jehova-jireh let us raise his name!

Aina raised herself from her seat, untied and retied her outer lappa [sic] and joined Agatha in her holy seductive dance.

'Abi Aina no be Moslem?' Beatrice asked Elewa in a whisper.

'Na proper grade one Moslem,' she replied wondering by way of a puzzled look what the point of the question was. Then she seemed all of a sudden to discern the questioner's difficulty. 'Dem talk say make Moslem no dance when Christian de sing?' she asked in return.

.....

After five or six repeats of the same words of the catchy little song Braimoh shouted: 'Heep! Heep! Heep! And the ecumenical fraternization was neatly terminated with a lusty 'Hooray!' and laughter." (Achebe; 1987: p. 224)

It is after these preliminaries that the true feasting, drinking and other forms of rejoicing follow: It is merry making.

4. Names as channels to convey messages or the meaningfulness of West African names

During his exile in his maternal village, Okonkwo has had a few children among whom a female baby. To symbolize the period, the child is named Nneka meaning "Mother is Supreme". His uncle Uchendu, his mother's brother informs the reader:

Why is Okonkwo with us today? This is not his clan. We are only his mother's kinsmen. He does not belong here. He is an exile, condemned for seven years to live in a strange land. And so he is bowed with grief. But there is just one question I would like to ask him. Can you tell me, Okonkwo, why it is that one of the commonest names we give our children is Nneka, or "Mother is Supreme!" We all know that a man is the head of the

family and his wives do his bidding. A child belongs to its father and his family and not to its mother and her family. A man belongs to his fatherland and not his motherland. And yet we say Nneka – “Mother is Supreme”. Why is that? (Achebe; 1958; p. 96)

In Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*, the narrator informs us of the meaning of some names including the one of the protagonist of the novel namely Obi Okonkwo. As a matter of fact, Obi is the short form of Obiajulu which means “the mind at last is at rest”. More details are given to the reader in the following terms:

Obi Okonkwo was indeed an only palm-fruit. His full name was Obiajulu – ‘the mind at last is at rest’; the mind being his father's, of course, who, his wife having borne him four daughters before Obi, was naturally becoming a little anxious. Being a Christian convert – in fact a Catechist – he could not marry a second wife. But he was not the kind of man who carried his sorrow on his face. In particular, he would not let the heathen know that he was unhappy. He had called his fourth daughter Nwanyidinma ‘a girl is also good’. But his voice did not carry conviction. (Achebe; 1958; p.06)

Other information is given about Obi's family mainly his sisters in terms of the meaning of their names. The narrator reveals:

In those days Obi got on very well with his three sisters, Esther, Janet and Agnes, but not with Charity, who was his immediate elder. Charity's Igbo name was ‘A girl is also good’, but whenever they quarrelled Obi called her ‘A girl is not good.’ Then she would beat him until he cried unless their mother happened to be around, in which case Charity would postpone the beating. She was as strong as iron and was feared by the other children in the neighbourhood, even boys. (Achebe; 1960; pp. 54-55)

Taking into account the meaning of names on the one hand and the influence names can have on people on the other hand, whether you are a king or a slave, whether you are a king or mere subject (of the king), whether you are a mere citizen or an authority, whether you are a ruler or a ruled, no matter the extent of your country or your kingdom, no matter your tribal or ethnic group, you must mind the name you give your child or children. Concretely speaking, if you are not careful enough when naming your child, the name may be ambiguous. As such, it can yield only negative result (output) in the worse of the cases or both negative and positive results. In this perspective, both the child and his/her parents can be sorry in the future. For example

when a Yoruba or a King names "his child Adekanmibi" he "puts that child in a precarious position when in future the child" sees an opportunity of occupying the throne. “The meaning “Adekanmibi” [sic] is a question which reads thus, ‘Is it my turn to claim the crown? His people can answer Yes or No. Luckily, a person who hears this name can claim that his name is Adekanmi (by cutting off the last two letters). This time his name means. “It is my turn to claim the crown”. Anyway, this is a seemingly funny point for it does not necessarily follow that anybody who bears this name forfeits his right to the throne.” (Ariwoola; 1965; p. 46).

We must mention that midwives and parents must be careful when writing the names given to children because the mistakes are sometimes made at these levels too.

A child's name can be the result of the combination of some syllables of the names of each of his/her parents or the combination of one or two syllables of the name of a

parent and full name of the other (parent). It can also be the combination of the full name of both parents. This happens when the name of each parent conveys a message of great importance and neither of them wants to lose his/her identity. Here we speak of compound names. What such parents usually ignore or do not have in mind is the fact that if they must have several children, will all of them bear their respective names, part of the meaning of their parents' names? Besides, who knows if the child or children who has/have in their name(s) parts of the names of both parents will live for a long time or become necessarily famous? Anyway, this is not obvious. For these reasons, parents must be cautious when choosing names for their children.

5. The participants to a naming ceremony and the desecration of naming in West Africa

5.1. The participants to a naming ceremony

The child's parents, his/her relatives and other people attend the naming ceremony. For the naming of Elewa and Ikem's daughter, Elewa's mother is available, her paternal uncle too. They have come even if it is to confirm what has been done in their absence. No member of Ikem's family is available because the latter is dead and cannot inform anybody from his maternal and paternal families. People like Beatrice, Aina, Agatha, Braimoh, and Emmanuel represent both the relations and friends of the couple Ikem-Elewa. (Achebe, 1987; pp. 222-228) This is almost the same thing that happens in real everyday life. It is the expression or symbol of African solidarity, communal life. The use of Beatrice's house the setting of the naming on the one hand and people such as Beatrice herself, Emmanuel, Braimoh to name just a few as people who have witnessed the naming ceremony is very meaningful. As a matter of fact, Beatrice holds a First-Class Honours Degree in English from London University and as such a Senior Civil Servant in Bassa, Republic of Kangan. Her house which Elewa's uncle refers to as "this whiteman house" (Achebe; 1987; p. 227) is evidence of financial and material achievements by a black woman. It is a symbol of modernity and Western world can be interpreted in several ways. First, if Africans in general and women in particular work hard, they could reach empowerment and development one day. This setting also reveals that it is people of a certain level of education and/or of wealth that live in such places and therefore can turn back or neglect some Africans ways or values such as naming. But fortunately for Africans in general and West Africans in particular, it is the contrary with Beatrice and her hosts who have taken all the measures to play their part in naming, the way they can do it, Elewa and Ikem's daughter Amaechina. It is also a way to prove that being an educated African does not mean rejecting all African ways. It is rather accepting what is from outside that can enrich Africa with the open idea of rejecting what is African that is not good for progress or evolution and development.

The participation to the naming ceremony by other people than the two parents and the close relatives is to show African solidarity, "weism", African communalism that prevails in traditional Africa. In traditional Africa, when a child is born even for your enemy, you have to go and salute them in order to tell them that you are not angry with the new born. In the same way, when your enemy loses a parent, a relative or a child, it is your duty to go and greet them, a way to console them showing through this behaviour that you don't have any hand in the death or you don't draw any pleasure from it. Some people denounce hypocrisy in this way of doing but the hypocrisy that brings harmony and peace is better than useless and selfish war.

5.2. The desecration of naming in West Africa: Clothing on the naming day and the presents to the child

The prostitution of the sacredness of naming or the desecration of naming in Africa in general and West Africa in particular is done through three different ways: the garments (the clothes) people wear and the presents brought to the child being named and the process the day of naming.

Some people, for money's sake, decide not to observe the necessary prescriptions for the naming rites. They do not take into account the number of days after which the ceremony must be carried out. For them if they do people may enter into a period when they lack money to give them as due, according to them. In this regard instead of holding the ceremony on the prescribed day, they do it on the fifth day or before or after for example. On the other hand, the child is kept outside for a longer time so as to oblige people, the participants and invitees to give him/her more money, forgetting that this state of things may jeopardize his/her health and even kill him/her. The most dramatic is the case of premature babies who undergo the same misfortune as described in Ayi Kwei Armah's *Fragments*. The way the babies are sometimes clad as well as his or her parents and relatives, invitees are also clad leads people to wonder whether it is a naming ceremony or something else. The narrator of *Fragments* describes:

They'd put the baby in a new cradle lined with deep-colored blue, gold, red and green kente and put him out there on the porch, a square of the morning sunlight falling on one side of a wide brass pan next to him. The fan stood behind the cradle, something else he had tried not to understand that day. They came in magnificent Sunday groups, the guests, their splendour making it impossible for Efua to keep from smiling and going beyond the gate to look at the line of cars before the ceremony could start [...] This was a rich crowd of guests, too, sitting at first like a picture already taken. Woollen suits, flashing shoes, important crossed legs, bright rings showing on intertwined fingers held in front of restful bellies, an authentic cold-climate overcoat from Europe or America held traveler-fashion over an arm, five or six waistcoats, silken ties and silver clasps, and a magnificent sane man in a university gown reigning over four admiring women in white lace cover shirts on new dumas cloth; long, twinkling earrings, gold necklaces, quick-shining wristwatches, a great rich splendour stifling all these people in the warmth of a beautiful day - but that was only an addition to the wonder: the sweat called forth new white handkerchiefs brought out with a happy flourish, spreading perfume underneath

the mango trees. The hunchback himself was in royal kente, brilliant as a painting set against the gate, looking anguished after cars that came by and didn't stop to let out more glistening dignitaries for him to welcome. (Armah, 1969; p.181)

From the above passage, the narrator points out the modernized ways in which the naming ceremony is held. This is an expression of greed. The naming ceremony is supposed to be something symbolic but nowadays people try by all means to show their wealth through their wearing expensive clothes making the whole thing extravagant. But in the novel, there is the main character Baako who opposes the dressing code during the "outing ceremony" of his nephew. The following conversation between Baako and his mother clarifies it:

"Well, there won't be too much to do. I wish you had brought a tux, or at least a suit, though. It would have been so fine."

"I'm not an ape."

"What a strange thing to say!" his mother said.

"Why else would I wear tuxes and suits in this warm country except to play monkey to the white man?"

"But for a special ceremony like this..."

"I suppose your sacred ancestors laid down the word that we should sweat in stupid suits and tuxes for such ceremonies. Too bad. I am going to wear clothes that won't choke me."

"Oh, Baako," his mother said, with real hurt in her voice, "I was only thinking of the best. Baako, what happened to you?"

"What do you mean?" he asked. But his mother was looking at him as if what she was staring at was something behind him, something that she could see only by looking through him.

"Nothing," she said. "You will receive the guests and later you can give them drinkables. Serve the VIP's first."

"Is that all?"

"Yes," his mother answered, turning to go. "Oh, and also, take care of the collection before he could say anything she had left closing the door very softly after her (A. K. Amah, 1969, p. 99)

From those who are making the naming ceremony, it is time for them to make money out of it and for the invitees it is time to exhibit their expensive clothes.

6. The protest or Rebellion against Foreign names

Although the trend was to receive and be referred to by Western personal names from colonization up to the first two decades of the independences, some African intellectuals and/or politicians chose to be referred to by their African names.

From the 1970s to date, there has been a continuous wave of protest or revolt against foreign names. In other words, Africans who were very fond of European names, wily nilly, from colonization doubled with the imposition of the new faith, Africans have decided for a few decades to come back on African values through the adoption or imposition to have African names and be referred to by them. There are several reasons behind this protest. Among them are two main ones. Some Africans rightly think or simply realize that these European and Christian names do not mean much or anything at all in the African context. Others want to protest against Europe's colonization, neo-colonialism and the exploitation of Africa. They are rightly denouncing this system of naming or renaming or baptism. The two groups of

Africans have, in actual fact, the same goal which is to put an end to western people's domination in all fields. For instance, Uhuru Kenyatta is the current President of Kenya and (he) is not referred to by any European name. The famous Kenyan writer, Ngugi wa Thiong'O used to be James Ngugi. But in the long run mainly in March 1970, when he was thirty-two years old, he changed and started bearing the name by which he is referred to now. The first independent Ghanaian President, Kwame Nkrumah has had a Western name which is Francis; then Chinua Achebe whose Western name, Albert, is almost unknown to many people. This revolt against some European ways, precisely naming, as far as we are concerned, has known a great success in Anglophone African countries such as Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria. But we must pay tribute to a francophone country where nationalism, as far as naming is concerned, is well rooted. This names even if some of them have Western names in addition. Even in these conditions country is Togo in West Africa, a country opened to the sea between Benin, Burkina Faso and Ghana. In this country there are some political and academic personalities known only by African these Western names appear just in administrative documents and are in acronyms if writing them in full letters is not necessary. Because some researchers and academic authorities are concerned, we avoid precisions here. Talking about foreign names given to Africans, some people think, wrongly, that Arab and Muslim names are African names

CONCLUSION

This article has pointed out the genuine character of the traditional African ways of naming through the rites and how meaningful African names are. In the name of modernity, some people are playing with the sacredness of the whole process of naming. It also reaches the conclusion that if naming rites can be alleviated (reduced), many reluctant Africans can adhere the whole process of naming and thus promote African values for the benefit and welfare of Africa and its peoples in the era of globalisation. There are different methods of naming children in Africa in general but in West Africa in particular. Among them are names liked to the parents' religion based either on their religion or their occupation mainly the father's one. There are other names which are related to the days of the week or the time of the day. There are some others that are linked to some events in the parents' life or the place and or conditions of birth to name just a few.

Naming rites enable to identify people. They are also necessary for death rites for the same individual. Nowadays, naming leads to useless and excessive expenditures that ruin people. Therefore, there are people who are getting off the way, which is a pity. It has been proved that African names are meaningful, but the term 'meaningful' should not be confused with 'prophetic'. The vivid illustrations of such a state of affairs are the names Onwumbiko, Molomo and Ozoemena which are supplication to death to leave their bearers so that they can live but unfortunately, they have died as clearly shown and quoted from *Things Fall Apart* in the development of this paper (Achebe; 1958; Op Cit, p. 54). Naming is also an occasion of communion among

people who know one another but who seize such an opportunity to meet one another.

This paper reveals that names can affect people's lives negatively or positively. In this light, parents or other qualified people should be careful not to give the wrong name unwillingly. In the same way, those who write names on birth certificates should also be careful because it is not the name given to a child that always matters but mainly the one by which he or she is referred to. In other terms when the given name is misspelled, it is this wrong name which will be used and it can jeopardize or change the course of the child's life. It is a reality that there are some powers linked to the names when these names are given or received, especially in Africa, although some people still ignore it and decide not to take this reality into consideration.

This article shows that a person's names are of a concern for the community and the society as a whole because an individual does not belong to their family alone but mainly to the whole community on the one hand and because of their natural and necessary involvement in the life of the society they belong to on the other. Naming is an occasion of communion for Africans. It is implied in the following quotation:

'I must say I liked your spirited stand for idea.'
'Mutual Admiration Club forming up again,' sang Abdul.
'And jealousy will get us nowhere,' sang Beatrice. (Achebe; 1987; p. 229)

This paper contributes to notice that Africa has always been and still is a well-organized continent not a cradle inhabited by liars, cannibals and big apes contrary to what its detractors said of it.

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