ALMA MATER
Journal of Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies

Journal of Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies
JICS 2024, 1: 86-100
DOI: 10.29329/almamater.2024.1053.7

Identity and Culture of Naming Among the Yoruba of West-Africa

Olakunle Folami[20], Omobolaji Omolola Akande, Oluwafemi Imisioluwa Olatunde[21]

Abstract

Naming is an important aspect of the Yoruba culture. The importance of naming has been eroded by civilization, Westernization, foreign religions, and globalization. Names are identity, and it is a means of social arrangement, social engagement, and social structure among the Yoruba of West Africa. Names are associated with place of birth, period of birth, family background, important events, days, and others. Many people have been able to retrace their origin, historical records, and family background through their family names. Names have opened opportunities for many. The Yoruba use names to determine suitability for marriage, association, friendship, and assumption of important traditional posts. The Yoruba naming could be described as cultural heritage. Differential Association Theory propounded by Edwin Sutherland was used in this study. Differential Association Theory emphasizes communication and learning processes as mechanisms of corruption in good manners. Secondary sources of data were used to collect data on differences, importance, sources, and reasons for the disappearance of indigenous names such as textbooks, the internet, and others. The survival of the Yoruba race impinges on the survival of its culture including naming culture. Bad aspects of Westernization, modernization, and globalization should be dropped to protect naming - an important cultural heritage among the Yoruba. Therefore, this paper suggested dropping any religious or foreign names such as Faith, Rashidat, Michael, and others. The Yoruba should retain their first and last indigenous names such as Adeyinka, Olu, Fayemi, Ogunlowo, and others.

Keywords: Culture, Identity, Naming, Western, Yoruba

Introduction

Culture is a critical facet of existence, serving as the bedrock of identity and imbuing life with meaning. It holds an intrinsic connection to every aspect of human behavior, from eating and dancing to housing, economy, sports, marriage, religion, and even death. As Wolf (2011) posits, culture represents the lifeblood of a vibrant society that emerges through numerous channels such as storytelling, commemoration of past events, entertainment activities and future aspirations. According to Taylor's (1871) definition: "culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge acquisition processes; belief systems; artistic expression appreciation mechanisms; moral codes; customary practices; legal frameworks as well as other learned capabilities shared by members within a particular society transmitted across generations". Culture remains dynamic in nature since it undergoes changes based on various social constructs such as socio-political interactions or Westernization trends among others. Cultural expression serves like a mirror reflecting our collective identities while enabling us to perceive alternative perspectives (Gilmore 2014).

[20] Dr. Adekunle Ajasin University, Department of Criminology & Security Studies, Akungba. ORCID-No.: 0000-0003-3420-2842.
[21] Dr. Adekunle Ajasin University, Department of Criminology & Security Studies, Akungba. ORCID-No.: 0000-0003-3420-2842.

How to cite this article: Folami, O., Akande, O. O., Olatunde O. I. (2024). Identity and Culture of Naming Among the Yoruba of West-Africa. In: *Journal of Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies 1:1*, 86–100. [Research Article]
Submitted: 08.05.2024
Accepted: 21.07.2024

This article is licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0

The Yoruba people of West Africa boasted a distinctive and exceptional culture prior to their interaction with Europeans via Portuguese adventurers and British colonialism (Law, 2011). According to Ogunyemi (2014), the facets of Yoruba culture encompassed greetings, dress, language, morality, religion and naming. Unfortunately, colonialism has eroded many crucial elements of Yoruba culture. To compound this issue further, Westernization, trans-Atlantic slave trade and contact with Arabs have all impacted essential features of this ancient society's traditions. Sociologically speaking, various actions undertaken by members within any given community - such as eating habits or systems of government - represent concrete aspects of non-material culture (Wahab et al., 2012). Meanwhile material objects like clothing articles or electronic devices also comprise an invaluable complement to cultural practices (Wahab et al., 2012). In terms of naming customs within the context presented in this paper; it is specifically focused on human beings. One could argue that material naming conventions remain unchanged despite exposure to foreign cultures; however, these customs retain their originality unless introduced tools are alien to traditional Yoruba society. For the Yoruba people themselves; names relate directly back to identity while providing insight into individual ways-of-life interpretations. As Aceto (2002) notes that the phenomenon of naming is as old as humanity itself since every civilization utilizes names for purposes related to identification or differentiation between its members. The paper therefore aims at linking together the concepts surrounding naming conventions alongside broader ideas tied-to both social construction and contextualized cultural norms among West African-based Yoruba communities. The argument made herein suggests that encountering foreign cultures has had adverse effects upon non-material aspects unique unto traditional-Yoruba societies - exemplified here through changes in social structure and arrangement which should be critically examined when considering impacts from outside influences upon indigenous peoples' needs and desires over time

This paper is organized into various sections and subsections. The introductory Section One provides an overview of the research topic, while Section Two delves into the contextual background of the study. In Section Three, the paper explores topics such as recognition, identity, and cultural significance related to naming conventions. Moving on to Section Four, the paper examines social arrangements and value systems that play a role in naming practices as well as societal structures which can lead to name obliteration. Finally, the paper concluding section ties together all previous findings presented throughout this study.

Context

This section of the paper delves into the significance of culture, heritage, and tradition among the Yoruba people in West Africa. Unfortunately, they have abandoned their ancestral names in favor of foreign ones such as European and Arabian monikers (Mensah, et al, 2020), leading to an identity crisis. Before exploring how naming practices have corrupted aspects of the Yoruba identity, it is vital to briefly examine the historical antecedents of this ethnic group. There are two accounts regarding the Yoruba origins: (1) The first oral history traces back to mystical beginnings where a group settled in Ile-Ife located in Southwest Africa. They were believed to be created by God with power and authority over their surroundings (Adeyemo, 2004). As Lyn (2014) notes, these early settlers possessed mystical abilities that made them revered as deities like "Obatala", "Yemoo", "Oranfe", "Esinmirin", "Obawinrin", "Obajio", "Obaremo," among others. Life was organized according to 'Ifa' divination which dictated behavioral patterns and

moral choices (Martin, 2020). The purpose behind 'Ifa' divination was to reconnect destiny with earthly consciousness by identifying one's heavenly calling (Martin, 2020).

Naming was conducted through the guidance of the divine entity known as "Ifa." The social, political, and economic norms were also determined by Ifa (Akinrefon, 2015). Another historical account traces the origin of the Yoruba people to Oduduwa (Lyn, 2014). According to oral tradition, Oduduwa descended from heaven to rule over Ile-Ife. However, scientific evidence has not yet substantiated this claim. It was through Ifa Oracle that a connection was established between Oduduwa and the indigenous Yoruba people of Ile-Ife (Scheutz. 2018). Subsequently, Oduduwa became their king while those who refused his authority left in anger including Osangangan, Obawinrin and Obatala among others (Adewuyi, 2013).

Oduduwa had a son named Okanbi who bore seven children: Olowu of Owu; Onisbe of Sabe; Onipopo of Popo; Oba of Benin; Orangun of Ila; Alaketu of Ketu; and Alafin of Oyo - all revealed by Ifa divinity (Adeoye, 2008). These seven grandchildren went on to become kings across Yorubaland with some spreading into neighboring West African countries such as Benin Republic, Ghana, Togo and Ivory Coast (Ajsta, 2021). Unfortunately, in the eighteenth-century slave trade era displaced many Yoruba individuals resulting in migration throughout South America countries like Brazil Trinidad & Tobago, Suriname, Jamaica among other nations (Babaloa ,2011).

Mensah, et al, (2020) argue that the abandonment of "Ifa" oracle consultation in Yoruba naming is a result of colonization, modernization and globalization. However, others believe that it is a gradual erosion of cultural values and identity. The use of foreign names and the adoption of Western naming conventions have become increasingly common among Yoruba families (Mensah, et al, 2020). This shift has led to a loss of connection with traditional Yoruba culture and heritage. It is important to recognize the significance of "Ifa" oracle consultation in Yoruba naming and identity, as it plays an integral role in preserving the cultural heritage and maintaining their unique identity as Yoruba people.

Colonialism and Yoruba Identity

This segment of the paper expounds on the Yoruba people's interaction with Europeans and their subsequent assimilation into Western culture. The chapter delves into this topic by scrutinizing the impact of exploration, religious evangelism, and political colonization.

The Yoruba civilization predates colonial intervention, which initially took the form of exploration. After discovering the Yoruba nation and other nationalities in and around the Niger River, Europeans launched a second wave of occupation under the guise of religion. Missionaries arrived to supplant traditional practices, marking their introduction as an initial political conquest of the area. It is important to note that slave trade was prevalent in Yoruba territory; people were transported to Europe and America as commodities until it was abolished in the 18th century. The ramifications of this industry still resonate within Yoruba society today, particularly with regard to identity. Many enslaved individuals lost their ancestral origins due to forced migration and name changes enforced by masters or Christian missionaries who baptized them into new faiths. As such, numerous members of the diaspora scattered throughout countries such as Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK) are unable to trace their roots back home. The final stage of colonization occurred during amalgamation when various territories were merged together under one administration.

Nigeria was incorporated into the British Empire during the scramble and partition of Africa, which culminated in a conference held in Berlin in 1885. Between 1862 and 1885, the British divided Nigeria into three distinct administrative regions: the Southern protectorate, the Northern protectorate, and the Lagos colony (Hamzat, 2012). On January 1st, 1901, Nigeria officially became a British colony under Chatterjee's account (1986). Prior to its amalgamation by General Lord Laggard for administrative purposes in 1914 (Falola & Heaton, 2008), Robinson (1961) highlights that Lagos colony and both protectorates were separate entities with unique governing structures. Moreover, it is worth noting that only two areas -the southern protectorate and Lagos Colony- had been joined before their eventual merger in 1906. According to (Wuam, 2012) the cessation of colonialism in 1960 marked a significant turning point as Nigeria gained independence. The enduring impact of prolonged colonial rule on the Yoruba identity is immeasurable (Wheatley, 1970).

As previously mentioned, the Yoruba identity is inextricably linked to their cultural heritage (Wheatley, 1970). Culture serves as a vital conduit for both recognition and self-identification. Prior to European influence, the Yoruba cultural identity was expressed through various aspects such as greetings, dress, language, morality, religion and naming conventions (Edward et al, 2018). While this paper will primarily focus on naming practices among the Yoruba people, it is important to provide a comprehensive overview of all components of their cultural identity.

Language

Language plays a pivotal role in shaping the Yoruba identity. Although all members of the community speak the native tongue known as Yoruba Language, Standard Yoruba has been designated as the official language for politics, education (including schools and higher institutions of learning), entertainment industry, media outlets, and is also recognized by government authorities (Arokoyo & Lagunju 2019). It should be noted that there are numerous dialects within the broader framework of Yoruba language such as Ijebu, Egba, Oyo, Ife, Ondo, Igbomna, Ijesa, Ekiti , Ilaje , Ikale among others . According to Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board (2004), between 20-26 distinct dialects can be found within the larger scope of Yoruba language. Despite its significance in defining identity, colonialism and contact with Britain have adulterated this language. English Language has become an official medium for instruction in schools and government offices while relegating Yoruba language to vernacular status. In some homes, speaking Yoruba is even prohibited. Elegantly, the notion of language serving as a marker of cultural identity is fading into obscurity.

Greetings

The Yoruba people possess distinctive ways of greeting that have been eroded by the influence of colonialism (Adeyemi, 2009). These greetings vary based on gender, days of the week, time of day, special occasions and age bracket. When greeting each other, men prostrate while women kneel. Unfortunately, many Yoruba cities and towns no longer practice these methods of greeting which serve as an integral part of their identity. Instead, English modes such as "hi," "hello," and "good-day" have supplanted these unique cultural practices (Muraina et al 2023). Some examples include: 'Ekaro' for good morning;

'Ekaale' for good evening; 'Ekasan' for good afternoon; and 'Eku Odun' to wish someone a happy anniversary.

Dressing

Attire serves as a significant component of Yoruba identity, distinguished by its unique and exceptional nature. Prior to colonialism, men donned buba ati sokoto while women wore iro ati buba. Men embellished their ensembles with caps sporting varying styles and shapes whereas women complemented their outfits with headgear (Muraina, et al 2023). These traditional modes of dressing have since been replaced by contemporary clothing such as shirts, coats, trousers, skirts, blouses, berets and ties among others (Muraina, et al, 2023). The significance of attire in Yoruba culture cannot be overstated as it is employed to denote personality traits, social class distinctions based on gender roles or age groups and even religious affiliations.

Religion

One of the key components of Yoruba culture is religion. Prior to European influence and the introduction of Christianity, Yoruba people practiced polytheism, worshiping multiple deities such as Sango, Ogun, Oya, Aje, Ifa, Osun, Esu and Obatala. These gods were believed to serve as intermediaries between humans and Eledumare - God. However with western monotheistic beliefs replacing their traditional belief system in polytheism was altered. It should also be noted that Islamic encounters have had an impact on Yoruba religious identity. Today's modern era sees Yoruba religion divided into three categories: Isese - Traditional religion; Christianity; and Islam.

Trans-Saharan Trade

Islam traversed these regions by means of great caravans or sea vessels that navigated vast trade networks on land and sea. It was also propagated through military conquest and the efforts of missionaries. As Islamic ideas and cultures were exposed to new societies, they took on unique forms (Khan academy, 2020). The practice of Islam dates back as far as 1550 C.E at Oyo-Ile, where a mosque had been erected (Al-Aluri, 1990). Al-Aluri (1965) suggests that Yoruba people were acquainted with Islam during Emperor Mansa Musa's reign in Mali around d1337 C.E through Malian traders and ambassadors residing in Oyo-Ile, the capital city of Old Oyo empire. This might be why some refer to "Islam" as "esin Imale," meaning "the religion of Malians" or "the religion originating from Mali."

Recognition, Identity and Culture of Naming

Recognition Theory progresses from atomistic to intersubjective, mechanical, and dialogical understandings between individuals because people's identity is precisely shaped through interaction with others in society. Our feelings of self-worth, self-respect, and self-esteem result from being positively acknowledged for who we are (McQueen, 2011). The modern understanding of recognition theory began with Charles Taylor's essay titled "Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition," which was first published in 1992 (Taylor, Gutmann & Taylor, 1994). In his essay, Taylor contends that recognition can be utilized to address issues arising from identity (Morrison, 2011; Andersen & Siim, 2004).

It is a reciprocal relationship where cultural background bestows legitimate claims to recognition (McQueen, 2011). Therefore one has authority only if recognized genuinely by others based on their identity. Reciprocity and mutuality are essential conditions for appropriate acknowledgment (McQueen ,2011). Cultural recognition may be classified into two groups:

1. At this primary level of identity, individuals seek recognition from others in order to establish a sense of self-worth and belonging. This recognition can come in many forms, such as acknowledgement of one's talents or accomplishments, respect for one's opinions and beliefs, or simply being seen and heard by others. Without this recognition, individuals may struggle with feelings of insecurity, loneliness, and even shame (Andersen & Siim, 2004). Furthermore, the importance of individual recognition extends beyond the personal realm and into the cultural sphere. In order for a culture to thrive and evolve, its members must feel recognized and valued for their unique contributions. This can include everything from artistic expression to scientific discoveries to everyday innovations (Andersen & Siim, 2004). By acknowledging and celebrating these contributions, we not only strengthen our cultural identity but also promote a more inclusive and equitable society. Overall, individual recognition serves as a fundamental aspect of both personal identity formation and cultural development. As such, it is essential that we continue to prioritize this form of intersubjective recognition in our interactions with others and within our communities; and

2. This secondary level of cultural recognition is important because it acknowledges the need for marginalized groups to have an equal voice in decision-making processes that affect their lives. It goes beyond simply recognizing and respecting cultural differences, but actively involving these groups in shaping policies and practices (McQueen ,2011). Achieving cultural parity participation requires a shift towards more inclusive and democratic systems that prioritize the voices of marginalized communities. This can be achieved through initiatives such as community consultations, participatory budgeting, and diverse representation in leadership positions. However, it is important to note that achieving cultural parity participation is not a one-time event or quick fix solution. It requires ongoing efforts to address power imbalances and systemic barriers that prevent marginalized groups from participating fully in society (Andersen & Siim, 2004). Only through sustained commitment to cultural parity participation can we truly create a more just and equitable society for all.

The two classifications are mutually complementary (McQueen ,2011). Personal acknowledgement from others is vital for the cultivation of self-awareness and identity. Devoid of an individual notion of identity and self-worth, it will prove arduous to attain collective recognition (Morrison, 2011). Taylor's scrutiny of acknowledgment pertains to the creation of identity and sense of self. They define identity as a mechanism through which individuals comprehend who they are, along with their fundamental attributes as human beings (1992). The validation or recognition we receive from others is what constitutes our integrity as people (Taylor, 1992). When we experience insults or degradation in any form, we are denied recognition that deflates our positive perception of ourselves (McQueen, 2011). Being unrecognized or deprived of acknowledgement results in injury towards our identity; it can be a type of oppression that forces someone into a false, distorted and diminished mode of existence (Taylor, Gutmann & Taylor, 1994:25).

Taylor (1992) asserts that recognition theory is a fundamental aspect of any satisfactory modern theory of justice. He contends that it provides insight into both historical and

contemporary political struggles, enabling their comprehension and justification. Recognition theory emphasizes the critical role played by social interactions in shaping our sense of identity and self-assessment, while also exposing the underlying motivations and justifications for political action. It proves especially valuable in understanding authenticity as well as determining the conditions necessary for agency, rational responsibility, and authority (Brandom, 1994:32).

Cooley's 'self-looking glass' theory proposes that society acts as a mirror which shapes our behavior and identity. It determines how we perceive ourselves and how others perceive us (Cooley, 1907). Being misrecognized is not merely about being judged negatively or undervalued in people's attitudes, beliefs, or representations. Rather, it involves being denied the status of an equal partner in social interaction (Taylor, 1992). This stems from institutionalized cultural values that establish one as relatively unworthy of respect or esteem (Fraser 2001:56).

Social Identity

Social identity plays a crucial role in Yoruba recognition within West Africa. As per Scanlon's (2020) perspective, one's name serves as an identifier that people use to call and recognize them, shaping their self-understanding. Although some individuals may receive nicknames or change their names later on, the common thread remains- a name is a reflection of oneself (Shaffer, 2005; Cooley, 1907). Personal identity holds immense significance for human nature since it influences our sense of self-worth and representation in the global arena (Scanlon, 2020). In terms of social identity among the Yoruba people, names serve as means of association for marriage and kinship bonds (Kumar, 2021), with exogamy being encouraged by this cultural practice. This paper examines several concepts that underpin naming culture as a form of social identity among the Yoruba community- including royal status, wealthiness, chieftaincy roles and birth circumstances. The following list highlights some examples of names associated with social identities among those who have royal lineage:

A. Royal Status

'Adegoke'- Royal progress

'Aderemi'- Royal consolation

'Adeniran'- Royal status has lineage

'Adelanke'- Cherish Royal status

'Adeyemi- befitting Royal status

Identifying individuals of royal lineage is facilitated by their names. For instance, a person hailing from a royal family may enter into matrimony with an individual from modest origins. Within the Yoruba community, possessing a royal status garners substantial reverence and esteem. Both endogamy and exogamy are encouraged among the Yoruba populace. A member of royalty may opt to uphold their noble heritage by marrying another individual whose name bears the prefix "Ade" denoting regal ancestry (Ajadi, 2022). Conversely, someone seeking to elevate their own or their family's social standing might choose to wed into aristocracy.

B. Identity and Wealth

In Yoruba culture, naming conventions can serve as a means of identifying individuals from affluent backgrounds. Those hailing from wealth typically bestow the name "Ola" upon themselves, which directly translates to 'wealth' in English. An individual's name can often be indicative of their socioeconomic status and those born into privilege are often distinguished by their lavish attire and willingness to spend extravagantly while maintaining an accommodating demeanor. As the saying goes, "A kii ri omo olowo ka ma mon". The following names are commonly associated with individuals who come from money:

'Olanike'- treasure wealth

'Folami' – respect and honor me

'Oladele'- wealth arrives home

'Ololade'- wealthy one has come

'Olaposi'- Increasing wealth

Another way that the Yoruba people consider wealth is through their cultural heritage and traditions. The Yoruba have a rich history of art, music, dance, and storytelling that has been passed down from generation to generation. They believe that preserving these traditions is a form of wealth that can be shared with others and passed on to future generations.

In addition to children and cultural heritage, the Yoruba also place a high value on community and social connections. They believe that having strong relationships with family, friends, and neighbors is a form of wealth that can provide support and security in times of need.

Finally, the Yoruba view education as a valuable form of wealth. They believe that knowledge and skills are essential for success in life and that investing in education is an investment in the future. As such, many Yoruba families prioritize education for their children and encourage lifelong learning for themselves and others in their community.

C. Chieftain

Individuals from chieftain families often adopt appellations that reflect their societal status. In Yoruba society, chiefs occupy pivotal positions such as community leaders, village heads, members of the Oba-in-Council and select kings. These roles are typically associated with specific names within the Yoruba lexicon.

'Oyeronke'- Throne to be pampered

'Oyediran'- Throne is hereditary

'Oyetunji'- Throne is resurrected

'Oyebisi'- Throne is multiplying

'Oyewumi '- Desire throne

The significance of self-identity in society cannot be overstated. It plays a crucial role in shaping one's perception of themselves and their place in the world. The concept of self-identity is closely linked to social status and recognition. Those who hold important positions in society are often recognized by their names, which carry a certain level of prestige and respect (Muraina, et al, 2023). However, it is important to note that self-identity goes beyond simply holding a prestigious title or name. It is a complex interplay between an individual's personal experiences, beliefs, and values that shape their understanding of themselves. In order to fully understand one's self-identity, it is necessary to reflect on one's own biography - the events and experiences that have shaped who they are today. This process of reflection allows for greater self-awareness and a deeper understanding of one's place in society. Ultimately, the relationship between self-identity and social status highlights the importance of recognizing the unique experiences and perspectives of individuals from all walks of life. By embracing diversity and promoting inclusive, we can create a more equitable society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential.

D. Birth Circumstances

The circumstances surrounding a baby's birth hold significant importance to the Yoruba people, as they believe that different factors associated with one's birth can serve as determinants for future happenings in their life. The circumstances of a child's birth automatically lead to the assignment of an orúko àmútọ̀runwá, which is essentially a predestined or generic name in Yorubaland (Oldnaija.com, 2017). This study has identified various aspects pertaining to the circumstances of one's birth that can impact their future trajectory.

'Taiwo and Kehinde' – Twins

'Ige' – Come out of mother's womb with two legs at a time

'Ajayi'- Come out of mother's womb turning face upside down

'Dada'- Born with deadlocks

'Ajose' – Born on Sunday

E. Value identity

The Yoruba society is structured around a set of core values that are highly esteemed by its people. These values, which encompass six crucial aspects of life, serve as the basis for how individuals are named and identified within the culture. The identification of an individual with specific values directly impacts their sense of self-worth, self-confidence, and self-respect. This subsection will delve into these essential values in detail, including 'onilaakaye', 'omoluabi', 'akinkanju', 'aniselapa', 'oniyi' and 'Olowo'.

The six identities of value comprise:

1. 'Onilaakaye' refers to the application of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding demonstrated by individuals who possess 'ologbon', 'onimo', and 'oloye'.

2. 'Omoluabo' describes integrity. An individual with integrity is true to their word. Wealth means nothing without integrity, as it is an essential component of being an 'omoluabi' in Yoruba culture.

3. 'Akinkanju' denotes bravery or courage in the face of risk or harm to oneself (Afolabi, 2018). Balogun - commandant serves as second-in-command to leaders in Yorubaland and must be courageous enough to lead during war or danger since cowardice is not respected among the Yoruba people.

4. 'Aniselepa' signifies hard work. One's profession or job must be legitimate and approved by society for visible means of living that guarantees lawful income or sustenance (Adedeji, 2020).

5. 'Oniyi' represents respectability which encompasses one's gait, carriage, public reputation; self-esteem; contentment; firmness; discipline; and consistency according to Yoruba tradition.

6. Olowo refers to wealth which holds minimal emphasis within the Yoruba value system as money comes last with proverbs such as "It God that giveth wealth" ('Orun nikan lo mo eni ma la ki ye fipa wa'wo').

Identity and Social Structure

The fundamental constituents of social structure comprise status, roles, social network, groups and organizations, social institutions, and society. Statuses encompass ascribed status, achieved status, and master status (Laulima, 2020). In Yoruba land's context, social organization can be referred to as a social status that was determined based on sex, age groupings within families or clans called descent groups and wealth (Adesina 2002; everyculture.com 2020). These characteristics determine seniority in social connections while also governing the rights each actor possesses along with their obligations and comportment vis-à-vis others. Additionally speaking to Yoruba land's political organization is its indigenous political system consisting of a ruler alongside an advisory council comprised of chiefs representing significant sectors of society such as military forces religious cults age grades markets secret societies among other structures (Omobowale 2008).

Social control among the Yoruba hinges on gravity and scale where disputes or crimes were judged by leaders from descent groups chiefs rulers or secret societies depending on severity. Meanwhile internal struggles for power were strongest between monarchs town heads warrior chiefs while external conflict involved raiding for slaves booty or large-scale warfare (Everyculture.com 2020). This paper identifies several distinct Yoruba social constructs:

'Balogun'- Warrior

'Oje'- masquerade

'Orisa'- Idol

'Ayan'- Drummer

'Ade'- royal

The hierarchical designation assigned to each family determines their roles and status within society. This naming convention is closely linked with the caste system in India, whereby individuals from the royal family are expected to assume leadership positions as kings or rulers rather than engaging in activities such as warfare, masquerading, drumming, or leading religious ceremonies. The skills and methods associated with each role or status are inherited and passed down through generations. Consequently, mentioning names associated with any of these designated identities reveals the bearer's background and ancestral lineage.

Annihilation of Selfhood

In this segment of the paper, we have identified westernization and religious affiliations - namely Christianity and Islam - as significant factors in the erasure of Yoruba's indigenous names and identity. The elimination of these native names has resulted in a distortion and misrepresentation of their true forms.

Westernization

Contact with the Western world, particularly the United Kingdom, has had significant impacts on Yoruba culture, particularly in regards to naming and identity (Ighobor, 2020). Many individuals who have had contact with white settlers have opted to adopt foreign names over their indigenous ones. Furthermore, contacts with the West have influenced some indigenous people to change their surnames entirely and adopt foreign ones. For administrative purposes, some indigenous people were compelled to incorporate foreign names into their existing native name (Ighobor, 2020). In certain cases, indigenous individuals now carry a foreign name as their middle name. However, in extreme instances of assimilation or cultural erasure due to colonialism's influence on identity formation processes and power dynamics within societies themselves - some indigenous persons may opt for complete obliteration of their original first and last names altogether in favor of adopting exclusively Western monikers instead. The far-reaching effects that such changes can have upon individual identity are indeed profound.. These are European names substituted for indigenous names:

Ryan

Frederick

Bridget

Tiger

Wilson

The adoption of foreign names rather than indigenous Yoruba names can result in confusion and is, in fact, misleading (Adelaide, 2016). Prior to the influence of Western culture, indigenous names held great significance and meaning. For instance, some individuals have both a first and last name that are of indigenous Yoruba origin (e.g., Adewale Adeolu), while others have replaced their first name with a Western one but retained their last name (e.g., Adewale Wilson Adeolu). Still others have discarded their

original last name altogether and substituted it with a new one such as Thompson (e.g., Adewale Thompson). However, the most problematic scenario arises when both the first and last indigenous names are abandoned entirely in favor of foreign ones like Thompson Williams. This practice not only erodes native cultural traditions but also elevates foreign cultures above that of the Yoruba people. Such disregard for indigenous naming conventions has significant implications for Yoruba civilization which dates back to before European colonization in the 18th century.

Islamic Culture

The Yoruba people also established connections with the Islamic world through Trans-Atlantic Trade and the dissemination of Islam, which was spearheaded by the Fulani from Futajallon. Usman dan Fodio, who waged wars against the Yoruba, played a crucial role in propagating this religion (Odumakin, 2021). Those who were swayed by his teachings and embraced Islam felt compelled to abandon their Indigenous names due to societal condemnation and demonization (Lenshie & Ayokhai, 2013). It has been reported in literature that most individuals who converted changed either their first name, last name or both (Adeleye, 1971). For instance, some chose to adopt a hybrid identity such as Ahmed Olatunde while retaining their original surname. Others opted to discard their last name entirely like Iyiola Abdullah. Meanwhile, many enthusiasts of Islam jettisoned both first and last names altogether and replaced them with Arab monikers; for example Rufai Mohammed. This phenomenon not only creates confusion but also complicates one's sense of self-identity. Research indicates that factors such as inequality, patronage and favoritism often motivate people to relinquish indigenous names in favor of Arabic ones.

Conclusion

This paper centers on naming and its impact on the social construction of identity within the Yoruba community of West Africa. Due to its significance in facilitating political, social, and interactive arrangements, names hold a special place among the Yoruba people. Within this context, two distinct historical origins for the Yoruba were identified: (1) oral; and (2) divine. The act of naming was viewed as a means of shaping one's social identity with important psychosocial dimensions explored throughout this analysis.

The Recognition Theory utilized in this study has identified three crucial psycho-social factors that are integral to names and identities, namely self-worth, self-respect, and self-esteem. The absence of any of these components can have a profound impact on one's overall identity. In order to safeguard the naming culture as an essential cultural heritage among the Yoruba people, it is imperative to eliminate negative aspects associated with Westernization and religious affiliations. Therefore, this paper recommends discarding any foreign or religious names such as Faith, Rashidat, Michael, etc., while retaining both first and last indigenous names like Adeyinke, Olu, Fayemi, Ogunlowo amongst others for the preservation of Yoruba culture and its survival.

References

Aceto, M. (2002). *Ethnic personal names and multiple identities in Anglophone Caribbean speech communities in Latin America. Language in Society, 31,* 577–608.

Adedeji, B. S. (2020). Yoruba's value system. 9ijaparrot. Retrieved 18 July 2020, from

https://www.9japarrotonline.com.ng/2020/06/value-system-edited-by-b-s-adedeji.html

Adelaide, A. (2016). Africa's naming traditions: Nine ways to name your child. BB News. Retrieved 19 July 2022, from *https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-37912748*

Adeleye, R. A. (1971). Power and diplomacy in northern Nigeria, 18041906. London: Longman Adeoye, O. (2008). A Case Study of Ibadaland; Retrieved 29 June 2022, from *https://www.laits.utexas.edu/africa/2004/database/adeoye.html*

Adesina, J. O. (2002). Sociology and Yoruba studies: epistemic intervention or doing sociology in the 'vernacular'. *African sociological Review 6 (1),* 91-114.

Adewuyi, O. (2013). Obatala: The Greatest and Oldest Divinity. River Water. Retrieved 17 July 2022, from *https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Obatala.html?id=kr6doAEACAAJ&source=kp_book_description&redir_esc=y*

Adeyemo, O. (2004) A Case Study of Old Oyo Empire, an Imbibe Democracy. Retrieved 29 June 2022, from *aits.utexas.edu/africa/2004/database/adeyemo.html#s:~:text=The%20Yoruba%20people%20and%20descendant,of%20Mecca%20in%20Saudi%20Arabia.*

Adeyemi, A. (2009). Rhetoric in Conflict-Related Yoruba Proverbs: Guide to Constructive Conflict Resolution in Africa. *African Study Monographs, 30(2),* 55-69.

Afolabi, L. (2018). Akinkanju. Omoluabi News. Retrieved 19 July 2022, from *https://www.omoluabi.ca/akinkanju/*

Ajadi, A. (2022). Olubadan: Preserving the ethos of everyman as a blue blood. Premium Times. Retrieved 18 July 2022, from *https://www.premiumtimesng.com/opinion/504220-olubadan-preserving-the-ethos-of-everyman-as-a-blue-blood-by-adewale-ajadi.html*

Ajsta (2021). List Of Five Countries That Speak Yoruba Language Apart Nigeria. Opera News, Retrieved 17 July 2023, from *https://ng.opera.news/ng/en/education/6c11eac4f462741caf940806d871f86f*

Akinrefon, D. (2015) *Ile-Ife: Ifa oracle set to choose next Ooni.* Vanguard

Al-Aluri, A. A. (1990). *Nasimu al-soba fi Akhbar al-Islam wa 'Ulamah bilad Yoruba.* Cairo:

Andersen, W. J. & Siim, B. (2004). *The politics of inclusion and empowerment.* Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Arokoyo B. E. & Lagunju O. O. (2019). A Lexicostatistics Comparison of Standard Yorùbá, Àkúrẹ́ and Ìkàrẹ́ Àkókó Dialects. *Journal of Universal Language 2019; 20(2),* 1-27

Babaloa, F. D. (2011). Roles of and threats to Yoruba traditional beliefs in wilderness conservation in southwest Nigeria. In: Watson, A; Murrieta-Saldivar, J; McBride, B. *Science and stewardship to protect and sustain wilderness values: Ninth World Wilderness Congress symposium.* November 6-13, 2009; Merida, Yucatan, Mexico. Proceedings RMRS-P-64. Fort Collins, CO: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, 125-129.

Brandom, R. (1994). *Making it explicit.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (2004), Nigeria: Difference, if it exists, between the Yoruba language spoken in the city of Lagos and a "traditional" form of Yoruba; degree to which the difference is of importance; whether it can cause

misunderstanding (2004), 29 November 2004, NGA43147.E, available at: *https://www.refworld.org/docid/42df61492.html* [accessed 3 September 2023]

Cooley, C. (1907). Mead Project. Everyculture.com (2020). Yoruba – sociopolitical organization. Every Culture. Retrieved 19 July 2022, from *https://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Yoruba- Sociopolitical-Organization.html#ixzz7ZVuwKS4Y*

Edward, O., Oluranti, & Abayomi, S., I. (2018). Understanding the Socio-Cultural Identity of the Yoruba In Nigeria: Reassessing Cicatrix as Facial Marks, Scarification And Tattoo. *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, 27,* 145–163.

Fraser, N. (2001). Recognition without Ethics? *Theory, Culture & Society, 18(2-3),* 21-42.

Gilmore, A. (2014). Raising our quality of life: The importance of investment in arts and culture. *Centre for Labour and Social Studies,* November 2014

Honneth, A. (1992). Integrity and Disrespect: Principles of a Conception of Morality Based on the Theory of Recognition. *Political Theory, 20(2),* 187-201.

Ighobor, K. (2020). Bigger than Africa: Tales of the Yoruba people. Africa Renewal. Retrieved 19 July 2022, from *https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2019-march-2020/bigger-africa-tales-yoruba-people*

Kumar, Y. (2021). Marriage, family, and kinship: Meaning, definition, type. Anthropology. Retrieved 18 July 2022, from *https://getuplearn.com/blog/marriage-family-and-kinship/*

Laulima, (2020). Survey of General Sociology. Notes to Social Structure and Interaction, Retrieved 19 July 2022, from *https://laulima.hawaii.edu/access/content/user/kfrench/sociology/Notes_Social_Structure.html*

Law, R. (2011). West Africa's Discovery of the Atlantic. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies. Vol. 4/1.*

Lenshie, N. E, & Ayokhai, F. E. F. (2013). Rethinking Pre-Colonial State Formation and Ethno- Religious Identity Transformation in Hausaland under the Sokoto Caliphate. In: *Global Journal of Human Social Science and Political Science. Vol 13 (4).*

Lyn, W. A. (2014). Our mysterious mothers: The primordial feminine power of àjé in the cosmology mythology, and historical reality of the West African Yoruba. California Institute of Integral Studies. Dissertations.

Martin, K. (2020). Why Yoruba's Ifa Divination is a Two-Way Street. Retrieved 29 June 2022 from, *https://ktmar10.medium.com/why-yorubas-ifa-divination-is-a-two-way-street-6b5d94bef908*

McQueen, P. (2011). Recognition, Social and Political, In: James Fieser & Bradley Dowden (eds.). Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy.vRetrieved 01 September 2015, *http://www.iep.utm.edu/recog_sp/*

Mensah, E.O., Inyabri, I.T., and Nyong, O.B (2020). Names, Naming and the Code of Cultural Denial in a Contemporary Nigerian Society: An Afrocentric Perspective. *Journal of Black Studies.* Retrieved 29 June 2022.

Morrison, Z. (2011). Social inclusion, diversity, and the politics of recognition. *Insights, 10(1).*

Ọpẹ́yẹmí, M. L. & Ajímátanraẹjẹ, A. J. (2023). Gender relations in Indigenous Yorùbá culture: questioning current feminist actions and advocacies. *Third World Quarterly, 44:9,* 2031-2045.

Odumakin, Y. (2021). The wars Yoruba fought. Vanguard. Retrieved 19 July 2021, from *https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/02/the-wars-yoruba-fight/*

Ogunbado, A. F. (2012). Impacts of Colonialism on Religions: An Experience of Southwestern Nigeria. *Journal Of Humanities And Social Science* (JHSS Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272717594_Impacts_of_Colonialism_on_Religions_An_Experience_of_Southwestern_Nigeria [accessed Aug 30 2022].

Ogunyemi, D. O. (2014). Yorùbá people. Encyclopedia Britannica. Retrieved 29 June 2022, from *https://www.britannica.com/topic/Yoruba.*

Omobowale, A. O. (2008). Clientelism and social structure: an analysis of patronage in Yoruba social thought. *Afrika Spectrum, 43(2),* 203-224. https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-352983

Scanlon, K. (2020). A Rose by Any Other Name: The Importance of Our Names in Shaping Identity. Retrieved 18 July 2022, from *https://medium.com/swlh/a-rose-by-any-other-name-the-importance-of-our-names-in-shaping-identity3fed42b116b1#:~:text=A%20name%20is%20your%20identity,common%20thread%20is%20a%20NAME.*

Scheutz, H. (2018). Ifa: Das Ifa Orakel. The ifa oracle. Retrieved 29 June 2022, from *https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=ACmADwAAQBAJ&dq=Ifa%E2%80%99%E2%80%99+oracle+dictates+ways+of+life&source=gbs_navlinks_s*

Shaffer, L. S. (2005). From mirror self-recognition to the looking-glass self: exploring the Justification Hypothesis. *Journal of Clinical Psychology. 61 (1),* 47–65

Taylor, C; Gutmann, A. & Taylor, C. (1994). *Multiculturalism.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Taylor, C. (1992). Politics of Recognition. Retrieved from *http://elplandehiram.org/documentos/JoustingNYC/Politics_of_Recognition.pdf*

Tylor, E. (1871). *Culture.* New York: Signet.

Wahab, E. O., Odunsi, S. O. and Ajiboye, O. E (2012). Causes and Consequences of Rapid Erosion of Cultural Values in a Traditional African Society. *Hindawi Journal of Anthropology.* Retrieved 29 June 2022.

Wheatley, P. (1970). The Significance of Traditional Yoruba Urbanism. *Comparative Studies in Society and History, 12(4),* 393–423. http://www.jstor.org/stable/178115

Wuam, T. (2012). Nigeria Since 1960: A Comparative Study In Nation-Building And Development. *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, 21,* 99–116.