

Naming and Name-Giving in Kambari Culture

Aliyu Ibrahim Dantata

Department of English

Faculty of Languages and Communication Studies

Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai

aiidantata@gmail.com

08052247574 / 08036322774

Abstract

This paper demonstrates how Kambari speakers often use names as linguistic resources to identify individuals in a variety of social functions in everyday informal interactions. Kambari is among the Niger-Congo family of languages, which is situated in the Northern part of Nigeria. The cluster is situated predominantly in some local governments of Niger State and Kebbi State (Magama, Agwara, Rijau, New-Bussa, Mashegu and Bangi –Niger State and Warra, Yauri and Shanga – Kebbi State). The intention of this paper is two-fold: to contribute to research in Kambari cultural names, often limited as a mere verbal play, by illustrating their communicative utility and to present the common functions cultural names fulfil in particular relationships and situations. The data reveal that Kambari cultural name occurs in a wide array of relationships and age group, although it happens in both male and female. The forms cultural names take and the naming patterns depend on the social distance between the participants, their relative social statuses, the context of name-giving and the speakers' intention. The data for this paper came from natural environment where the Kambari speakers are dominant (in Salka and Raba town) in Magama Local Government Area of Niger State, from the researcher's observations taken from naturally occurring interactions in public and private spheres with the native Kambari speakers of varying ages, gender, social status, occupation and religious affiliations.

Keywords: *Kambari, Cultural name, Age group, Status, Social Distance*

General Introduction

Scholars in various disciplines have shown considerable interest on naming and name-giving practices and the roles that cultural names play in social life. Sociolinguists consider naming as part of the study of systems of personal address (see Philipsen and Huspek's 1985). Anthropologists often look at naming practices as part of the study of kinship terminologies and the social organization of the communities under study (Antoun 1968, Barrett 1978, Gilmore 1982, Glazier 1987). Folklorists (e.g. McDowell 1981) have explored the nature of cultural names as folk expressions and social psychologists focus on their uses as observable mechanisms of group life (Morgan, O'Neill, and Harre 1979). "All these studies bring out the essentially group-related nature of the use of names and name-giving in everyday interaction especially, their grounding in small face-to-face primary group relations" (Blum-Kulka and Katriel 1991: 59). The use of cultural names is sociolinguistically complex as they serve a range of functions over and above the merely referential function fulfilled by the first name.

Despite this fascination with naming, no research has been done on Kambari cultural names. Guma (2001) focuses on the cultural meaning of names among Basotho of Southern Africa. According to Ubahakwe (1982:27), African names are aspects of African cultural heritage and make a significant impact on an individual's personality. This is because "each person's name moulds him into and cuts for him his separate identity" (Nze 1989).

There are many different types of naming practices, of which personal naming is one. In most personal naming practices, names are assigned and the holder has little or no control over their designation and use. Most cultural names relate to the circumstantial

attributes of the user, and as such, create expectations about the user. These can contribute to both positive and negative views of self and others and are often inaccurate (de Klerk & Bosch 1996, p. 526). Although cultural differences exist (cf. Liao, 2006 for Taiwanese; Wardat, 1997 for Jordanian Arabic), typologies of names claim that they tend to cluster into specific categories (Crozier, 2002; Crozier & Dimmock, 1999; de Klerk & Bosch, 1997). Kambari cultural names tend to relate to the users' personal histories including cultural background (e.g. *Azona* – a child born at the farm), while others include personal or family names. Renditions of names in Kambari include culturally accepted forms (e.g. *Vanumu* - a child born on a mission which was not successful) and those which are more unique to the user. Wierzbicka (1992) argues that important pragmatic differences exist between standardized and less-standardized forms of personal names and the two should be considered separately. A proposed study here includes all forms of cultural names in Kambari, as we believe that these fulfil a similar function, to identify the user.

The Form and Function of Traditional/Cultural Names

There is a wide range of academic literature on naming patterns, focusing on the cultural and sociological significance of naming, on their linguistic properties, or both. Cultural names serve many psychological purposes, both for the namer and the named. The selection of a name, whether to bestow or to assume, is usually multi-determined – motivated by a number of wishes and associations which may not all be available to conscious recall (Seeman, 1980: 237).

Finnegan (1970: 472) mentioned that names are of great significance in that they can express joyful sentiments and a sense of personal aspiration for oneself or others. She further averred that names may also contribute to the literary flavour of formal or informal conversation, adding a depth or succinctness through their meanings, overtones or metaphors.

In African societies, the birth of a child is an event of great magnitude (Mbiti 1975: 125). Great significance is, therefore, attached to the naming of a child. This is also applicable to Kambari where naming is considered to be of profound significance in that the name-giver chooses a name that truly identifies the child as a person. A name is considered a precious and marvellous gift while a person without a name is regarded as a non-human being and to the traditional African people, naming practices are very important since names are often given to mark the testimony of what a society holds dear.

Another noticeable feature of the current state of research on naming is that although there is a wealth of information about personal naming practices in different cultures worldwide, little information exists on minority communities within these cultures. The sociological studies of naming practices in Kambari have shown that naming practices are often associated with domains of language use.

The Scope of Name Use in Kambari Culture

The scope of name use refers to the sociological boundaries, the social categories or persons favourable to it and those that constrain it. Our concern is the wider social network of name usage, for example, the family, neighbours, lovers, friends, etc. We documented naming among members of these social network, observing that the backdrop of common knowledge and assumptions speakers share provide the “moral unity” which allows such naming to occur. The attempt to capture the naming behaviour of various Kambari cultural

groups serves to show the heterogeneity of the larger Kambari speaking community. We hope that both the focus on the modern setting and diverse social relations vis a vis name use will contribute to the understanding of personal naming practices as an instance of the interaction of language and social life.

Our data reveals that names are given and used by parents, siblings and relatives within the family unit.

1. *Azolinga* 'One who eats out of people's sweat' is a cultural name addressed to a male who regular does something cunning to benefit from what others has laboured for.
2. *Landoma* 'a girl who was born sick as if she will die, but still lives' is a traditional circumstantial name addressed to a female by her parents or siblings within and outside the family unit due to the nature of the circumstances by she was born.

In adolescence, peers, parents and siblings may address children by traditional names and, in adulthood, peers, intimates (lovers and friends) and sometimes acquaintances, address and refer to members of their relational culture by traditional names in appropriate situations. Social distance is one of the foremost factors that determine the way interlocutors use traditional names. Social distance "is a measure of the degree of friendship/intimacy (or absence thereof) between interlocutors" (Boxer 1993: 103). It determines the degree of comfort or politeness in a verbal exchange. Following Wolfson's (1988) theory of social distance termed 'The Bulge,' we view the social distance scale as a continuum, with complete strangers at one extreme and intimates at the other end, with friends and acquaintances nearer to the middle. For instance,

3. *Aliwashi* as 'Someone who boasts of her beauty' can be addressed to a female by an intimate friend to show the degree of friendship through social distance, someone not intimate cannot make such an address to the bearer of the name.

Speakers use traditional names directly when addressing or referring to intimates (same-generation or younger family members, friends, lovers) or acquaintances with whom they share a symmetrical relationship, and covertly or clandestinely when referring to strangers and acquaintances with whom they share an asymmetrical relationship. For example, while children may call a sibling by a traditional name, they may only refer to an elder whose attitude is 'gossiping' as *Dammala'a* behind his/her back, such as:

4. *Dammala'a* 'One who gossips',

Relative social status (achieved or ascribed) is also an important sociolinguistic variable in that an elderly interlocutor can address a younger person by cultural name whereas the latter normally refers to the former by the same name behind his/her back or indirectly. When a younger interlocutor refers to an elderly person by cultural name indirectly, the latter relies on mutually shared background information, both linguistic and non-linguistic, together with the general powers of rationality and inference to identify him/herself as the referent of the name. It is not uncommon to have situations where a younger person shares a joking relationship with an older person. This joking relationship gives the younger interlocutor the liberty to address the older person by a traditional name, in some situations, since the license to use such name directly signals a close or intimate relationship with the bearer, positive warmth and familiarity. Such address as:

5. *Yalupa* ‘A child born by a woman when she doesn’t love the husband’, can be used as a joke by either an elderly person to a younger one or vice versa as long as there is that close intimacy or relationship with the interlocutors.

Some Common Traditional/Cultural Names in Kambari Community

Habitual names

These are names that are traditionally attached to individuals due to their habits in the society which consequentially gave rise to such traditional name. For instance, *Alomomu* in (6) is a traditional name given to a woman constantly deceives people when they come to seek her hand in marriage; she is never straight forward in her dealings. *Gurandale* in (11) is a name given to either male or female who constantly break his/her calabash on his/her way to the stream to fetch water. *Lolo* in (12) is a traditional name attached to a female whose habit is marrying different people; she never stays with one man for a long time. It becomes part of her to change men at will. *La’anuno* is a cultural name in Kambari being addressed to either a male or female that is found to be talkative. *Azolinga* is addressed to a male as traditional name in Kambari to someone who eats out of people’s sweat. He never can do or initiate something on his own but rather depends on others to reap what he didn’t sow.

6	Aliwashi	F	Someone who boast/swagger of her beauty
7	Azolinga	M	One who eats out of people’s sweat
8	Alomomu	F	A woman who deceives people
9	Dammala’a	F/M	One who gossips
10	Givale	F/M	Someone who belittles by recalling favours done to others
11	Gurandale	F/M	one who constantly breaks calabash
12	Lolo	F	A woman who gets married to different people
13	La’anuno	F/M	Someone who is talkative
14	Dammashi	F/M	don’t talk

Traditional names

These are names given to the name-bearer in Kambari so as to identify an individual in that culture or society. Traditional names can apply to both sexes for identification purposes. For instance, *Adama* in (15) can be addressed to a female who is being talked about by people due to either her beauty, character, attitude (good or bad); she is on the lips of everyone. *Adawa* in (15) is a traditional name given to set of twins in the family, either male or female. *Guzali* in (27) is a cultural name in Kambari addressed to someone who is from idol worshipping. *Ga’anlolo* in (26) is another cultural name in Kambari addressed to a female or male to show he/she is fit for marriage. *Lobonole* in (39) is a traditional name in Kambari for a female who is extremely beautiful. *Jiyamu* in (30) is another traditional name in Kambari addressed to someone who is thoughtful, most especially the male gender. *Peshe* in (45) is a cultural name in Kambari referred to a female twin that is born first, while *Pala’e* in (46) referred to female twin that is born second.

15	Adama	F	A girl talked about by people
16	Azocigi	F/M	Something I cherish
17	Azolamu	F	Someone that takes risk
18	Azatsuru	F/M	the gotten one
19	Adawa	F/M	Twins

20	Ayunsa	F/M	Continue
21	Amacimayu	F	the trustworthy
22	Boci	M	Sotheyer
23	Banale	F/M	escort them
24	Chigileshi	F/M	they don't love one another
25	Dammamu	F	Talk of the people
26	Ga'anlolo	F/M	one fit for marriage
27	Guzali	F/M	someone from idol worshipping
28	Iwale	M	they don't love him
29	Indace	F/M	the lucky one
30	Jiyamu	M	One who is thoughtful
31	Kamashi	M	Twin
32	Kunalewa	F/M	do whatever, you will live it
33	Kokko'o	F	Separate
34	Kovomu	F	A portion has been given
35	Kuatesu	F	it ends on the face
36	Kunele	F/M	they are tired with you
37	Kopomu	F/M	you should borrow me
38	Liostimo	F/M	don't say it out
39	Lobonole	F	pretty girl
40	Langashi	M	it is not spoiled
41	Maggado	F/M	a child born after twins
42	Maguino	M	from idol worship
43	Ne'eusullo	F/M	God's gift
44	Nekunele	F/M	they will be tired with talking
45	Peshe	F	Twin that was born first
46	Pala'e	F	Twin that was born second
47	Rochomu	F/M	thank me
48	Sumavumma	M	fear people
49	Sulaja	F/M	it's from God
50	Sulereve	F/M	God knows
51	Tsiramavo	F/M	I've gotten my own
52	Tonoshi	F/M	don't mind them
53	Idari	F	Barren

Circumstantial names

These are cultural names given based on the circumstances of the child's birth in Kambari. The names are giving to children immediately after birth and he/she grew with it. Instances of circumstantial names are given below:

Azona in (54) is a cultural name in Kambari given to female child who was born at the farm.

Bowayi or *Lawamu* in (55) and (62) can be addressed to either male or female who stay alive after many children died. Such children are addressed as such.

Lambasho in (63) is a cultural name in Kambari referred to either male or female that his/her father died before he/she is born.

Madaji in (66) is a male given name when the child is born in the bush.

Jaiwa in (78) is a male name in Kambari referred to a child born when the mother loves someone not, the real father.

Abagi in (72) is a twin child that was born alone.

Ke'enu is a cultural name given to an individual in Kambari community due to the statue of the name bearer. A person or child can be addressed as *Ke'enu* if the circumstance of his/her birth is small or tiny in statue.

54	Azona	F	A child born at the farm
55	Bowayi	F/M	he/she comes to stay (after many were gone/couldn't stay alive)
56	Chibuwa	F/M	more are born again (a child born when people were saying the woman has stopped giving birth)
57	Chiwente	F/M	not agreeing with one's world
58	Dannale	M	stay with them
59	Damantsa	F/M	enough of what I'm hearing
60	I'imedā	F/M	Hatred
61	Lawamu	F/M	a child who stays alive after many children died
62	Lambasho	F/M	someone who lost a father before he/she is born
63	Landoma	F	a girl who was born sick as if she will die, but still lives
64	Matsale	F	she born for them
65	Madaji	M	a boy born in the bush
66	Mindale	M	be watching them
67	Makoto	F/M	the children have finished
68	Ne'enpere	M	free gift - a child that was born after so many attempts by the mother but couldn't bear a child
69	Vanumu	M	a child born on a mission which was not successful
70	Vainamu	F/M	my own killed me
71	Wenesu	M	he has seen with his eyes
72	Abagi	F/M	A twin child that was born alone
73	Yalupa	F/M	A child born by a woman when she doesn't love the husband
74	Ke'enu	F/M	small/tiny person
75	Muntsashi	F/M	I am not lucky
76	Ke'enu	F/M	small/tiny person
77	Dununale	F/M	stay with them
78	Jaiwa	M	a child born when the mother loves someone, not the real father

Cultural/traditional names were fixed because of the necessity for the name to fulfil its identifying function. Among the types of traditional names according to name-giving motive the most numerous group is formed by traditional names referred to the nature of birth (*Madaji* – a boy born in the bush), statue of an individual (*Ke'enu* – being small or tiny in statue), personal habits and traits of the referent (*Alomomu* – a woman who deceives people), religious affiliation of the bearer (*Guzali* – someone from idol worship), and most importantly even the way women and men are looked at by others (being pretty or handsome). Within this, the creation of names is mostly motivated by the shape, stature of an individual (small, tall, fat, thin), instances of which are: *Ke'enu* (being small or tiny in statue), *Mashelli* (small girl), *Lobonole* (pretty girl), *Adama* (A girl talked about by people), etc. On the second place are names given to individuals by their grandparents and traditional names followed such individuals to comply with its identifying function such as: *Yalupa* (A child born by a woman when she doesn't love the husband), *Ne'enpere* (free gift – a child that was born after so many attempts by the mother but couldn't bear a child). Thus, there are still names attributed to the circumstances and behaviour of an individual, such as: *La'anuno* (Someone who is talkative), *Lolo* (A woman who gets married to different people), *Gurandale* (one who constantly breaks calabash), *Alomomu* (A woman who deceives people), *Dammala'a* (One who gossips), *Azolamu* (Someone that takes risk), *Azolinga* (One who eats out of people's sweat).

Cultural/traditional name giving in Kambari communities is mostly influenced by traditional rather than religious doctrine, and some names conform to the circumstances

one is born, such naming practices include: *Azona* (A child born at the farm), *Bowayi* (he/she comes to stay (after many were gone/couldn't stay alive)), *Jaiwa* (a child born when the mother loves someone, not the real father), *Chibuwa* (more are born again – a child born when people were saying the mother has stopped giving birth), *Lawamu* (a child who stays alive after many children died), *Vanumu* (a child born on a mission which was not successful), *Abagi* (A twin child that was born alone), *Madaji* (a boy born in the bush), *Maggado* (a child born after twins). Other naming practices in Kambari communities applied to cross-linguistic aspects of naming, such as: *Idari* (Barren), *Adawa* (Twins), *Kamashi* (Twin), *Peshe* (Twin that was born first), *Pala'e* (Twin that was born second), *Abagi* (A twin child that was born alone). One can only be identified by the name associated to him/her in Kambari community and across the globe.

Conclusion

In this paper, we demonstrated that naming is a widespread linguistic phenomenon including Kambari speakers of various social networks and that; names convey a great deal of information. The form that a traditional name takes and how it is used depend mainly on the social distance between the participants, their relative social statuses, age, sex, and the name's intended effect. Although, this paper does not offer sufficient data to claim that naming among the Kambari culture is male linguistic behaviour, it is clear from the data discussed here that men and women use traditional names more frequently and more overtly. This study, however, legitimizes naming as a serious area of study in sociolinguistics or socio-onomastics, since, unlike the more obvious topics of language planning and policy, naming is either taken for granted or often relegated to literature and anthropology.

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