

# Personal Names as Sociopolitical and Cultural Metaphors: A Case Study of Ebedei-Umueziogoli<sup>7</sup>

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## Abstract

Particularization of human persons in many African sociocultures, particularly in Ebedei-Umueziogoli is suffused with ritual, wherein power-symbols are actively involved. A great deal of investigations have been carried out on naming, but the examinations mainly border broadly on syntactic, historical, pragmalinguistic, ethnolinguistic, sociocultural and causativity descriptions, thereby omitting one of the essentialities of naming: the ritualistic particularization of human person in sociopolitical and cultural metaphors. This article demonstrates objectification of names as sociopolitical and cultural metaphors in relation to Ebedei-Umueziogoli community. Subsequently, forty-nine namees were interviewed to elicit data. Six were purposively sieved out to demonstrate names as sociopolitical and cultural metaphors due to strategic roles they played in the community. The data was described linguistically using functional grammar as a touchstone and subsequently with Black's Interaction Principle (1979) to explicate the nounal metaphorical operations. All the namees suggested that they were existentially, sociopolitically, culturally and metaphorically the embodiment of the meanings of their names, albeit ambiguously, because some aspects of the perlocutionary forces of the names remained unactualized in the namees' lives.

## 1. Introduction

In the particularization of human persons, naming is sublimed in ritual particularly in the African socioculture. The sublimation of naming in ritual is considered a part in the rites of passage in the existence of an individual. Ritual as a sociocultural belief cannot happen outside language, for power-symbols (Ifesieh 2015) constitute the planks wherewith and wherein ritual is consummated. The essentiality of power-symbols requires

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<sup>7</sup>The author acknowledges Firebird Foundation for Anthropological Research at the following email address - [Firebird@FirebirdFoundation.org](mailto:Firebird@FirebirdFoundation.org) for its financial contribution towards the 'documentation of oral traditions and ecological resources of Ebedei'. This article is a part of the documentation exercise.

emphasis, because it is via the daily attitudinal responses to power-symbols that interaction and various forms of human relationships and actions are reinforced and maintained in ‘an institutional arrangement’ (cf. Hayden 1988: 422). Rappaport (1999: 24) defines ritual as ‘the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers’. ‘Performance’ as can be noticed from the definition is the basic feature of ritual. It is a commonplace fact that speech is a performative act. Therefore, ritual is humanity’s basic act because it helps to establish norms and social bonds. A serious ritual performance bears the strength to transform function and the individuality of the actor (Bellah 2003; Van Gennep 1960). This is often noticed in the rites of passage of which naming is a typical example.

Factually, naming is the culmination of man’s ingenious efforts to substantivize conceptualizations, actions, events and existence in dynamic cognitive models. The substantivization results in the lexical categories: nouns, verbs, adverbs, participles, pronouns, prepositions, adjectives, interjections and conjunctions. These lexical categories variously undergo individuations, which involve some amount of cognitive strength. The amount of cognitive force required in the individuation of nouns is not quite much in contradistinction to that required for verbs. Particularization of events and naming them with a verb involves more cognitive processing than in the case of objects, because events cannot be readily manipulated in time and space like objects (cf. Croft 1990).

However, the idealized particularization of objects and events as noticed in the lexical categorizations is not synonymous with the ritualistic particularization of human persons. Naming human persons has been investigated by linguists of various persuasions (Ubahakwe 1981; Oduyoye 1972; Essien 1886 and many more). Nevertheless, the investigation so far border broadly on syntactic, historical, pragmalinguistic, ethnolinguistic, sociocultural and causativity descriptions, thereby omitting one of the essentialities on naming: i.e., the ritualistic particularization of the human person in sociopolitical and cultural metaphor as typified in Ebebei-Umueziogoli (see Appendix). Therefore, this article demonstrates the ritualistic objectification of names as sociopolitical and cultural metaphors in relation to Ebebei-Umueziogoli community.

## **1.2 Conceptual Framework**

In christening a human person the namer ritually invokes and projects a befitting nounal word, phrase or desentencialized clause upon the namee in the order of thought. The name serves as a non-stop particularization of the bearer, harbouring a potent vocative force which causes the namee to attitudinally respond or react to power-symbols through interaction or communication in various forms of human relationships and actions which are maintained and reinforced institutionally. The ritualistic naming is not only an interpersonal linguistic function, otherwise known as performative speech act, but also a sublime metaphorical projection of a set of implicative complex isomorphic with the circumstances surrounding the conception, gestation, nativity or adoption of the namee upon the same by the namer. The set of implicative complex projected upon the namee gives rise to the imagery which constitutes the meaning of the name. Since imagery is

subjective and liable to speaker variations and multiple interpretations, then personal names are pragmatically ambiguous. Nevertheless, the denotation or the signification of the name remains sacrosanct irrespective of the behavioural patterns of the namee. Through the ritualistic particularization, the namee is privileged and bestowed with the power and legitimacy to operate within the socioculture and polity either as a subject or a ruler.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

In christening a person the namer x-rays the entirety of his experiences, searches his cognitive space and then associates his conceptualizations to the circumstances surrounding the conception, gestation, adoption or nativity of the namee. Subsequently, he sieves out a befitting nounal word, phrase or clause which is ritually invoked and projected upon the namee. The name serves as a non-stop particularization, which distinguishes the bearer from others in the society. The name bears within it a potent vocative force which is capable of causing the namee to answer a question, respond variably to situations, reject an offer or take-up one. The namee can also accentuate the power of his name through his actions or inactions. It seems indubitable that in human history namers usually do so in good faith and on the basis of the facts of the moment. Therefore, more often than not, namees bear names given to them up to the time of their death, irrespective of the semantic implications of the name; for instance, people answer *Nwosu* in Ìgbò which means ‘son/daughter of an outcast’; *Kaya* in Akan: ‘carrier of load’; also *Bonka* in Akan: ‘gutter’, ‘it smells; *Ndatta* in Ibibio: ‘I am not pleased’, *Abiona* in Yorùbá: ‘born by the roadside’; *Maye* (male) *Mayya* (female) in Hausa: ‘a wizard’ (male) ‘a witch’ (female) respectively. Ordinarily, the names above may have negative connotations within the sociocultures, but the namees bear them because they are factual and perceived as good intended. Sequel to the factuality and good intention, the names could also be interpreted to bear positive semantic charges; for instance, besides the meanings ascribed to *Nwosu* above, it can equally be used to refer to a son of a god, thereby giving the impression that the bearer is a powerful person. That foreshadows the premise that ambiguities are subsumed in names.

Earlier studies on names such as Oduyoye (1972), Ubahakwe (1981), Essien (1986; 2004) all deal with structural descriptions and explanations of names. How the names impact on language is given little if any attention in those documentations. Nevertheless, Ansa and Okon (2014) in accord with Odebode (2013) suggest that personal names historicise, socialize, spiritualize and influence people psychologically. Ansa and Okon claim that Efik personal names affect the mind and exert sociopolitical as well as religious impact on the namee, the namer, the hearers of the name and those who vocalize the same. However, Ansa and Okon fail to show how the personal names exert such impact. In a related manner, Agbo (2014) handles causativity in Ìgbò personal names. With exemplifications, he demonstrates that the Ìgbò personal names are predominantly a product of lexicalization and desententialization. Sequel to that, lexicalized and desententialized name-forms can be viewed as variants of sociopolitical and cultural metaphors.

Obeng (1998) presents socio- and ethnolinguistic readings of Akan death prevention names. Besides a clear portrayal of the emotional trauma child mortality cause parents as evident in the names, the descriptions also show how language is used to talk about culture and how culture informs language. Obeng considers context as a very important factor in the comprehension and application of the names. Although Obeng's interpretation of Akan-death prevention names is quite illuminating, it fails to demonstrate how metaphoric implicative complex of death is ritualistically projected upon the namee to actualize the comprehension of the name. In a related ethnographic study of slave names and naming in Barbados, Handler and Jacoby (1996) confirm that African naming practices are tied to rituals and identity; that naming can take on practical adaptive functions in a situation of subjugation. In such a situation, names become strong metaphors for power relations. Through multiple names, both African born and Creole slaves discovered an avenue for keeping self-esteem and establishing an identity which go beyond enslavement. Handler and Jacoby's claim that the personal name can function as metaphor is quite exciting, nevertheless, they fail to show clearly how the personal name operates as metaphor and how the name connects to power relations.

Suggesting names as sociopolitical and cultural metaphors is an apparent way of saying that a name can actually be equipped to support an ideological formation. In this manner, it can be deployed to speak for the interests of a person, a group, socioculture, cult and gender stereotype. It is a commonplace observation that in many sociocultures, the female names are different from their male counterpart. By operationalizing name differentiation, a particular political institution, ideology, ethnic group, and even a continent can effectively be privileged and be bestowed with the power and legitimacy to dominate some other structures (cf. Onuegbu 2008). Quoting Goldberg (1993: 150), Tsaior (2009: 92) recapitulates:

... power is exercised epistemologically in the dual process of naming and evaluating. In naming or refusing to name things in the order of thought, existence is recognized or refused, significance is assigned or ignored, beings elevated or rendered invisible.

Goldberg's view is quite informative, because it relates naming to thought, which relates to the senses and logical experiences of life. His submission also implies that a name has political significance. It is through names that destinies are controlled: while some persons are brought to the limelight, others are obfuscated. Therefore, context is essential in the comprehension of names, for names can neither be foregrounded nor obfuscated outside context.

Subsequently, Ogunwale (2012) emphasizes the importance of context, supposedly designates Yorùbá proverbial names as propositions within the speech act and also adopts Oluikpe's (2004) pragmatic approach to the interpretation of Ìgbò personal names for his work. By Oluikpe and Ogunwale's agreement, the personal name is a proposition with a unidirectional implicature. The implicature impacts on the namee and the wider society. Nevertheless, they fail to show how the implicature operates. This is because the speech

act theory cannot account for how the invocation of personal names creates imagery in the mind's eye of the namee and the individual members of the society. To Ogunwale, the perlocutionary force of the name operates only when the namee's life reflects the signification of the name (cf. Ogunwale 2012). Now, the implicature or the implicative complex comprises the connotations arising from the secondary subject in a metaphorical interaction process (Ifesieh 2013). It is complex and ambiguous. Ambiguities can contextually subsume both negative and positive pragmatic meanings. A simple illustration of the problematic of Ogunwale's suggestion can be demonstrated through this claim: a name may be borne by more than one persons; the various individuals may have different behavioural patterns which may variously be confirmatory to the perlocutionary force of the name; an absolute negation is vanishingly rare. The various behaviours of the different individuals that bear the same name do not cancel out the signification of that name. The perlocutionary force of a name operates once the name is called. However, its impact on individuals may somewhat differ from person to person because meaning is subjective (Oyetade and Ifesieh 2013) in contradistinction to sense which only signifies (Ifesieh 2010). Therefore, although personal names are circumstantially applied, their significations remain more or less sacrosanct. By the reason thereof, the imagery created in the mind's eye of the individual members of the society {who share the same Members Resources (Fairclough 1995)}, by the name remain more or less inviolable. Subsequently, for a proper account of the imagery created in the mind's eye by personal names, a principle of metaphorical explication is inevitably needed.

A metaphor is usually treated in association with the noun. A word (noun) is not a metaphor because it is used, though it is a necessary condition; it becomes a metaphor when it is used to make reference to a new purpose, to a previously disclosed aspect of experience in order to open a hitherto unnamed and distinct experience (cf. Ifesieh 2013). Attempts by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), and Kövecses (2007) to explain metaphorical applications using philosophical approach fail to account for metaphoric imagery. This is because their conceptual metaphor principle attempts the explanation of metaphor by adopting idealized concepts which are explicated with concrete linguistic usages. A good example is the well-known ARGUMENT IS WAR conceptual metaphor whereby WAR is mapped unto the source domain, which is used to understand ARGUMENT which in turn is mapped unto the target domain. The problematic of the conceptual metaphor principle is the lack of explanation on how the major part of abstract matters is mapped (i.e., not termed, but also thought) metaphorically because the corresponding target domains would be lacking independent a priori conceptual structure. Consequently, there would be no argument for analogies between the source and target domains (Krikmann 1994; Ifesieh 2013). Therefore, a metaphorical principle which draws empirical data from functional linguistic usage to explicate processes that undergird the storage, production and comprehension of imagery is engaged in this write-up.

Sequel to that, Black's (1979) interaction view of metaphor is adopted in this article. This is because it portrays metaphor as very important in parole quite unlike the substitution and comparison views (Levinson 1983) and takes care of the gap noticed in

Lakoff and Johnson, and Kövecses' submissions. Black's principle of metaphorical operation stipulates that a metaphor consists of two subjects: primary and secondary; that the metaphorical utterance works by projecting upon the primary subject a set of implicative complex which is predictable on the primary subject. The interaction takes place in this way: the presence of the primary subject causes the hearer to select the secondary subject's features which are isomorphic with the ones of the primary subject and consequently constrain him (the hearer) to build a new subject, i.e., imagery (cf. Black 1979; Ifesieh 2013). It is the imagery that constitutes the meaning of the name. The new subject is neither exactly like the primary one, nor exactly like the secondary one.

### **3. Methodology**

Data was gathered via oral interview. The namees were the target interviewees, but on two instances where the namees were not available, members of the families who knew the namees with regard to the circumstances surrounding their conception, gestation and nativity were interviewed. Sequels to that, forty-nine (49) namees were interviewed. All interviewees showed that their names reflected variously, albeit ambiguously in their lives. However, in order to demonstrate that names are metaphorical, sociopolitical and cultural, data was purposively sieved out on six (6) namees only due to strategic roles they played in Ebodei-Umueziogli community. This data collection strategy is qualitative and artistically based on rational and commonsense assumption that the six select interviewees play key roles in the continued existence of the community. They are the custodians of the community's sociopolitical and cultural values. Therefore, their comments about themselves and the community are pivotal in making value judgements concerning the issue under discourse. The circumstances surrounding the names are firstly presented, followed by the ritualistic naming. Then, the performative naming ritual is illustrated linguistically using the Hallidayan functional grammar. The core assumptions of the Hallidayan functional grammar are that language is used to perform two meta-functions: 1. ideational function (to reflect on things) and 2. interpersonal function (to act on things, i.e., humans and some animals). The meta-functions are actualized in terms of processes (basically material, mental and relational) through the textual function, which constitutes the third function and reunites the meta-functions. The textual function bears the clause (designated as transitivity), which in the Hallidayan conception is the most significant, grammatical unit for expressing a particular range of ideational meaning (cf. Halliday 1985, 2004). Subsequently, the conceptualization indicated as the name (secondary subject) and its projection upon the namee (the primary subject, the baby) are elucidated using the Black's interaction principle. The views of the namee about the name are considered crucial in coming to grips with the impact of the perlocutionary force of the name on the bearer. Therefore, they are presented immediately after demonstrating the interaction between the secondary subject and primary subject. Subsequently, family members of the namees and community members' general remarks on the namee with reference to the name are presented. The remarks help in assessment delivery with regard to the realization of the meanings (perlocutionary forces) of the name in the namee's life.



#### 4. Naming Ritual in Ebedei-Umueziogoli

For ritualistic naming to take place, *ogilisi* (i.e., common name: boundary tree, Botanical name: *new bouldia laevis* seem, Family name: *bignoniaceae*) and *aboshì* (i.e., common name: camwood, Botanical name: *baphia nitida* lodd, Family name: *fabaceae*) are planted at the centre of the compound and named *Anjezi* (i.e., compound land). In front of the *Anjezi*, the naming (of a child) takes place after the first seven days of the child's birth. The exercise (naming) is undertaken by the eldest man in the family. Items used in the naming ritual are: four-lobed cola-nut upon which prayers of goodwill are made by the namer, money and drinks.

Modus Operandi: Prayers of goodwill are made on the cola-nut by the eldest man present and distributed to everyone present to consume. Subsequently, the child is raised above the shoulders into the air by the eldest man saying in Ukwuani: *Oghene! Nke nì wu X*, each time the child is raised into the air; where *X* stands for the child's name. Then, the child is lowered touching the buttocks on the ground gently. This exercise is repeated four times. Thereafter, the child is handed over to the mother who says in Ukwuani too: *I bu nwa m oo* (you are my child oo), after observing to confirm that it is her child. Then, the eldest man gives the child a gift followed by the other family members and people present at the naming. Eating, drinking, music and dance follow suit.

#### 5. Data Presentation and Analysis

Namee 1: Mrs. Ojinze AJIEH (nee Ossai) (76 years)  
Nze Ossai EJIKEME, the father of Mrs. Ojinze AJIEH was the custodian and the priest of *Nze*, a powerful deity celebrated by the entire Ebedei kindred and her neighbouring towns. *Nze* is a deity for peace, justice, purity and righteousness. The priest of *Nze* is forbidden from eating in common with slaves and outcasts. The deity is placated and re-invigorated through an annual festival called *Ikenga* festival. The festival is also associated with some other names such as *Ukwata* and *Ukpalabọ*. On the one hand, *Ukwata* is a ritualistic dance which signals the onset of the *Ikenga* festival, on the other hand, *Ukpalabọ* is a moveable deity, i.e., it is carried to a place where it is worshipped. The deity chooses who carries it, who it identifies by striking the person with any of the following sicknesses: madness, epilepsy and paralysis. It is certified that the deity has chosen the person through a confirmation by *Elishi* oracle. *Ukpalabọ* as a deity has the duty to kill adulterers and to identify thieves. Then, *Ukpalabọ* as a deity would be the first to eat the new yam before any other person. Therefore, the *Nze* deity connects to the other deities characteristically. *Ojinze* is a sub-deity of *Nze*.

Subsequently, once the word *Ojinze* is mentioned, all syncopation and paraphernalia that accompany the *Nze* deity such as peace, justice, purity, righteousness, *Ikenga*, *Ukwata*, *Ukpalabọ* and their concomitant activities are re-invoked and implicated. On the occasion of the ritualistic naming, the namer, Nze Ossai EJIKEME said:

Ukwuani: *Oghene! Nke nì wu Ojinze*. Repeated 4 times  
Gloss: God! This one is *Ojinze*. (Name)

Translation: God! This is Qjinze.

In Ebedei-Umueziogoli wherein the name is located, the namer uses the relational process of being, *wu: is* which has an Identifier participant, *Nke ni: This one* and an Identified participant, *Qjinze*. In the clause, two subjects can be noticed: *This one* (the primary subject i.e., the baby: namee) and *Qjinze*, (a conceptualization, i.e., the secondary subject). In accordance with the principle of metaphorical application, the implicative complex associated with the *Nze* deity which include peace, justice, purity, righteousness, *Ukpabọ*, *Ikenga* and their concomitant activities and by further implications progress, development, wealth etc. are projected upon the namee.

The namee, Mrs. Qjinze AJIEH affirmed that the features of purity, righteousness, justice and peace were the leitmotifs associated with her personality. She was the only surviving child of Nze Ossai EJIKEME. All her children were trained in the university and were comfortably married. She enjoyed a prominent position in the sociopolitical and cultural life of Ebedei-Umueziogoli, being the only wife of the late His Royal Highness, Chief Chonogu, AJIEH (1910-2012). She said that she was satisfied the way she was; she was fulfilled. However, she said that as an adult Christian she had no conviction any more to placate the *Nze* deity having identified with Christ and accepted the Christian faith. The family members and community members affirm that, Mrs. Qjinze AJIEH in Ebedei-Umueziogoli was associated with women leadership and exemplary lifestyle. She was a name to reckon with in the community.

One can say that to a large extent, the perlocutionary force of the name reflected on Qjinze. However, it is apparent that the implicative complex of the name is not entirely fulfilled in her life: she could not function as *Ukpabọ*; she would not be celebrated as a deity; she could never be *Ukwata*. Therefore, in pragmatic terms, she is not actually the sub-deity signified or denoted.

Namee 2: Mr. Joseph CHUKWUKA (74 years)

The father, Mr. Chukwuka, whose surname he could not remember named him Joseph. He had no indigenous name. According to Joseph, his father was a peace-loving man, a major land owner and a great farmer. He died not believing in juju practice. Therefore, when the villagers spoke about going to make charms for good luck, to ward off witchcraft or evil spirit, etc. his father did not admire such suggestions. His father, Chukwuka believed strongly that the unseen God was the ultimate provider. He had a strong Christian influence and saw Christians as peaceful and prosperous people. He was told that Joseph, a carpenter was the father of Jesus, who the Christians emulate. He loved the name so much. Therefore, with the name Joseph, Christ-like behaviour, peace, carpentry, aversion to juju and belief in the supreme God are implicated. On the occasion of the ritualistic naming, the namer, Mr. Chukwuka said:

Ukwuani: *Oghene! Nke nị wu Joseph.* Repeated 4 times

Gloss: God! This one is Joseph. (Name)

Translation: God! This is Joseph.

In the clause above, the relational process of being, *wu: is* which has the Identifier participant, *Nke nị: This one* and the Identified participant, *Joseph* is noticed. The



implicative complex of the name Joseph which include Christ-like behaviour, peace, carpentry, earthly father of Jesus Christ, Israelite, dislike for juju and belief in the supreme God are projected upon the baby i.e., *Nke nị: This one*. Thus an image of peace loving person possessing Christ-like behaviour is created in the mind's eye. The namee confirms that the perlocutionary force of the name was manifest in him. He said that he worked for peace; that because of his Christ-like attitude, he was made the *Onotu-Uku* of Ebedei-Umueziogoli (the one who presides over the settlement of any conflict). He had a wife and children who in turn had theirs. He was a happy grandfather of many. He was a major land owner, but never a carpenter. Recently crude oil was discovered in his land. Mr. Joseph considered that he was an embodiment of the meaning of his name. Joseph CHUKWUKA's family and Ebedei-Umueziogoli uphold him as a symbol of arbitration and fairness. One can deduce from Joseph, his family and the community's observations that the meaning of the name reflect on the namee, though not completely. Although the following were implicated, they could not be used to identify the Joseph: father of Jesus Christ, carpentry and Israelite.

Namee 3: Isusu ENEMUWE (62 years)

Isusu is a type of juju, which brings wealth, children, money and fortune to the person who possesses it. Enemuwe CHIBUOGU, the late father of Isusu who named him Isusu was a very powerful juju priest. People came from far and near to consult him on juju practice, but in spite of his fame, he was abjectly poor. On account of his abjection, he named his son Isusu. Therefore, once Isusu is called wealth, productivity, money and fortune are implicated. It was reported that on the occasion of the ritualistic naming, Enemuwe CHIBUOGU said:

Ukwuani: *Oghene! Nke nị wụ Isusu*. Repeated 4 times

Gloss: God! This one is Isusu. (Name)

Translation: God! This is Isusu.

In the Ukwuani clause made by Enemuwe CHIBUOGU above, the relational process of being, *wụ: is* is again set in motion. The Identifier participant, *Nke nị: This one* (i.e., the baby), the primary subject is connected to the secondary subject, the Identified participant, Isusu (conceptualization) via the relational process. In the traditional Ebedei-Umueziogoli community Isusu signifies a juju whose potency works for enriching, providing fortune, wealth, and children for the procurer. Subsequently, by invoking Isusu upon the baby, the implicative complex constituting the perlocutionary force of the name is projected upon the baby. The expectation of the namer as regards the child was that the child would be rich, influential and reproductive.

The namee believed that the perlocutionary force of the name was actualized in his life. He said that, even though he could not marry early, he was able to beget children without difficulty. Although he was financially handicapped, he believed that his children would be financially buoyant; they would build cement houses and would no longer reside in huts made of red earth and roofed with grasses and tree branches. In Ebedei-Umueziogoli and in the neighbouring villages, Isusu ENEMUWE was well known for making charms and medicine such as anti bullets, anti fire, anti poison, anti snake poison, anti scorpion

sting, anti malaria, anti acid, anti bottle, and anti stomach pains, anti hot water and anti rainfall. Isusu ENEMUWE contemplated that, if he was making the medicine for robbers and for evil purposes, perhaps he would have been rich. However, he insisted that God truly gave him the powers to prepare those medicines. Consequently, profiting with God's power might be too consequential against him. Isusu's family members and community members affirmed that, although he was financially poor, he was well respected in Ebedei-Umueziogoli. It is clear that the implicative complex of Isusu consisting of wealth, productivity, money and fortune almost eluded the namee, but for his procreative ability and a good mastery of his job which made him influential.

Namee 4: Enuagwune OLISANYENUM (70 years)

Enuagwune OLISANYENUM was the second out of two sons of a farmer, Olisanyenum OSAKWUNI. Upon the birth of the second son, his father liked him so much, called him several pet names but the boy cried all through the day and night as long as he was awake. Consequently, his father embarked on a mission of enquiry. Several oracles were consulted. The oracles all said that the boy was a reincarnate of Enuagwune OSAKWUNI. Sequel to that, on the occasion of the ritualistic naming, the father said:

Ukwuani: *Oghene! Nke nì wụ Enuagwune.* Repeated 4 times

Gloss: God! This one is Enuagwune. (Name)

Translation: God! This is Enuagwune.

The naming act was again ritualistically actualized through a relational process of being *wụ: is* which has an Identifier participant, *Nke nì: This one* (the primary subject) and the Identified participant, Enuagwune (the secondary subject). Enuagwune OSAKWUNI was a great warrior known for his extraordinary courage, potent magical forces, resilience, temper, war tactics and brutality. He was a man of tremendous mental and physical strength. Doing battle was his job. According to the namee, as soon as he was named Enuagwune and addressed as such his cry began to subside and eventually fizzled out. Then, he began to behave well like any other normal child. By invoking Enuagwune upon the Identifier participant, *Nke nì: This one* (i.e. the baby), all the implicative complex (i.e., war tactics, potent magical forces, resilience, temper, brutality, great mental and physical strength) associated with the late Enuagwune OSAKWUNI were projected upon the primary subject, who was then identified as Enuagwune OLISANYENUM. The interlocutors who knew the late warrior then visualized the imagery of a fresh embodiment of Enuagwune.

The namee categorically stated that the perlocutionary effects of the name were all manifest in his life and that he was still alive to carry out more functions. As a desententialized word, Enuagwune implies that 'the resources of the heavens could never be exhausted', just like the ingenuity of a hero could never stop. As a young lad, he was the *Onotu otu-aya*, leader of *otu-aya* (i.e., boys between the ages of ten and twenty). Their function was to keep the community wells, bye-roads and markets clean. In due course, he became the *Onotu otu-onuogbe* (i.e. leader of boys between twenty one and thirty years old). Their function was to clean the roads leading to the various quarters of the town, keep the play ground clean, the age grade was also in charge of procuring drinks used in

placating *agadi*, a war deity. Soon afterwards, he became the *Onotu otu-ole*, the leader of *otu-ole* (i.e., boys between twenty-five and forty years old). They serve as soldiers during war time. They also lead the *otu-aya* and *otu-onuogbe* in the hunting of animals for the celebration of *Ikenga* festival. At a time he was the *Onotu otu-ole*-general of all Ebedei kingdoms.

Members of the community and his family said that, he was a large scale farmer and rubber tapper. They also said that his name was popular in Ebedei-Umueziogoli and the neighbouring villages for his oratorical prowess. He was a warrior and a brave spokesman of the community as well as the chief security officer of the community. Looking at Enuagwune and contrasting the metaphorical implicative complex with what he, his family and community said about him, one would notice some differences between Enuagwune OSAKWUNI and Enuagwune OLISANYENUM. The first was a professional warrior, the latter, a famer and rubber tapper. Nevertheless, he had the central features of the late Enuagwune: great mental and physical strength. That is why he was a community leader, a large scale farmer and rubber tapper. He was also popular for his oratorical prowess.

Namee 5: Ossaiuku OKUYA (97 years)

Ossaiuku was named by his father, Okuya ONWUSAA, who was in turn named by Onwusaa ENWELIKWU-EGWU. The father of Okuya was Onwusaa (a death prevention name, which means ‘death leave me’). The family experienced a great deal of child death. Okuya knew the family’s infant mortality history. Therefore, to forestall further infant mortality in the family, he procured a juju called *ossai*. *Ossai* was usually a family juju, which either a man or a woman could bear as a name. The juju is usually ritually reinvigorated annually. The reinvigoration often involves killing of certain animals. A family head subscribed for *ossai* from a person who knew how to prepare it, if he had incidences of child death. Once procured, it usually stopped infant mortality. A child born after the juju had been procured could be named *Ossai*. Subsequently, *Ossaiuku* means big *Ossai*. In other words, the moment *Ossai* is called, juju which has the capacity to stop infant mortality is implicated. Ritualistic killing of an animal, reinvigoration of juju are also implicated. Sequel to that, on the occasion of the ritualistic naming, Okuya ONWUSAA said:

Ukwuani: *Oghene! Nke nị wụ Ossaiuku.* Repeated 4 times

Gloss: God! This one is Ossaiuku. (Name)

Translation: God! This is Ossaiuku.

The ritualistic naming act was here again actualized through the relational process of being, *wụ*: *is* which has the Identified participant, *Nke nị*: *This one* (the primary subject) and the Identifier participant, Ossaiuku, (the secondary subject). By invoking Ossaiuku, upon *Nke nị*: *This one* (i.e the baby) through the performative speech act, the implicative complex associated with the juju, Ossaiuku is projected upon the child, subsequently, the interlocutors visualize imagery of the primary subject who could resist premature death.

It was affirmed that the name reflected on Ossaiuku OKUYA’s life for he survived the forces of infant mortality and had become the eldest man in Ebedei-Umueziogoli. Being

the eldest man in the village had earned him the most revered sociocultural and political position, *Okpalauku* in the community. As the *Okpalauku* of Ebedei-Umueziogoli, he was both the spiritual and political leader of the community. He was the custodian of the *Ndi-ichie*, sacred totems of the community. He operated as the chief priest of the community, who appeased major deities within the clan such as *Otuleka*, a deity in charge of accepting children of Ebedei-Umueziogoli stock, *Ani-Umueziogoli*, a deity in charge of Ebedei-Umueziogoli land; *Onoku*, a deity for yam and plantain productivity; *Ndi-ichie ọsa*, represents all the deities of the community and *Dinweneanyi*, a deity referred to as ‘our husband’. As a young man Ossaiuku was one of the great warriors of Ebedei-Umueziogoli who fought and regained a large part of community land confiscated by a neighbouring town, Umukwata.

It was a unanimous assertion by both the family and community members that in the history of Ebedei-Umueziogoli royalties and sociopolitical events, Ossaiuku OKUYA exerted a great deal of influence. The name symbolized not only death prevention juju name, but also royalty. It also symbolised spiritual, sociocultural and political leadership in the community.

Ossaiuku is a typical name bearer who adds valence to his name. Surely the invocation and projection of the death prevention juju name upon him worked out well. Nevertheless, he went ahead to engage in brave actions like fighting for the territorial integrity of his community. He also became the political and traditional leader of his community. However, some of the implicatures of the name were not fulfilled in him: he was not a juju, even though he bore a juju name; this connects to some events which associate with the juju: ritualistic killing of animal, reinvigoration of juju.

Namee 6: Oliseh {(Robinson) (60 years)}

Oliseh was named by his father Osom OLISEH.

According to the namee, his father said that the oracle mentioned that he, the namee was a reincarnation of his grand-father, Oliseh who had a lot of hectares of land in Ebedei-Umueziogoli. Therefore, on the occasion of his naming, Osom OLISEH said:

Ukwuani: *Oghene! Nke nị wụ Oliseh.* Repeated 4 times

Gloss: God! This one is Oliseh. (Name)

Translation: God! This is Oliseh.

In the ritualistic naming act above, the relational process of being, *wụ*: was again used to actualize the performative speech act. The Identifier participant, *Nke nị*: *This one* (the primary subject) had its semantic implication modified through metaphoric projection of the implicative complex of Oliseh upon it. Oliseh simply means *Chukwu*, God. However, the namee said that he did not know the elliptical part of the name, for in Ukwuani, Oliseh usually had an appendage e.g. *Olisenyenum* (God gives me), *Oliseemeke* (God does wonders), *Olisenwe* (God’s own), *Nebeolise* (Wait on /hope in God), *Oliseegboka* (God wards off evils) etc. Oliseh also said that even though he was named Oliseh by his father, he noticed that he was also addressed as Robinson. The meaning of Robinson was not also known to him. However, it was recorded that Robinson had multiple meanings: it could mean a prototypical bird or a mischievous English spirit or creature.

The complete meaning of Oliseh to the namee was not made known. But he mentioned that as he was born, his mother shouted that she had given birth to a powerful man, a lion, who no one could stop, that they could only make the lion blind, but could not kill him. At the age of 25, Oliseh suffered measles and lost his two eyes. He went to a special school for the handicapped at Lagos, Nigeria. The schooling qualified him to work as a teacher at Ebedei-Umueziogoli primary school. As a young man, he lived a carefree life and operated as a musician. That earned him nicknames – Arobin, Longlife. As at the time of this investigation, Olise was a retired teacher, who people called *Onyechijinduya*. That is, ‘the one who God upholds’. He said that he liked the nickname.

Of the various orthodox Christian denominations brought into Ebedei-Umueziogoli, such as the Roman Catholic Mission, Christian Missionary Society and Ebenezer Baptist Church, only the last one, which he brought into the community survived up to 2017, the time this interaction was held.

Oliseh could not affirm to what extent his name impacted on him; although he believed that *Olise* (God) upheld him. Nevertheless, he said he was being antagonized by the villagers. On several occasions his domestic animals had been carted away during the *Ikenga* festivals with neither permission nor payment.

Robinson’s family and community members said that his life journey had been shrouded in myth. It was God who upheld him, which is semantically in accord with his name.

However, projecting God upon an individual would entail that the individual is expected to exhibit certain attributes of God such as almightiness, ubiquity, all-knowing and omnipotence. On the contrary, Olise lost his sight as a youth. He knew not the complete meaning of his name. However, going by the travails he passed through, one is constrained to believe that God upheld him because, what made him blind could have killed him too, but for God’s intervention.

## **6. Discussion of Findings**

In the Ebedei-Umueziogoli ritualistic christening speech act, the relational process of being *wu: is* was deployed to circumstantially indicate the identity of the namee in every instance. This shows that Ebedei-Umueziogoli people are existential, i.e., each studied individual name showed a certain uniqueness even though the sociocultural and political conditions of operation and livelihood were common to them all. This goes further to show that the naming practice in the community is not only traditional, i.e., it is not only an indigenous cultural practice that is passed from generation to generation, but it is also sociopolitical. In the ritualistic naming speech acts, the efforts of the namers to substantivize their metaphorical conceptualizations existentially in dynamic cognitive models are clear. Because the culture of the people is highly cherished by them, they devise dynamic and complex means of sustaining it. For instance, the child is of much value to the Ebedei-Umueziogoli people. Subsequently, the loss of any on account of death has to be forestalled. This gives rise to certain attitudes, i.e., several sociocultural beliefs with regard to specific objects or situations. Exemplifying further, the belief that child mortality is a sociocultural aberration is reinforced in linguistic structure as evident in the ingenuous



conceptualization of *ossai* juju which has the capacity to stop child mortality. To demonstrate the efficacy of the ingenious invention conceptualized as *ossai*, the concept is metaphorically projected upon a child in whose family infant mortality is known to have happened. Consequently, the child does not die as evident in namee 5. Ossaiuku OKUYA. It suffices to mention that Ossai as a personal name is very common and popular in the entire Ukwuani local government area, Delta state, Nigeria.

Names as cultural metaphors are clearly evident in the six instances analysed. The names all originated from the people's ways of life within their environment: their likes, dislikes, emotions, loves, hates, flora and fauna, which are conceptualized symbolically. Ojınze for instance is a sub-deity of *nze* deity. Deity as a concept is cognitively stored as a part of belief system of the people; a deity is conceived as a spirit and is stronger than mortals. However, through the ritualistic naming, all the syncopations and paraphernalia of the deity are projected upon the namee. Pragmatically, a human being bears the name in the instance under discourse. This is a kind of linguistic extrapolation, which causes multiple semantic mutations such that the two subjects involved in the interaction reproduce a hybrid subject, whose meaning is characterized by ambiguity. A similar observation is made in the case of Isusu, a type of juju projected on someone as a name. The juju has the capacity to make a person who procures it to be rich, influential, reproductive and productive. Each name has a perlocutionary force which is tantamount to the meaning of the name and constitutes the stimulus that calls for response once the namee is invoked or called. It is informative that in all the instances analysed, the namees' lives failed to reflect all the metaphorical implicative complex of the names. Nevertheless, that is one of the essential reasons why names are metaphors, because ambiguity is a necessary and substantive part of metaphor's suggestiveness. All the namees believe that they were the embodiment of the names they bear, yet they all have one or two aspects of the meanings of their names which did not reflect on their lives.

Politics is a power structured grid through which an individual or a group of individuals controls the activities of the others. Sequel to that, the moment the ritualistic naming speech act is enacted, the naming rite of passage is consummated. Subsequently, the family of the namee and the larger society begin to exert control over the namee using the name. The namee in turn reciprocates, reacts or responds to the constraints imposed on him. Through the reciprocation, reaction or response, he conversely impacts on the family and larger society. Subsequently, each name not only harbours parts of the family historical experiences but also personifies the namee. In an organized polity, it will almost be an absolute impossibility to carry out instructions which are not particularized. Name is sociopolitical, because it is through the naming and the subsequent actualization of its metaphorical implicative complex, albeit ambiguously and by further addition of valence to the name through actions and inactions that the namees operate within the socioculture. An Ebedei-Umueziogoli person who wants to operate effectively within the community must have a name that is agreeable to the people. It is through the ritualistic naming that the individual is initiated into the large society as a subject, who occupies a responsible position within the society as seen clearly in namees 2, Joseph CHUKWUKA 4,



Enuagwune OLISANYENUM and 5, Ossaiuku OKUYA. A name that is not properly articulated, if given to a child could eventually leave a psychological vacuum in the life of such individual as noticed in namee 6, Oliseh (Robinson).

## 7. Conclusion

Ethnographic knowledge and language interact symbiotically: they feed on each other to dynamically sustain social institutions. The ritualistic naming as an institution is political and deeply rooted in Ebedei-Umueziogoli socioculture and language. Therefore, it would be pretty difficult to understand the meanings of the names without penetrating the society and culture of the people. The names are the products of both the existential and cognitive experiences of the name givers. Such existential cognitive experiences are couched symbolically. Then, they are ritualistically and metaphorically projected upon the namees. The ritualistic naming leaves a permanent identification and control label in and on the namees.

However, the ritualistic traditional naming pattern in Ebedei-Umueziogoli is becoming unpopular due to Christianization and westernization. Nevertheless, because cultural values are die-hard and essentially being transcendental they are constantly reinforced through linguistic structures (Hayden 1988). Therefore, the traditional ritualistic naming is dynamically assimilating into Christian naming pattern. In the Christian naming, the alter represents the *anjezi* and the priest represents the eldest man, who mediates between God (*Oghene*) and the mortals. The *anjezi* and the eldest man (the namer) constitute the most essential elements in the traditional ritualistic naming and the two have been aptly recaptured in the Christian naming. Consequently, the traditional ritualistic naming in Ebedei-Umueziogoli undergoes epistemic remodelling.

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## Appendix

Ebedei-Umueziogoli is one out of the six communities constituting Ebedei, which is located in Ukwuani Local Government Area between longitude 6061 and 6042 East, latitude 6031 and 8025 North of Greenwich meridian. Topographically, Ukwuani wherein Ebedei is situated falls within two belts, Delta Swampy forest, which covers the southern and South Eastern coastal town and the tropical rain forest located in the northern part of the territory (Ossai 2013). It is one of the upland oil producing communities in the Niger Delta Region, South South of Nigeria. Ebedei-Umueziogoli speaks Ukwuani dialect of (Ika)-Ìgbò.