COMMUNICATING *NOMINATIM*:

SOME SOCIAL ASPECTS OF BONO PERSONAL NAMES

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Abstract

This article describes various communication functions performed by Bono (a Ghanaian people) personal names. Indeed, in the non-western context, personal names have been linked to social status, or may have cosmic or religious significance, or may assume gender dimensions. From data obtained from interviews and observations, it establishes a basic two-name Bono personal name format. It outlines the different characteristics, attributes and formats of Bono names classifying them into ascribed or acquired, circumstantial (fixed and substitute) and day-based names. The characterisation includes the capacity of certain classes of names to generate meaning. The article concludes with the observation that the dynamism of the naming system seems to be transforming name formats to a degree that is causing a loss in their communicative attributes. A future in which the communicative capacity of the Bono personal name may not be so evident is, thus, predicted.

Introduction

Personal names may be of little consequence in various contexts.[1] This paper contends that personal names support human interaction as a vehicle for communication. It outlines certain properties of Bono personal names that are intrinsically communicative.[2] Thereupon, it proposes that, contrary to any belief that there is nothing in a name, personal names play a role in social interaction, at the root of which is communication.

A Conceptual Dimension

Beidelman's (1974) findings from his study of the Kaguru of Tanzania indicated that the Bono share aspects of the social significance of personal names with that group. According to Beidelman (1974), among the Kaguru, the name which one uses for a person reflects not only the particular social tie which one wishes to exploit, but also one's degree of familiarity. This has theoretical implications for communication in terms of name use or non-use in a societal context.

Theoretically, communication tends to be explained through many models which posit a basic assumption of "transmission" of messages from sender to receiver. All three of the process models of communication: the Lasswellian (1960) paradigm, the linear flow (Shannon and Weaver 1949) and the triangular flow (Newcomb 1953) models imply intention on the part of the sender. That is,

the sender deliberately plans, initiates and executes a communication act.

However, messages deriving from personal names may not necessarily incorporate the element of intention. Much of the communication attributable to names could be unintentionally stimulated. For example, a National Service person complained recently on television about a hostile public officer. His belief was that the hostility was triggered off when the officer saw his name on a file.[3] Obviously, it was not the intention of the service person to communicate the negative perception of his name to the officer. The negative decoding the officer associated with that name could, thus, not have been the result of any intentional encoding on the victim's part. The name seems to have signalled some kind of aversion which could have derived from the officer's past experiences, perhaps deriving from a certain degree of stereotypical association.

Thus, it would appear reasonable to link communication based on names to signification as do Glastra and Kats (1993). "The name constitutes a privileged part of the social personality the essence of which is to be communicated," asserts Erny (1981: 16). Laing (1985: 41) also observed that names of artistes "play an important but often overlooked part in the process of production of meaning for the audience." Wolffsohn and Brechenmacher (2001: 117) believe: "Whether in affirmation or contradistinction, whether proclaimed openly or done quietly in private, the act of naming a child is an expression of attitude and opinion and thus also a political act." In Peru, lawmakers felt so concerned about the social consequences of names parents choose for their children that they legislated against name types that would expose such children to ridicule.[4]

Models of signification as summarised by Fiske (1990), indeed, emphasise signs and symbols as channels of communication. While signs and symbols may be formulated to convey certain desired denotative meanings, their mere existence may connote meanings independent of the denotation. Just as a name "positively connotes" (Laing 1985: 41), it could negatively connote as well, as evidenced in the case of the officer's aversion for the service person's name cited earlier. In such cases, connotation seems a good guide for explanation. Apparently, the victim's name appeared to have prompted the hostility towards him.

In trying to explain the communicative aspects and implications of Bono personal names, then, this paper examines the question more from the perspective of signification. Actually, Darden (1983), for example, believes personal names present an opportunity to determine meaning. Brewer (1981) also contended that Bimanese names can be used in managing social relations – at the core of the interaction would be communication. Hence, what Bono personal names stand for, their characteristics and influence are examined here in terms of their symbolism.

Perhaps for the reason of commonness, personal names are discussed more in the general social context than in the specifics of communication. Often, such works are in the form of compilations

and they include those by Ezeanya (1967), Francis *et al.* (1976) and Cottle (1983). Others, including Coker (1964), Chuks-Orji (1972) and Oduyoye (1972), do more than list names. Coker (1964), for example, examined the cosmic significance of some Nigerian and Ghanaian names and also explored their grammatical implications. Chuks-Orji (1972) analysed the origin, meaning and pronunciation of various African names.

Yet another group of researchers focuses attention on the social consequences of defined name systems. Harari and McDavid (1973), Garwood (1976) and Demetrulias (1991) all found aspects of personal names that impinged upon teacher expectations or school achievement in multicultural settings.

However, much of the information here is based on works with broader holistic analyses of the African experience. Included in these are sections of Nketia's (1969) examination of the role of names in Akan funeral dirges, Erny's (1981) essay on traditional education, and Mazrui's (1986) historical analysis of Africa. Other sources include the overview of indigenous African communication by Doob (1961) as well as the discussions of the Akan calendrical system by Danquah (1928) and Adjaye (1987).

This paper is the result of some seventeen years of literature search and interviews on the naming systems of the Bono people of Ghana. Secondary literature, as described above constitutes a fair proportion of the discussion. However, the various works cited are usually sources for comparison for the purposes of support and authentication of responses from interviews with chiefs and elders from the Berekum Traditional Area of Ghana. Information also came from both participant and non-participant observations, as well as informal conversations. The researcher, as an indigene of the area, also draws on his own experiential knowledge about the subject.

Nature of Bono Names

Bono personal names and the naming system at large are prototypically Akan. They assume the characteristics of the wider Akan system and its principles. These include:

- name classification;
- two-name format made up of *din pa* or *agyadin* and *akradin*;
- *din pa or agyadin* that have no specific meanings;
- gender determined or differentiated names;
- multiple naming system;
- dynamic naming system.

Bono personal names may be classified into (a) ascribed and given, (b) fixed circumstantial and flexible circumstantial, (c) gender differentiated and gender neutral, (d) substantive and substitute,

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and finally (e) day-related and non-day-related names.

Two-Name Ascribed/Given Format[5]

Bono personal names conform to Warren's (1986) classification of the Asante/Akan name into a two-part format composed of an ascribed *akradin* and an acquired *agyadin*. Danquah (1928: 241) uses the terms "natal" for *akradin* and "patronymic" for *agyadin*. *Akradin*, literally soul name, is derived from the week-day on which one is born. *Agyadin*, or *din pa* (Nketia 1969: 30) is characterised by Warren (1986) as the "proper name."[6] This particular name is chosen by the father of the child. This is reflected in Brempong's (1999: 15-16) use of "named after" in contrast to the Biblical term "begat."

TABLE 1: BONO AND OTHER VERSIONS OF WEEK-DAY NAMES

DAY		NAMES					
ENGLISH	BONO	BONO		MFANTSE*		EWE (Abutia)	
		MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
Monday	Dwooda	Kwadwo	Adwoa	Kojo	Adjoa	Kwadzo	Adzoa
Tuesday	Benada	Kwabena	Abena	Ebow	Araba	Kwamla	Abra
Wednesday	Wukuoda	Kwaku	Akua	Kweku	Ekua	Kwaku	Akua
Thursday	Yawooda	Yaw	Yaa	Kow	Aba	Yao	Yawa
Friday	Fieda	Kofi	Afia	Kofi	Efua	Kofi	Afua
Saturday	Memeneda	Kwaam	Ama	Kwamena	Ama	Kwami	Ama
Sunday	Kwasieda	Kwasi	Kosua	Kwesi	Esi	Kwasi	Akosua

*Mankessim Fantes are said to have migrated to the coast from Bonoland.

The communication significance of the two-part name is that, in true Akan sense, any personal name with more than two elements needs further examination to establish the bearer's Akanness, even though two-part names exist in other cultures.[7]

Since *akradin* and to a large extent *agyadin* are gender indicative, the mere mention of an individual's first or proper name immediately depicts the sex of that person. Proper names of women usually have a man's name as the root plus a suffix of *a, aa* or *wa*.[8]

Also known as *Koa* names (Ahinful 1997), *akradin* are thought to have originated from the Akan belief that week-days are ruled by certain deities whose names are ascribed to people born on

the days they ruled over. Danquah (1928: 241) refers to the deities as "genius or guardian spirit." A deity's name would be given to a person because that individual was considered as its *akoa* (slave) brought into the world to serve that particular deity. *Akoa* (female *afena*) was originally *kwa* and that is why all the week-day names have the prefix *Kwa* (Table I). The *Yaw* of Thursday was truncated over time from its original *Kwayaw*. In the case of *afena* (female slave), the *Kwa* prefix is substituted with an *A* prefix.[9] Among the Ga Ajorkor Okine We or lineage, Dakubu (1981: 85) observed that "male day names seem to be used more frequently than the female ones." No such gender-based differentiation in the frequency of day-name use was, however, observed among the Bono.

As shown in Table 1, one can also always tell the day of the week on which someone was born because each day of the week is assigned a gender-differentiated name (one for males and one for females). Kwasi, a first name or *akradin*, thus denotes a Sunday-born male child. Kosua ("Akosua" in Asante Twi), on the other hand, is a Sunday-born female child.[10]

By themselves, Bono *din pa* often do not convey specific meanings. Perhaps the original meanings were so unclear, or mutated, or not sustained by the dynamism of naming to the extent that they have been lost over time. The lack of meaning for the Bono *din pa* is, however, unlike Ibo, Ewe and Yoruba names, which have been found to possess meanings by Doob (1961), Egblewogbe (1985) and Akinnaso (1980) respectively. Both the Bono *akradin* and *agyadin* carry what Nketia (1969) terms by-names or appellations. Almost all Bono *agyadin* have these and they have literal meanings. For example, the name Ansu has the by-name *Diaboo*. The name *Kyeremeh* has two, *Ampaabene* or *Duodu*. Chiefs often adopt image-enhancing titular names that may originate from *nsabrane* (appellations deriving from war exploits). Danquah (1928) noted that the "guardian spirit," the source of the *agyadin*, has a suffix-title. That for *Kwame* is *Atoapem*. According to Danquah (1928: 241), *akradin* also have *mmrane* (ordinary appellations). For example, *Kwame* (Saturday male-born) has the appellation *Kyeretwie* (one who catches leopards).

A Multiple Naming System

The impression given so far is that the Bono have a simple naming system. However, such an assumption would not accurately represent the Bono name structure; because, whereas a first name, which is virtually ascribed, may possess one simple format, *din pa* are of different types.[11] *Din pa* may be given, acquired or even bestowed from among several alternatives.

Substantive and Substitute Names

There is always only one *agyadin* or *din pa* which is assigned at official *abadinto* (naming) ceremonies. At an *abadinto* ceremony, the child's humanness and individual identity is confirmed

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with the symbolism of a name. The *agyadin* is, however, also an *adaka din* which literally translates into "name in a box." The box could be a trunk or a coffin. The implications of the "boxed name" arise from the fact that the *agyadin* may be hidden and never openly used throughout a bearer's lifetime. It may only be retrieved for composing a funeral dirge or for praise singing. For this reason, while all *agyadin* are *din pa*, not all *din pa* are *agyadin*. A *living* Bono may acquire an additional *din pa* that substitutes for the *agyadin* for everyday use. This enables the two-name criterion to be satisfied at all times. Substitutes are developed through various means. However, many substitute *din pa* names may be described as circumstantial, because they derive from various circumstances.

TABLE 2: BONO INDIGENOUS CALENDAR*— SOURCE OF MONTH-DAY NAMES

1 Wunadwo	12 Fofie	23 Munubena	34 Kwamene
2 Nkyibena	13 Wunamene	24 Fowukuo	35 Munukusie
3 Kurudapaakuo	14 Nkyikusie	25 Wunayawo	36 Fodwo
4 Kwayawo	15 Kurudwo	26 Nkyifie	37 Wunabena
5 Munufie	16 Kwabena	27 Kurumene	38 Nkyiwukuo
6 Fomene	17 Munuwukuo	28 Kwakusie	39 Kuruyawo
7 Wunakusie	18 Fayawo	29 Munudwo	40 Kwafie
8 Nkyidwo	19 Wunafie	30 Fobena	41 Munumene
9 Kurubena	20 Nkyimene	31 Wunawukuo	42 Fokusie
10 Kwawukuo	21 Kurukusie	32 Nkyiyawo	
11 Munuyawo	22 Kwadwo	33 Kurufie	

*Supplied in an interview with Nana Agyenim Akuamoa Boateng, Omanhene of Berekum Traditional Area (1958-1967) and first President of the Brong-Ahafo Regional House of Chiefs in May, 1987. Individual days on the calendar are determined from six prefixes: *Munu, Fo, Wuna, Nkyi, Kuru,* and *Kwa* in that order.[12] According to Nana Akuamoa Boateng, the main difference between the Bono and Asante calendars is that the Bono *Fokusie* is Asante *Akwasidae*.[13]

First, a substitute for an *agyadin* may be an ascribed month-day name. Month-day names originate from the indigenous Akan calendar (Table II). Each day has a name. A particular month-day appears once in a forty to forty two-day Akan month cycle. Among the Berekum Bono for example, one special day, *Kwafie* (the most sacred day) appears only once a month. One may use the month-day of birth as a *din pa* although the sacredness of *Kwafie* and its communal ownership precludes its adoption as such.

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Nkyibena and *Fofie* are among the most popular month-day names. Both are *da bone* (literally bad days or sacred days). *Nkyibena* is actually the great oath of the Berekum state. A person born on one of these sacred days may be called simply *Dabone* rather than a name with the *Nkyi* or *Fo* prefix. In effect, there are two types of day-names in the Akan naming system: week-day name which is always an *akradin* or first name and the month-day name which is always a *din pa*.

Birth order names, also described as "seniority names" by Dakubu (198: 83), and by which a child is assigned a name on the basis of the sequence of children born to a specific mother constitute another form of substitute *din pa*.[14] Whereas numbers are assigned irrespective of the sex of the child by the Bono birth-order naming principle, Egblewogbe (1985: 12) contends that among the Ewe, "male children born immediately after females do not as a rule take sequential names from them." Also of the substitute name type is the differentiation between same-sex offspring with a common *akradin*. Two Kwasis (both Sunday-born) of the same mother become *Kwasi Panyin* (earlier-born) and *Kwasi Kuma* (later-born).[15]

Perhaps the most natural substitute naming is not unlike the western suffix "Junior." The Bono/Akan equivalent of "Junior," as used in the western naming system is *Kra* or soul (feminine *Kraa*). For it to be assigned, the individual ought to have been born on the parent's *kra da* (soul day) or week-day of birth. Thus, *Kwame Kyeremeh*'s son born on Saturday the father's soul day, assumes both the *akradin* and *agyadin* of the father. The child's *akradin* is naturally Kwame but he also gets assigned the father's *agyadin*, *Kyeremeh*. Using the substitute name principle, *Kra* is used in place of the father's *agyadin*. The child's common or regularly used or everyday name is then *Kwame Kra*.

Dynamic Naming System

The Akan naming system is dynamic with an ever-changing format which has altered over time. The possibility of meanings of Bono *din pa* having been lost through time was stated earlier. Originally, the naming procedure was simple: a father would select an *agyadin* for his child. Principles guiding the selection included the birth order by which a first child was given his paternal grandfather's name.[16] The second child was given the paternal grandmother's name, the third went by the maternal grandfather's name, and so on. Today, many offspring adopt their father's personal names, as opposed to the *agyadin* which was selected by the father but hardly ever the father's own name.

A by-name, a nickname or an appellation may also transform into a "legitimate" (acceptable to user, family and community) *din pa* name. Substitute *agyadin* or *din pa* may further be acquired on the basis of extraordinary birth circumstances including unusual place of birth and weather or other

conditions prevailing at birth.[17] Such "circumstantial" names differ from day-names which are determined *a priori.*

With Christianity, Islam and particularly schooling came Semitic Biblical and Koranic names (Mazrui 1986) which were assigned through a different naming system.[18] Both Christians and Muslims practised conditional baptism which required converts to assume Semitic names. Furthermore, in the case of Christians, teachers and priests assigned fathers' names to schoolchildren arbitrarily. This meant the father, whose responsibility it was to choose a name for his child would one day realise the child has a name other than the one he the father assigned. A kind of dualism of naming and names thus developed in which a child would possess school or modern name(s) and home or indigenous name(s).[19] Then as fathers became converts and decided to choose "Christian" names for their children, Biblical or Semitic names became anglicised names.

Nothing is more symptomatic of the dynamism of the Bono naming system than compound and hyphenated names. At the stage where indigenous names were replaced arbitrarily with Semitic or Euro-Hebraic names, indigenous *akradin* (first names) and in many cases *agyadin* or father-given *din pa* could not be used. Mazrui (1986: 253), for instance, observed that:

> Western Christianity has transferred to Africa its own concept of 'Christian names' with a pool of names to choose from. Western secular culture has contributed the concept of 'surname' – but has allowed Africans to create their own pools of possible surnames. Thus many Africans have a Semitic or European first name and an African surname.

In post-independence "measures to establish parity of status between indigenous and Euro-Hebraic names" (Mazrui 1986: 253), *agyadin* were retrieved.[20] For those who had replaced their own with fathers' proper names, the retrieved *agyadin* were coupled with retained father's names to form hyphenated names. Those who later were able to use their own *agyadin* as last names fashioned out hyphenated names which took the form of a combination of an *agyadin* with its *nsabrane* or appellation.

As another indicator of the dynamism of name formation, Nketia (1969) noted that in the days of domestic slavery, a slave would at times be incorporated into a lineage by abandoning his/her original name and assuming a substitute name compatible with the new *abusua* (lineage) that was adopting him/her.[21] The un-Akan practice whereby female forms of names are "masculinized" through the process of wives adopting husbands' names and daughters adopting fathers' names has led to the introduction of name formats such as Yaa Yeboah instead of Yaa Yeboaa.

Communicative Attributes

Naming dynamism notwithstanding, a Bono personal name can have certain communicative

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attributes. To the extent that a Bono father has selected a specific name for his child, there is an implicit assumption of some degree of intention on his part to communicate a message or messages that might be embedded in that name. A child thus becomes a medium through whom a father sends a message in the form of a name into which meaning is formulated for the consumption of others who interact with the child.[22] This, indeed, is indicative of the signification function of Bono personal names.

An obvious implication of personal names for communication is the notion of identification. A name proclaims the identity of a person. Personal names are inseparable from the issue of identity in human affairs. Through identity, personal names also become enmeshed in matters such as ideology, ethnicity, religion, sexual differences and social mythology (Mazrui 1986: 253). Notable Bono *agyadin* such as Kyeremeh and Ansu tell one the ethnic and cultural background of the bearer. A colleague from Wenchi insists anyone called Abrefa must necessarily come from Bono Wenchi. As Mazrui (1986: 253) would put it, all three names reflect "the collective uniqueness" of the Bono society.

On occasions when a Bono name "rings a bell," it stimulates communication that might lead to recollections of pleasant or unpleasant memories or important events. In such an instance, a personal name plays an important role in recall that may have socio-cultural implications. Stories told in Bono personal names may actually be of historical import. The unisex name *Nkyibena*, for example, is a month-day name. But it is also the "Great Oath" of the State of Berekum.[23]

Bono personal names further serve the purpose of establishing individuality. Thus, even though an *agyadin* would indicate one's Bononess, the concept of "family name," especially patronymically assigned, is unknown. Another indication of individuality as far as the Bono naming system is concerned is that wives do not adopt husbands' names. Bono, like other Akan, can be counted among "most African societies" in which a "wife's adoption of her husband's name upon marriage is an alien custom" (Mazrui 1986: 253).

Even more direct communicative tendencies are discernible from Bono personal names. It was earlier explained that both week-day (*akradin*) and month-day names indicate the day on which an individual was born. All kinds of messages are also implicit in a number of substitute *din pa*. In fact, the essence of the substitute name is its capacity to convey meaning.[24] The *akradin* has a special communicative function as the name a dying person is called by to ascertain death. It links the human in physical state to the spiritual realm – the human having been sent to earth by the deity which rules that day to worship and serve it (that deity).

Thus, *akradin* is the channel through which the temporal is connected to the spiritual. It is believed the individual person communicates to the soul through the week-day name. In incidents

of trauma, the soul is said to desert the body (*kra adwane*). On such occasions, custom demands *kra dware*, a ritual ceremony to wash or bathe (*dware*) the soul (*kra*) or pacify it through some ablution processes. *Kradware* is performed on the specific day a person is born. And its purpose is to purify the soul. The soul needs to be pacified when the individual gets involved in something unpleasant such as an accident or prolonged sickness. Its other purpose is to ensure that the link between the living and the spiritual world is restored.

In cases where an *akradin* is adapted to suit an *agyadin*, such that *Kosua* becomes *Abena* because a *Kosua* is being named after an *Abena Sakyiwaa*, a kind of noise or interference is supposed to develop in an otherwise smooth communication with the spiritual world. The Akan believe this conversion from one *akradin* to another can affect the personality development of the individual concerned because the *koa* deity would be offended with the change of the *akradin*. Consequently, individuals who have to undergo such structural name changes are known to experience some form of emotional disturbance.[25]

Another ritual associated with the week-day name is *Anohyira* (blessing the soul). It is performed to celebrate victory over trying situations. The rituals both symbolise and facilitate communication between the subject and his/her soul (the patron deity) through the week-day name. Soul pacification rituals exemplify indigenous communication in which separating ritual from communication becomes problematic.

The *Akradin* is also used to express affinity or as a persuasive tool. If one wants to persuade Kwasi Ansu-Kyeremeh to do something for him/her, only Kwasi will be used: *Kwasi, wommoa me?* (Kwasi, could you kindly give me a hand?). The use of one's *akradin* denotes informality and indicates a strong bond of relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Indeed, using all the elements in one's name in one call is labelled as *atanfre* (hate call). The object of the call would ask the caller "*Aden nti na wotu me din ase saa?* (Why are you calling my name by the roots?). All the same, while an *akradin* links one to the deity which rules his/her week-day of birth, *agyadin* links the same person to his/her ancestral spirits.

Birth-order names constitute an example of Bono personal names with messages. They tell the order in which one was born on the mother's side. In unusual births such as twins, a distinctive birth order criterion is used. Similarly, in other abnormal situations such as *abawu* (successive deaths of children), children are given names which exposed them to public ridicule, mockery and humiliation. These include *Bonsam* (satan), *Dɔnkɔ* (slave) and *Ampε* (unwelcomed). This is to express parents' disgust with the child's past appearances, and nonchalance at encouraging him/her to stay. The appellation of *Dɔnkɔ* is *Bagyina* (surviving child or the child who stayed). This connotes the message of prior child deaths immediately. A child whose father died before his/her

birth was called *Anto* (late or missed). Again, any mention of *Anto* signifies the orphan status of the bearer of that name.

Other substitute proper names describe the circumstances of birth.[26] These can be grouped into names that are associated with: i) geographical place and ii) unusual weather conditions or iii) object names. Should one be born in a place other than the hometown, that individual could be assigned the name of the town of birth. Occasional names may be weather-related or not. A person born on a windy day was named *Mframa* (wind). A girl born around the day her mother was enstooled Queenmother assumed the name *Afriyie*, meaning a propitious arrival.

Unlike the *agyadin* type of *din pa* which is chosen by a father for his offspring, substitute *din pa* are largely unisex or gender-neutral. They tend to stress circumstances of birth rather than gender. Objects such as rivers (*Tano* after River Tano), trees (*Dua* meaning tree) and stone (*Bo*) may be assumed by people as personal names. In this context, Bono names could differ semantically from Ewe names which according to Egblewogbe (1985:10) "have certain semantic aspects which limit their use to human beings."

While *agyadin* in themselves may not convey any specific messages, their accompanying *mmrane* (appellations) or *ammodini* (by-names) do. Nketia (1969), for example, states that both feature prominently in funeral dirges. A dirge itself is a principal communication medium through which an individual may be praised, commended or extolled. Dirge messages may also "describe in short gnomic form the qualities or expected qualities, accomplishment or status of a holder of the corresponding proper name" (Nketia 1969: 31).

Substitute proper names perform an important communication function. The primary objective for their adoption and use is to shield the *agyadin* from abuse and indignities. *Agyadin* have owners as claimed by Nketia (1969). A father usually will select a name borne by an achiever or someone with some admirable qualities from the child's parents' families or community. The intention and expectation of the father is that the child would grow to inherit these positive characteristics of the original owner of an *agyadin*.[27] The *adaka* or hidden name principle exists mainly to protect the honour, dignity and sterling qualities of the original *agyadin* owner. The protection particularly pre-empts the possibility of calling the original bearer's name in vain. Sometimes, the *agyadin* is called using a titular prefix such as *Nana* (for someone named after a chief or grandparent) *Agya* (for someone named after an elder), *Maame* (mother) or *Papa* (father).

Substitute proper names, by-names and appellations also tell stories. A mere mention of those types of names evokes certain sentiments so that those who hear them, especially for the first time, are likely to react with a why, in search of further clarification of the circumstances of birth.

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Future Trends

Just as meanings for Bono *agyadin* as *din pa* have atrophied and disappeared over a period of time, current name acquisition methods and formats appear to be threatening the communication capacity of personal names. The emergence of compound and hyphenated names is a manifestation of change propelled by the dynamism of the Bono (and larger Akan) naming system.

These days, it is possible to come across a double *agyadin* such as *Osei Bonsu* without *akradin* or any other first name. Other formats include *Kwaku Mensa-Abrampa* which has the suppressed appellation *Abrampa* activated. And many children use their father's name to the extent that what should be *Adwoa Dansoa* is now *Adwoa Danso* ("masculinised" feminine). Teachers continue to assign schoolchildren the names of their guardians who may be uncles or grandfathers. Should the trend continue, the communicating potential of Bono names could, in future, be obstructed by unrecognisable forms and formats.

Summary

Investigation into Bono personal names based on interviews and observations shows a naming system that for many years featured a basic two-name format of an *akradin* and an *agyadin*. The system incorporates a classification element. For example, names may be classified into circumstantial names that are *din pa*, which are fixed and constant, as well as substitute circumstantial names. Either group is formed in such a manner that messages might be built into them. To that effect, Bono names have several communicative implications that may not be likened to other name formats.

Names such as *Dɔnkɔ* and *Bonsam* convey meaning. Bono personal names also aid in the composition of dirges, drum language praises and praise poetry. The names also represent the clan or signify the qualities of the immediate past owner. Furthermore, they are episodic (tell stories of birth circumstances) and symbolic. And they signify individualism. Finally, the use or non-use of Bono personal names indicates the signals a particular name represents. Characteristics of Bono personal names, however, tend largely to conform to what obtains with other Akan personal names.

In addition, the Bono naming system is dynamic. But the dynamism is such that contemporary developments in the system seem to be causing personal names to lose their original meanings. Indeed, the naming system appears to be "... venturing into a nameless void, watching the old system begin to crumble and having nothing to take its place."[28]

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Notes

[1] William Shakespeare downplayed the significance of names in his often-quoted line: "What's in a name?"

[2] The Bono (also written as Brong) are part of the larger socio-linguistic Ghanaian ethnic group known as Akan. Thus, Bono name and naming characteristics as described here are in several ways applicable to other Akan groups including the Adanse, Ahafo, Akuapem, Akyem, Asante, Assin, Fante and Kwawu. The groups share many name characteristics as Boadi (1984) attempts to show.

[3] The individual concerned said on GTV ("2nd Generation," Saturday, August 2, 1997) that an officer threw his forms away when he saw his name.

[4] *JOY FM* news, 2:00 p.m., Wednesday, April 29, 1998. The ink had hardly dried when the President decreed the law's repeal according to *BBC* news report at 3:10 a.m., April 30, 1998.

[5] Mazrui (1986: 253) notes "official forms in many African countries include a column for 'Christian name' and a column for 'surname' – both of which are non-indigenous concepts." The terms "first name" and "surname" are used in this work interchangeably with *akradin* and *agyadin* respectively.

[6] Warren's (1986) term, though, seems more of a translation of an etymology than an authentic Bono term.

[7] Unlike the Indonesian single-name format. A name-conscious reader, T.K. Adaloama ("Are Ghanaians being ruled by foreigners," *The Guide*, Oct. 9, 1997, p.5) worried whether "President Jerry John Rawlings and Vice President Evans John Atta Mills" are Ghanaian by their names.

[8] Kwamena Ahinful (1997: 7) states, though, that *akradin* (week-day names), which he describes as "*Koa* (or *Kwana*) names [and which are] shared by the Akans, Gas and Ewes have their feminine counterparts always consisting of 'a' as prefix, and the same masculine suffixes."

[9] It is interesting how the Western nursery rhyme "Monday's child is fair of face ...." associates certain human qualities with one's week-day of birth. See *The Book of a Thousand Poems*. London: Evans Brothers, (1959), p.4.

[10] F. Abena Dolphyne (1979: 88-118) identifies various differences between Bono and other Akan "dialects."

[11] Among the Asante and the Fante, an *akradin* may be substituted along with an adopted *agyadin* where the *akradin* of the original owner of the adopted *agyadin* differs from the *akradin* of the beneficiary or inheritor. An Akosua (Sunday *akradin*) became Abena (Tuesday *akradin*), Afrakoma and Kwadwo (Monday *akradin*) became Kofi (Friday *akradin*) Amoakohene. The Nzemas are known to combine one's own *akradin* with that of the father. So that Kofi (Friday-born male) who has father Yaw (Thursday-born male) becomes Kofi-Yaw.

[12] In the words of Odoom (1979: 43) "... by far the most important Muslim cultural influence on the Brong is to be seen in the forty-day calendar of the Akan (*Adaduanan*) according to which a period of 42 days is calculated by running a seven day week against a six day one."

[13] This is supported by Arhin's (1979: 54) interview with Techimanhene Nana Kwakye Ameyaw.

[14] David Stipp ("Birth-order theory shakes the family tree," *Globe and Mail*, Wednesday, August 24, 1994, pp. A1, A5), reports of a "birth-order theory" that states "later-borns are more open-minded than

firstborns".

[15] Names derived from the numerical sequence of offspring from the same mother are from first-born *Baako, Manu, Mensa* (fem. *Mansa), Anane, Num, Nsia, Nsonwa, Nwotwe, Nkroma, Badu, Duku, Adunu* to thirteenth born *Adusa*. Only the third-born is gender differentiated. Warren (1986: 13) also notes that "Traditionally the third, sixth and ninth children are lucky, the fifth unlucky." A first-born may also be called *Piesie* and a last-born *Kaakyire*. When twins set in, the order is modified or rearranged into *Ata* (feminine *Ataa), Tawia, Nyankamago, Tuakosen, Abobikrokrowa* in that order of appearance.

[16] See Brempong's (1999: 15-16) table for confirmation.

[17] As is also the practice among the Ibo (Doob 1961: 191).

[18] According to Brempong (1999) a Techiman Chief (referred to as the "true Bono" by Techimanhene Nana Kwakye Ameyaw in Arhin (1979: 10) was called *Yaw Kramo, Kramo*, a Bono translation of Muslim.

[19] A father refused to call any of his children by their school-assigned names although the mother enthusiastically did, preferring these to the indigenous ones.

[20] In Ghana, the anti-Hebraic name "rebels" included former political leaders President Kwame Nkrumah who changed his name from Francis Kofi Nwiah and Prime Minister Kofi Abrefa Busia who changed his from Joseph Frederick Busia. Ahinful (1997) observes the practice has become a feature of PANAFEST, a festival of reunion of Africans in diaspora and those on the continent celebrated annually in Ghana.

[21] Personal conversation in his office at the International Centre for African Music, University of Ghana, Legon, September 10, 1997.

[22] The importance of understanding names in Akan society in general is underscored by the observation of H.O.A. McWilliam and M.A. Kwamena-Poh (1981: 4) that "included in the curriculum of traditional education was the learning of names and appellations."

[23] A day on which the people of Berekum are said to have suffered a devastating defeat at the hands of the Dormaas.

[24] This is more like Igbo names; see Doob (1961: 191).

[25] The Ahafos, Akan immediate neighbours of the Bono seem to hold a different view. They would rather hide their original *akradin* as a shield to protect themselves from evil. They believe that since it is through the *akradin* that one can reach the spiritual world, every spiritual harm would have to be channelled through it. Consequently, the surest way of protecting one's self against witchcraft and other evil doings is to hide one's original *akradin*.

[26] In a few instances, such as month-day-derived, circumstantial names may assume full *agyadin* or proper name non-replaceable status. However, the majority tend to be substitute names.

[27] A semblance of prophesy (Martin 1988: 134) of one's future.

[28] *Globe and Mail* editorial ("A new way of naming," Monday, September 5, 1994, p. A16) on Canadian names.