

A Study of Honorific and Titular Names Use as Part of Kanuri personal Names

Dr. Isa Mohammed

Department of General Studies Education
School of Education
Federal College of Education (Technical)
P.M.B 1013, Potiskum, Yobe State, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper investigated the wisdom behind the use of honorific and titular/political names by Kanuri people as part of their personal names which is an aspect of Onomastics. The study used qualitative (Ethnographic) method of data collection in conducting this study and descriptive method of analysis was adopted. The names under this category are either honorific or titular/political names that are regarded as names of prestige. The study was able to realize that these types of names are bestowed on individuals as a result of excellent performances that the individuals have achieved in a given profession, occupation, business enterprise, scholarship, education, meaningful contributions to the development of the community and/or the person is a member of the royal family who should be saddled with a political responsibility. The study was able to discover that these kinds of names precede the owner's real names. Therefore, those who are bestowed with these kinds of prestigious names are much more popular and proud with these names than their real names and consequently some children who are named after these prominent personalities are also much more popular with these names than their real names. Both male and female personalities are given these names based on their gender.

Keywords: Personal name, Honorific name, Titular names, Onomastics, Socio-cultural values, Anthroponomy

Introduction

Names are terms used for identifying or securing a particular referent (i.e. a person, place or an object) in a given society. In other words, names are words used as labels to denote persons, places or objects in communities (Bright 2003, Adeniye 2008, Chamo 2012 & 2016). Name of a person, for instance, can be linked to his/her family genealogy, culture, language, occupation, town, position in the society etc. and certainly these can communicate information to others. In that, culturally, names are used to store vital information about a given people and their culture (Brender 1989, Duranti 1997, Abubakar 1999-2001, Gimba 2000, Daudu 2002/2003, Agyekum 2006 and Al-Zumor 2009).

This study adopted descriptive approach within the purview of linguistic anthropology. Linguistic anthropology uses general approach in specific socio-cultural contexts. It deals with how language allows for and creates distinctions between groups, persons and identities (see Duranti 1997: 7). Naming can be considered as a universal cultural practice. In that, every society in this contemporary world gives names as tags to its people, but how the names are given, the practices and rituals involved and the interpretations attached to the names differ from society to society and from one culture to another (Agyekum 2006: 208). This approach is concerned with the study of strong interface that exist between a people's language and their cultural practices. In other words, the approach tries to expound more precisely on how language is used as cultural resources and practices, and also how it is considered as a strong tool/means used for viewing and understanding of a particular society's view and philosophy about this contemporary world (cf. Duranti 2009). Therefore, this approach considers language as a microscopic lens that could be used to view and comprehend the socio-cultural practices of a given society. In support of the above fact, Duranti (1997: 2) views linguistic anthropology as "... the study of language as a cultural resource and speaking as a cultural practice". Foley (1997: 3) offers the following as the role of linguistic anthropology and its function in linguistic studies:

Anthropological linguistics is that sub-field of linguistics which is concerned with the place of language in its wider social and cultural context, its role in forging and sustaining cultural practices and social structures. It views language through the prism of the core anthropological concept, culture, and as such seeks to uncover the meaning behind the use, misuse or non-use of language, its different forms, registers and styles. It is an interpretive discipline peeling away at language to find cultural understandings.

Qualitative (Ethnographic) method of data collection was used in conducting this research. This is because this method of data collection involves four basic procedures: observation, interview, document, and visual materials (cf. Hymes 1974, Creswell 2003 & 2011, Babbie 2004 and Adamu 2006 & 2012). Among these four data generating procedures identified, the first three were used in this study (i.e. observation, interview and document).

This is because the researcher believed that this study is qualitative research and the above three mentioned procedures were used in order to generate more natural data. The procedure employed for the data processing of this study was simple and effective. The researcher, being a native speaker, used his native speaker's intuition to classify the data obtained from the printed materials into various names and derived versions. The data obtained through interview, being tape-recorded (in some cases) were transcribed and the data relevant to the study were then selected for analysis.

The study adopted descriptive method of analysis which is deemed best method for the data (cf. Hymes 1974, Leedy 1993 and Adamu 2012). The data were simply selected and identified as male or female names then discussions and explanations followed.

Use of Honorific and Titular/Political Names as Personal Name

The kernel of this paper was the disinterment of the wisdom behind the use of honorific and titular/political names by Kanuri people as part of their personal names. Hence, honorific and titular/political names as one of the various typologies of Kanuri personal names were considered (otherwise known as anthroponomy). Anthroponomy is a branch of Onomastics that deals with the study of proper names in terms of their socio-cultural interpretations, forms/structures and their typologies in a given community (see Algeo 1992 and Bright 2003).

These are names that are politically bestowed on individuals by the ruling class of a particular community to honor a person as a member of the ruling class who has a special function to perform. Sometimes a member of a community based on his/her good antecedent is given a special name for his/her outstanding performance/accomplishment in contributing to the development and progress of his/her community (cf. Koopman 2002, Daba 2000/2003, Agyekum 2006 and Mohammed 2020). These excellent performances/accomplishments that attract such names to individual members of the society can be an achievement in one's profession, occupation, business enterprise, scholarship and education etc. (Agyekum *ibid*). Therefore, in Kanuri communities, some children who are named after these prominent personalities may only have such names as their names (see Mohammed 2012, 2014, 2020; Mohammed & Sheriff 2015). Some of these names are given below:

Table: Honorific and Titular Names in Kanuri

Honorific and Title Names	Derived Names	Interpretation
Abba	<i>Abba(na/gana)</i>	Prince
Aja	<i>Aja(na/gana)</i>	District Head
Alaji/Alai	<i>Alaji/Alai(na/gana)</i>	A male person who has performed pilgrimage to Mecca.
ZannaArjunoma	<i>Zanna(Arjunoma)</i>	One of the traditional titles given by the Shehu.
Bəlama	<i>Bəlama</i>	Ward Head
Bako	<i>Bako</i>	A male person who has performed pilgrimage to Mecca.
ZannaBayama	<i>Zanna (Bayama)</i>	Traditional title given to chief of investiture/turbaner.
ZannaBoguma	<i>Zanna (Boguma)</i>	One of the traditional titles given by the Shehu.
Bulakarima	<i>Bulakarima</i>	Traditional title given to a learned person.
Camam/Shugaba	<i>Camam/Shugaba</i>	A person heading a corporate, governmental board of directors or any organization: <i>chairman</i> .
Ciroma	<i>Ciroma(na/gana)</i>	One of the traditional titles given by the Shehu.
Yadowoma	<i>(Ya)dowoma(na/gana)</i>	Name given to the elder sister of the Shehu/any traditional ruler.
ZannaDambusuma	<i>Zanna(Dambusuma)</i>	A title given to the traditional/native doctor.
ZannaDapcarima	<i>Zanna (Dapcarima)</i>	Traditional title given to one of the commanders under the Shehu.
ZannaDujima	<i>Zanna (Dujima)</i>	Traditional title given to the chief wife of the Shehu.
Fər	<i>Baa/YaFər</i>	A name given to someone who rears host.
Fuwu	<i>(Baa)Fuwu(gana)</i>	Traditional title given to head of profession (e.g. head of barbers).
Fuwura	<i>(Baa)Fuwura</i>	Student/pupil (especially of the Holy Qur'an recitation/studies).
Gaddama	<i>Zanna (Gaddama)</i>	Traditional title given to one of the commanders of the Shēhu.

Galadima	<i>Galadima</i>	Traditional title given to the commander to the western frontier of Borno.
Galtima	<i>(Baa)Galtima</i>	Traditional title given to the commander to the southern frontier of Borno.
Gonyi	<i>(Baa)Gonyi</i>	Title given to a learned/expert person in the Qur'an recitation/studies.
Grema	<i>(Baa)Grema</i>	Traditional title given to second in command in a group/profession.
Gujibawu	<i>Gujibawu</i>	Traditional title given to the chief adviser of the Shehu.
Gəmsə	<i>(Ya)Gəmsə</i>	Name given to the senior wife of the shehu.
Gwamna	<i>(Baa)Gwamna</i>	Governor
Hajja/Ājja	<i>Hajja/Ajja(na/gana)/Ājja-Ājjà</i>	A female person who has performed pilgrimage to Mecca.
Helma	<i>(Baa) Helma (gana)</i>	A title given to head of laborers as the headman/foreman.
Kaiyama	<i>Kaiyama (Kaigama)</i>	Traditional title of the commander-in-chief of the Shehu's forces.
Kambar	<i>(Baa)Kambar</i>	A traditional title denoting leadership.
Kachalla/Kazalla	<i>(Baa)Kachalla/Kazalla(na/gana)</i>	Traditional title given to leader of a group (e.g. leader of shehu's slaves).
ZannaKazalma	<i>Zanna (Kazalma)</i>	One of the traditional titles given by the Shehu.
Kingi	<i>(Ya)Kingi</i>	Name given to the daughter of a prince/princess (granddaughter of an eminent ruler in Borno).
Komishna	<i>Komishna</i>	An official in charge of a government department "commissioner".
Laali	<i>Laali(ana/gana)</i>	Islamic judge (i.e. Alkali).
Ladan	<i>(Baa)Ladan</i>	A name given to <i>mu'azzin</i> : one who calls for the five Muslim daily prayers.
Lawan/Laan	<i>Lawan/Laan(ana/gana)</i>	Village head.
Liman	<i>(Baa)Liman</i>	Islamic leader in prayers.
Mala	<i>(Baa)Mala(na/gana)</i>	Traditional title denoting leadership among the Shehu's slaves.
Maiduwu	<i>(Baa)Maiduwu</i>	Name given to the son of a prince/princess (grandson of Mái).
Makinta/Mayinta	<i>(Baa)Makinta/Mayinta(na/gana)</i>	Traditional title given to ward head.
Maləm	<i>Maləm(ana/gana)</i>	Name given to an Islamic teacher/scholar.
Maina	<i>Maina/Maiana(gana)</i>	Prince.
Másu	<i>Zanna (Masu)</i>	Title given to the holder of royal stick use by the Shehu.
Maira	<i>(Ya)Maira/Mairana(gana)</i>	Princess
Matawalli	<i>Matawalli</i>	Traditional title given to distinguished personality by the Shehu.
Moworam	<i>(Ya)Moworam</i>	Name given to the eldest sister of the Shehu/any traditional ruler.
ZannaMəlima	<i>Zanna(Məlima)</i>	Traditional title given to the one saddle with the responsibility of taking care of Shehu's horse stable.
Minister	<i>(Baa)Minista</i>	Chief executive of a ministry.
Sayinna	<i>(Baa)Sayinna</i>	Islamic teacher/scholar.
Shettima	<i>(Baa)Shettima</i>	Traditional title given to head of a professional group.
Sheu (Shehu)	<i>(Baa)Sheu</i>	Traditional title of the highest ruler of Borno.
ZannaSunoma	<i>Zanna(Sunoma)/(BaaSuno)</i>	Traditional title given to the in charge of the Shehu's shoes.
Talwa	<i>(Baa)Talwa</i>	Traditional title given to one of the commanders under the Shehu.

Wakkil	<i>(Baa)Wakkil(ana/gana)</i>	Name given to an assistant/representative of any traditional leader.
Waziri	<i>(Baa)Waziri(ana/gana)</i>	Name given to the chief administrative officer/assistant of the shehu.
Yerima	<i>(Baa)Yerima(ana/gana)</i>	Traditional title holder in the shehu's court.
Zaiwata	<i>(Baa)Zaiwata</i>	Traditional title holder in the shehu's court.
Zanna	<i>(Baa)ZannaYawudima</i>	Traditional title given to distinguished personality by the Shehu.
Zarma	<i>(Baa)Zarma</i>	Traditional title given to some personalities by the Shehu.

Most of the names under this category are derived from nouns and are single term names apart from the names *Bəlakarima* which has three distinct linguistic elements put together as *Bəla* (town) + *kárí* (mender/improver) + *ma*, *Bəlamà* which has *Bəla* (town) + the suffix *-ma* (with low tone) suffixed to each of them and *Fərra* which has *Fə* (*host*) + *a* (with high tone). The suffixes *-mà* and *-á* here both denote ownership (see Bulakarima 2000, Bulakarima & Shettima 2011 and Bulakarima & Shettima 2012). When the names are used to refer to a namesake, then kinship terms (such as *Báa* and *Yâ*) and the morpheme *nà/ganá* are optionally attached to them to indicate respect (which means *nadawu/bərzəm*) to the real bearers of the names as can be seen in the above table. When a name is attached to the term *nà/ganá* then, structurally it becomes compound name. For the purpose of illustration, *Báa* means father, *Yâ* means mother and *nà/ganá* means little/small (indicates diminutive sense). The name *Ájjà-Ájjà* is structurally reduplicated name. In that, the base of the name is repeated and the repetition of the base/root in this context installs that the name has diminutive sense in it (cf. Bauer 1983 & 2003, Katamba 1993, Matthews 1993, Abubakar 1999-2001, Girei 2003 and Yakasai 2014). Those names that have *Zanna* attached to them, their namesakes can have the *Zanna* as the short form of their names as in the table above. Therefore, it is common to most of the namesakes to bear only *Zanna* as their names.

Furthermore, it has been realized that culturally, these types of names precede the bearer's real name i.e. the name comes before the referent's official names. Those who are honored with these reputable names are much more popular and proud with these names than their real names. In that, these names serve as index to their status as these names attract great respect (*bərzəm*) to them in the society among their people. Consequently, some children who are named after these prominent personalities are culturally much more popular with these honorific names than their real names in order for them to enjoy the reputation accorded to the original owners of the names. By and large, both male and female personalities are accorded these types of names based on their gender as indicated in the above table. Personal names under this category are derived from common nouns as the data show from the above analysis.

Conclusion

The paper exhumed the wisdom behind the use of honorific and titular/political names by Kanuri people as part of their personal names. The names under this category are either honorific or titular/political names that are regarded as names of prestige. The study was able to realize that these types of names are bestowed on individuals as a result of excellent performances/accomplishments that the individuals have achieved in a given profession, occupation, business enterprise, scholarship, education etc. and also as a member of the royal family who should have a special duty rest on his/her shoulder to execute. The study was able to discover that these kinds of names precede the owner's real names i.e. the name comes before one's real names. Those who are bestowed with these kinds of prestigious names are much more popular and proud with these names than their real names. This is because these names serve as index to the status of the bearers in the society among their people. By and large, some children who are named after these prominent personalities are also said to be much more popular with these names than their real names in order for them to benefit from the reputation enjoyed by their namesakes. Both male and female personalities are given these names based on their gender.

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