AN AFRICAN RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE ON NAMES AND IDENTITY

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Abstract

African names are not philosophical rhetoric, but they are believed to convey deep intrinsic significance for the bearer and the community as a whole. It is argued that African names evaluate nature, essence as well as provide a string of relationship between the living and the dead. This paper argued that though African names function thus much, the various incursions into Africa have continued to vitrify their context, nature and continuum. Through the gristmill of religious interpretive framework, it is argued that if this trend remains unabated, African names as part of African religious cultural value or heritage would in no distant time ebb into oblivion.
KEYWORDS: Names, African, culture, community, colonialism, Christianity

Introduction

Almost everyone who writes on African concept of names generalizes, undermining the increasing heterogeneous and pluralistic nature of African society. Traditional African communities may have shared similar traits; it is also true that there are parallel intricate values. The cultural complexities in Africa are further ossified by the widespread establishment of missionary religions—Christianity and Islam—which have added their own cultural peculiarities to indigenous cultures, particularly names that many Africans have to bear. The influences of colonialism on African cultural values have been well documented (IGBOIN 2011). The adverse effects of these incursions on African culture such as religion, language, values, and African names in this context are very well articulated by Thabo Mbeki, when he challenged African leaders to critically reflect on the legacies of colonialism whose emblems have continued to

> …evoke our distant past, our living present and our future as it unfolds before us…. We have chosen an ancient language of our people. This language is now extinct as no one lives who speaks it as his or her mother-tongue. This emphasises the tragedy of the millions of human beings who, through ages, have perished and even ceased to exist as peoples, because of people's inhumanity to others. (MORAN 2009, 10)

The obvious reality that this work provokes further is that just as many African languages are going extinct, so also are their names and identity. In this paper, we espouse how Christianity and colonialism have vitrified autochthonous African belief and values of names; we also argue for restraint from uncritical adoption of foreign names.

African Concept of Names

Anthony Echekwube (2005, 279) instantiates the import of African names when he avers that names are not just signs but also symbols that evaluate "nature, essence, characteristics, functions, and orientation of an object, person, or place relative to what role it plays in the sight and understandings of the one who gives the name." In other words, names encapsulate the totality of humanity and nature on the one hand, and on other, they depict intimate relationship between the named and the namer. Anthony Ekwunife does not agree less when he argues that for the African, there are pungent philosophical accounts to sustain the position that African names are both intrinsically and extrinsically meaningful. He further distils the point that some of the names which Africans bear need deliberate conscious efforts to decode. Otherwise, for the ordinary person, African names may just be labels, meaningless and dispensable (EGBUNU 2013, 1).

John Mbiti (1969, 119), one of the most influential authorities in naming in Africa, argues that almost all African names are meaningful. The meanings of names are tied largely, in many occasions, to the circumstances of birth of the child; and to a large extent, these names influence the personality and character of the bearer, thus his/her identity. Names, he adds, are constant reminder of the composite conception of the African community because, some names borne, realistically recall the belief in reincarnation. Thus, Mbiti introduces strong metaphysical ontology to African naming code. Hence, "the name is the person, and many names are often descriptive of the individual, particularly names acquired as the person grows." Mbiti (1969, 119) further posits that there are no 'family names' in traditional Africa, except in a few instances. The reason for this is that individuals bear their own names. According to him, "there are no single family names shared by everybody in a given family." Ayandele ((1969, 259) has argued that the Yoruba do not have family names because of the sacred nature of one's father's name such that "no younger members dare mention it even after a father's death." The adoption of surnames in Africa by the will of colonialists is believed to have destroyed the reverence and respect accorded them. In Nigeria, the British introduced it. It was compatible with the British law of property and inheritance just as it suited the individualism introduced by colonialism and foreign religions into African communal setting (1966, 259).

Laurenti Magesa opines that personal identity is a function of complex realities, which in turn defines the person. That is why Africans do not "conceive

of personal identity apart from life in its totality; that is, where they come from, what they do, whom they associate with their relations, their gods, etc" (1997, 82). Even though these define humanity, self understanding is incomplete unless the 'drama of life' takes place within the natural world, in the life of nature and culture. As H. Sindima puts it, "as nature opens itself to people, it presents possibilities for discovering how inseparably bonded people are to each other and to all of creation" (1990, 144-145).   This bond initiates an incarnation or actualization of the named in the reflex of his/her ancestor; this brings to the fore an expected moral quality or values, power or event of the latter. It is in this sense that it can be said that "to confer a name is therefore to confer personality, status, destiny, or express a wish or circumstances in which the bearer of the name was born" (NYAMITI 1988, 42).

Apart from that, names preserve memories of historical events just as they represent current family or personal reality, or replay the circumstances of birth. However, the ethical demand of historical names, especially the negative ones is to help the individual and community to prevent a reoccurrence of the grubby circumstances that had been experienced. The ethical challenge therefore is to place on the family and community template "the responsibility to create a new social, political or economic order in which everyone can enjoy a full life" (MAGESA 1997, 89). For the positive names, the logic is the same because they are clear expressions of desires or moral qualities, and media for "preserving the vital force of the clan" (MAGESA 1997, 89). This is partly why names may not be held in derision because they are intrinsically valuable and tied to the bearers, thereby deserving respect. Maquet submits that:

> An individual is defined by his name; he is his name. This is an inside name which is never lost, and this distinguished from the second name given on the occasion of an increase in strength…. The inside name is the indicator of a person's individuality within his lineage. For no man is isolated: he 'constitutes a link in the chain of vital forces, a living link, both active and passive fastened by the top to the link of his ascending line, and supporting at the bottom the line of his descent.' (1972, 106)

Benezet Bujo (1997: 27) argues from anthropocentric dimension of African names. According to him, the strengthening and growth of life in individual and community is the core responsibility of every member of the African "ethical community" in its composite nature. The African community has a dialectical relationship, each playing its roles in accordance with the rules with the hindsight to generate rather than diminish life. With this co-responsibility of all, names function in cohering the dialectics (1997, 27).

Bujo (1990, 95-102), Kwame Gyekye (1996, 25) and Ferdinand Ezekwonna (2005) among others first and foremost debunk, and rightly so, the position of some of the first generation of African religious studies scholars and thinkers that held the view that African individuality is wholly subsumed under or lost in community. Contrary to that, within the community thesis, the individuals do not lose their identity; rather it is the collective identities of the individuals that generate life for the community identity even though the latter apparently works towards the fulfillment or satisfaction of the former. Ezekwonna illustratively uses the case of the Igbo in Nigeria to drive home the argument when he avers that though every individual belongs to the community, the community emplaces the individuals in such a way that they do not forfeit their essence, talents and skills (2005, 34). Bujo expatiates:

> Usually, it is not the father's name that is just passed on to the child; every child gets his or her own name according to the circumstance of birth. Therefore the name is never without individual meaning, but expressed something of the person's being. It characterizes the personal ontological reality. (1997, 28)

It is also in this sense that the community demands morality from the individual as free moral agents, thus becoming responsible for their actions. The community and the individual, by this relationship, are not opposed to each other in the generation and fulfillment of life. It is within this ambit that both individual and community names reflect the kind of values that identify them in the midst of others.

In the context of the rights of the individual in African tradition, Bujo admits that there are no family names in the Western sense, which are transmitted from father to son. Rather the child bears his/her names, which confers on him/her "a historical being, in its uniqueness" and espouses "the history and prehistory of a family as well as those of the entire lineage…. It contains a whole programme for life, which everybody has to realize individually and not through others" (1997, 147-148). Ezekwonna argues that personal names are a proof of individual identity. Researching among the Igbo, he posits that "a name is the first mark of personal identity in African communities" without which meaning and value are impossible to discern and ascribe (2005, 73). This argument is in tandem with Tempels' study of the Bantu that "the first criterion is the name. The name expressed the individual character of the being. The name is not a simple external courtesy; it is the very reality of the individual." It is the name that maintains individual presence in the community (1959, 73-74). Edwin Smith relates it well when he said that in Africa, "names are not mere labels, but often express qualities for which the owners are conspicuous" (DANQUAH 1968, xi).

In the series of names a person bears, it is believed that the first defines the ontological or intrinsic reality of the bearer. This, more than any other reason, accounts for change of names in Africa. Tempels shares his experience during a baptismal rite to justify this. During the baptism, the parents of the child being baptized were asked the native name of their child, which was Ngoi, to which they responded: "that is he" rather than the Christian name which they merely said was Joseph (1959, 107-108). To compromise the African name seems to mean to lose one's identity or individuality.

But how does a name confer identity and individuality if it reflects the namer's experiences rather than the named? Jacob Ayantayo answers this question partly. Engaging the functional theory of sociological investigation, he argues that "the traditional names are serving some purposes because there is much in a name as far as those who give names are concerned." This ramification is important because the act of name changing has become a global concern. If the namer names the named according to his/her condition, should not the latter have the right to determine his/her identity by changing his/her name in order to fulfill his/her own destiny believed to be attached to the name? On the other hand, when the name works in the positive side, the bearer is not likely to change it. Here lies the dilemma, which Ayantayo tries to survey among the Yoruba. He observes that Yoruba names reveal peculiarity, genealogy and royalty apart from the fact that they are sources of family pride and means of historical preservation of tradition. The abandonment of traditional names is a sign of cultural disintegration, which requires drastic measures for preservation. His worry is not a recent one, but it has become widespread, it is not only in Africa but also in other places, to which we turn (2010, 1-16).

Concept of Names in African Christian Traditions

Many African writers use Christian and Western concept of name interchangeably. In other words, they present Western names as Christian and vice versa. Ezekwonna (2005) and Ayantayo (2010) among others do not distinguish between them. The question is whether there is a difference between them. In the context of our discourse, Christian and Western traditions are different even though the former has been adjudged to have had great influence on the history and culture of the latter. It is in this sense that John Onaiyekan avers that every culture that accepts Christianity must necessarily be converted into it, even the Jewish people and culture, among whom and where Jesus Christ himself came from need be converted to Christianity (2001, 3). Thus, it can be said that Christianity is thoroughly contextualized in the West so much so that its traditions have been greatly influenced by it. Hence, for many Africans, as a consequence of the influences of slave trade, mission and colonialism, Western

names are not distinguished from Christian ones, even though they have radical different motives.

A question is whether the Jewish or Greek names that appear in the Bible are Christian names if the argument of Onaiyekan above holds. We can also ask if those Jewish and Greek names that do not appear in the Bible are not to be considered among Christian names. How therefore do we distinguish between Jewish and Christian names? To the infallibilists, the answer lies in taking the Bible and its contents literally, in such a way that whatever appears therein is what God allows, and must be the standard of theological discourse. For the inculturationists the Bible as a living Word must meet every culture that yearns for it and its demands without compromising its standard. Therefore, names that appear in the Bible and those in other cultures which Christianity has met and that bear the contours of sound biblical theme can be regarded as Christian. In this way, we can differentiate Christian names from Western or African ones.

Efficacy and Change of Names in Africa
The common questions usually asked include, what is in a name, do names influence the bearer's character, and if yes, how? Is it the name that has influence on the bearer or vice versa? These questions are relevant because of the fact that names are believed to be meaningful and powerful. Ayantayo disagrees with the position that names influence the bearer's status in life. According to him, there is no "logical connection between the name a person bears and the fortunes that attend with one's life" (2010, 13-14). This is because, as he puts it, no reasonable parents would give 'evil' names to their children. In spite of that, that a person is named Abiola among the Yoruba, for instance, which means 'born into wealth,' does not follow logically that the child will be wealthy. In fact, there are so many unheard Abiola in Yoruba land. He crystallized this by making reference to late MKO Abiola, one of the wealthiest people in Nigeria and the acclaimed winner of June 12, 1993 Presidential election, who many parents name their children after. The wish of those who name their children after him is that such children would be as wealthy as Abiola was. However, Ayantayo's position raises three points that he has not correlated. One is that parents can name their children in accordance with their present condition, so Abiola in this sense means born into wealth. This does not mean that the parents logically think that the child will be wealthy even though it is their desire. Rather, the birth of the child coincides with a very pleasant moment in the family which bears historical significance. The second is that parents who name their children after a successful person, e.g. Abiola, express their admiration and wish that their child would be as great as the person he/she is named after. Even though it may not be in all cases that the child grows to be like the person he/she is named after, it cannot be ruled out that there are ample exceptions. Third, a person can name his child after a friend as a seal

to their friendship or relationship. So we can tease out those who name their children after Abiola in order to categorize where they belong to in accordance with the three realms above.

Anthony Akinola also anatomizes the name of the Nigerian President, Goodluck Ebele Azikiwe Jonathan. According to him, the rise of Jonathan from obscurity to prominence in Nigerian politics has nothing to do with his name essentially. To think it does is to sentimentalize democracy rather than put into it some rational pill. That he is named after Nnamdi Azikwe, one of the foremost Nigerian nationalists and the first indigenous Governor-General should not be imputed into the equation. According to him, "it will be dishonest not to acknowledge that the strategic importance of the south-south geopolitical zone as the region that accounts for our nation's wealth has rubbed off in the historic achievement of Goodluck Jonathan" (2011, Web. N. P).   He adds:

> Jonathan's first name may be about luck but it is doubtful if there would have been much support for him to "continue" with the mandate originally given to the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua via the zoning arrangements of his party if he had been a Vice President from elsewhere. (AKINOLA 2011, Web. N. P)

While the above thesis bears some truth that there is no logical correlation between Jonathan's name and his political rise, one wonders how he became a Deputy Governor, who by 'providence', (his boss was impeached), became the Governor. Jonathan was said to have been struggling to retain his position in the gubernatorial primaries in his state when he was appointed as Vice Presidential candidate to Umaru Yar'Adua, to the angst of majority of his party and the country. Jonathan did not struggle to become the President when by 'providence' his boss died and he assumed the position of the President. As Akinola himself realizes, "the tsunami effect of Jonathanism had been unstoppable" even by the North that believes that rotational presidency was destroyed by Jonathan's ambition, and the more astute and deft politicians who consider him to be a political neophyte (2011, Web. N. P).

If Akinola believes that luck or name, as he puts it, "defies rational explanation" (2011, Web. N. P) it means that rationality has its limits in explaining itself and other realities. One can be justified to argue that should Jonathan have come from another zone, the permutations of presidential circumstances that brought him political 'luck' would possibly have worked for his favor, in the order of his name, as it is at present. After all, Leonardo Boff (1979: 57)   observes rightly when he said:

> Reason itself, the very foundation of science, is nonrational. While reasons begin with reason, the latter itself has no reason. There is no rational motive that calls for the existence of reason. Reason itself is gratuitous. It exists as a bare fact, grounding rationality on a base which itself is not rational. The nonrational does exist, therefore, and it is seen as a limit by science itself. (1979, 57)

This position received philosophical corroboration from Louis Pojman and David Stewart who argue that no matter the logicality of rationalism in the explication of realities, rationality, by the very essence of things cannot answer all questions. This is because the rationalist cleverly and rationally selects the method that tends to align with his/her objective while excluding other methods as nonrational, if not irrational (POJMAN 2001, 14). For Stewart , those who pursue rational basis for the justification of all human phenomena must come to terms with the reality that human beings function through "a complex unity of reason, emotion, will, appetites, and feelings" (1992, 6). Jacques Derrida in his "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy" reasons more critically about the underlying colonial sting in universal reason discourse. According to him:

> Metaphysics—the white metaphysics which resembles and reflects the culture of the West: the white man takes his own mythology, Indo-European mythology, his own *logos*, that is, the *mythos* of his idiom, for the universal form that he must still wish to call Reason.(MORAN 2009, 19)

Derrida obviously insists that reason is a universal tablet and not domiciled with particular people. Contrary to the claim of the West, their myths are local to them; it is their peculiar mythological way of thought, which ought not to be universalized since every culture has its reason and myths.

It is observed that Africans are increasingly assuming Christian and foreign names. Theophilus Okere observes that missionaries and colonialists regarded every African as fetish, "their languages were hopelessly tone-infested cacophonies, while their names were unpronounceable gibberish for which the names of European canonized saints had to be substantiated" (OLANISEBE 2010, 55).. Ayandele , on the other hand observes that many Africans, even the educated ones like to assume "high-sounding or polysyllabic (foreign or alliterative) names" (1966, 257) possibly as a mark of pride of association with the West.

Reasons for change of name differ from one person to another or even culture and religion. Colonialism has accounted for change of names among various cultures. For instance, even though many Christians claim that there is a

lot of name-changing in the Bible as their reference for their action, it is the case that most of the changes were as a consequence of colonialism. In the Old Testament (OT) only three cases show God's involvement in change of names: Abram, Sarai and Jacob to Abraham, Sarah and Israel respectively. In others, it was an imposition: Joseph was renamed Saphenath-Paneah by Pharaoh (Gen. 41:45) Pharaoh-necoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah King and renamed him Jehoiakim (2Kgs. 23:34). King of Babylon coronated Mattaniah and renamed him Zedekiah (2Kgs. 24:17), the chief eunuch of Babylon also changed the names of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah to Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego respectively (Dan. 1:6-7). These examples authentically demonstrate the fact that "to name a person is to assert one's authority over the person named, and thus explains the change of names imposed by a master" (OLANISEBE 2010, 55). It is through this prism of master-slave dialectic that we can understand the rampant change of names that characterized the colonial and postcolonial periods in Africa.

In Africa, slave trade, mission, colonialism and now globalization seriously affected and still affect the concept of name. The assumption of foreign names by Africans was not only to show admiration for them, it was a form of cultural subjugation. Culture is instantiated here as "the whole complex of distinctive, spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterizes a society or societal groups. It includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs" (cited in FALOLA 2010, 13). Since names and naming are part of culture and heritage, Blyden believed that the imposition and acceptance of foreign names by Africans caused "cultural calamity," which affected adversely African spiritual profundity in the struggle for independence. Those educated Africans who realized the spiritual, cultural and theological implications of imposed or acquired foreign names as "a terrible homicide" began the process of change of names (AYANDELE 1966, 253).

The real awakening of cultural nationalism in the twentieth century was first manifested in change of names from foreign to African autochthonous names. Such figures as "David B. Vincent became Mojola Agbebi; the Rev. J. H. Samuel, Secretary of the Lagos Institute founded in 1901, became Adegboyega Edun…. Joseph Pythagoras Haastrup became Ademuyiwa Haastrup, while George William Johnson… became Oshokale Tejumade Johnson" (AYANDELE 1966, 257-258). Ayandele further points out that these important people relinquished their foreign names because they reminded them of their slavery experiences; such names culturally and spiritually separated them from their African people and cosmology, their root; and were meaningless in "a society that attached a great deal of importance to names" (1966, 258). This intellectual and cultural disobedience was carried further at national level in Zaire under

Mobutu Sese Seko. According to Eugene Hillman, the blunt refusal of colonialists and Christianity to recognize African names and their import would also be met with rebuff such as:

> in Zaire, the initiative came from the government of Mobutu Sese Seko when he decided to abandon his "Christian" names, Joseph Désiré, and retrieve from the dustbin of history his original names. At the same time the Belgian Congo became Zaire. Leopoldville was renamed Kinshasa, and Elizabethville became Lubumbashi. (EZEKWONNA 2005, 77)

According to Ezekwonna , it is not enough to castigate those who renounce Christian and foreign names to assume their traditional ones in which they find meaning, identity and purpose of life. It is strongly believed that it is in these traditional (inner) names that they find their personality or individuality within their community; an umbilical cord that ties them to their ontological root and a compass to philosophic spirit inherent in their culture (1966, 258).

As the realization of ontological reality of names dawned on Africans in the Diaspora, there have been several cultural programs for revival of their African root, one of which is assumption of African names, and other rites embarked upon by them include reversion to African burial rites, spirituality, and worship. According to Lupenga Mphande, this decision was made in order to reaffirm their humanity, identity and genealogy thus continuing the "process of redefining themselves and dismantling the paradigm that kept them mentally chained for centuries" (OLANISEBE 2010, 62).

However, in contemporary African Christian experience, it is no longer the foreign missionaries and colonialists that demonize African names, especially the theophoric ones; it is on the contrary the African Christian bodies, particularly their leaders that have continued to de-Africanize us. Although it might be argued that this could have been a carry over from the missionary-colonial treatment and mentality, or even an extension of neo-colonialism, such reasoning would not be enough for continued mental and cultural slavery. The more popular reason adduced for change of name has to do with divine directive, a situation in which a Christian claims to have received revelation to do so. It is observed that Pentecostal churches are more prone to this claim. While we cannot prove or disprove their claim to divine directive, it is however true that most changes of names in the Bible reflect colonial dialectics rather than divine mandate. Even Jabez that most of them frequently refer to did not change his change but rather prayed that God should change his status in the family and community. Today, such names as Jekayinfa, Babatunde, Esubiyi, Ifafoore etc. have been rechristened to Jakayinoluwa, Olutunde, Jesubiyi, Oluforesayemi respectively (AYANTAYO 2010, 9). The change from Babatunde to Olutunde

has serious theological problems, for instance among the Yoruba. Babatunde means 'father has come back again.' This is an expression of the belief in reincarnation. To say Olutunde, if it implies God has returned, means that the lineal concept of history and eschatology of the West and Christianity must be replaced by the African cyclical eschatology. It also means that God is finite, mortal, mutable and susceptible to human caprices. But more critically, Olutunde would mean that God had died and reincarnated. This is an admission of the finitude and mortality of God, which in actual sense is preposterous to Yoruba metaphysics. Again, even if it is granted that it reflects Christian conception of name and the power believed to exist in name, the same conclusion is inevitable, namely that the Christian God is also mortal and finite, and in addition, he has lost touch with his essence and linearity and assumes the African cyclical eschatological reality.

There are other times that the names changed are not contextualized; they are outrightly changed and bearers assume new names. Such common names Christians now bear include: Precious, Simple, Prosper, Gentle, Covenant, Marvelous, Promise, Treasure, Testimony, Diadem, Joy, Glory, Excellent, Favor, Righteous, Praise, Blessing, Mercy, Perfect, Heaven, Gift, Battleaxe, etc. (OLANISEBE 2010, 64; IGBOIN 2004, 22). Battleaxe, for example, is the shortened form of God's battleaxe. A pastor who named his son Battleaxe was compelled to rename him after three years because of the wild and weird behavior of the boy. It was reported that the boy would hit his classmates with his head and when cautioned, he would proceed to hit the wall. As usual, the pastor claimed that he was divinely directed to rechristen the boy (IGBOIN 2004, 22).

These biblical adjectives, verbs and nouns which have turned names of Christians and non-Christians alike reflect the level of theological understanding of the namers. Although they lay claim to divine inspiration, it is hardly demonstrated that these names carry such import and authority. It is apparent that the namers are carving a class for themselves by their 'Christian' names. It has been observed that some of them change their surnames, the names which link them with the other members of their lineage: "changing surnames is an embarrassment to the parents and a form of spiting them and it is against the biblical injunction that made it mandatory to honour their parents for longevity of life" (OLANISEBE 2010, 64).

Names and Identity
We have tried in the preceding paragraphs to argue that names and identity have correlative appeal. Names have much to do with identity-determination as well as identity-crisis. The sense of identity is crucial to individuals even though some have tried to "downplay the critical importance of identity inheritance and

constructions to the well being of the individual human and the group" (BEWAJI 2008, 267). As Amartya Sen puts it:

> A sense of identity can be a source not merely of pride and joy, but also of strength and confidence. It is not surprising that the idea of identity receives such widespread admiration, from popular advocacy of loving your neighbour to high theories of social capital and communitarian definition. (BEWAJI 2008, 268)

This widespread or global admiration of identity provokes metaphysical, quasi-metaphysical (cultural), religious, epistemological and axiological consciousness, that people can, and do, defend, kill and be killed for, identity. "And yet identity can also kill—and kill with abandon. A strong and exclusive sense of belonging to one group can in many cases carry with it the perception of distance and divergence from other. Within-group solidarity can help feed between-group discord" (BEWAJI 2008, 273).

Name-identity-crises are becoming prevalent in many African families. This involves a situation whereby a member of a family changes his/her surname, while others retain it. This act has generated identity-crises affecting social solidarity and inter-personal relationship. This, in turn, has negative effects on genealogy, history and events depicted by the changed names (AYANTAYO 2010; OLANISEBE 2010 and IGBOIN 2004). The acquired names change the identity of the person and the ontological dependence and relationship of the group. But should identity be confined to cultural provenance in a global setting? Should names still exercise their authority, if any, within a cultural province in light of global forces that are redefining identities? Are their global provisions that are so universal to safeguard the cultural advantages derived from names, and the identity they confer? Whose culture becomes supervinient in a global society in which the question of cultural relativism or cultural difference is hardly sufficiently resolved? What universal religious paradigms should be adjudged best standard in name and identity in the African-global setting? Is colonialism not implied in globalization of names and identities as had been experienced before?

Conclusion

We are confronted with real critical challenges concerning African names. Thus far, true life situation has shown the difficulty those who hold traditional view of African names would have to face should we argue for a complete return to pre-colonial and pre-missionary Africa. The other side of the dilemma is that should we continue with the rate of abandoning African names for Christian and foreign names we are also faced with the danger of culture decline. The only option that appears open is how best to "balance between two intellectual traditions that have long been in conflict and mutually exclusive" (MORAN 2009, 7). Thus, while the creative contextuality has its own very tortuous challenges to African culture,

it is also a fact that cannot be easily or even realistically stopped because of the pervading endorsement of the foreign religions and cultures. Nevertheless, it is instructive that the enlightened Africans should realize that there is the urgent need for a re-think so that they can begin to halt mental slavery that foreign influences have imposed on them.

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