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INDIVIDUAL NAMES WITH TIV PEOPLE FROM NIGERIA AND CAMEROON

Abstract

This article focuses mainly on individual names given at birth and by which people are ordinarily named with Tiv people from Nigeria and Cameroon. Many change factors punctuate their attribution and offer some typological bundles to be put in relation with practices that have been observed on others communities mostly those related to God and death, to fauna. Individual names are a linguistic reality since they express verbal messages whose signs are those of daily language practices. They are also a social reality because they are place of cultural expression in their genesis and their content. They convey relationships network in which individual socially defines himself. The first scientific interest of this work is that, going from the knowledge of the change factors that rule individual names attribution, we come to review classical historiography of African linguistic communities in general and Tiv people in particular.

Keywords: Anthroponyms, variational factors, typological clusters, classical historiography

1. Introduction

The article intends to examine the contexts of denomination practice of individual with Tiv people from Nigeria and Cameroon. The objective is to show primacy and diversity of the factors that establish attribution process of African individual names in general and the ones of Tiv people in particular and to appreciate expression of the bearers' belief. Individual names are a linguistic reality since they are verbal messages whose signs are the ones of daily language practices. They are also a social reality because they are place of cultural expression in their genesis and their content. They convey relationships network in which the individual socially defines himself.

The analysis tools of individual names defined by Lerot (1983), Ntahombaye (1983), Rodegem (1985) and Saulnier (2002) constitute our conceptual anchorage points. The corpus basing the analysis has been constituted throughout the years 2015 and 2016 in different Tiv-speaking localities of Nigeria and Cameroon. It combines in situ observation of this linguistic community, semi -directed and directed enquiries as recommended by Béal (2000, p. 17) and Blanchet (2012, p. 51).As regards the problem summarizing the whole of the reflection, it can be expressed by the following questions: What are the change factors that justify choice of individual names in Tiv community? What relationships those individual names maintain with belief of this community's members? What social functions do they fill? Cannot individual names use as reference for questioning some of established theories, namely the ones related to religious missions in Africa that have been, in part, at the colonization origin?

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2. Tiv Community and Context of Individual Names Attribution

Tiv people are a linguistic community localizable in Nigeria and Cameroon (Blench, 2012, p. 82).Nigeria is a multilingual country with five hundred and fifty languages (op. cit., p. vi) that are spoken by different tribes and ethnic groups. Tiv people constitute 3.5% of Nigeria population and thus represent the fourth most important ethnic group (Census, 1991).They spoke Tiv as language. Benue-Congo type, Tiv is spoken at "Benue State, Makurdi, Gwer, Gboko Kwande, Vandeikya and Katsina Ala LGAs; Nasarawa State, Lafia LGA; Taraba State, Wukari, Takum, Bali LGA; and in Cameroon »(op. cit., p. 82).For Tiv people like other tribes of Nigeria and Cameroon, individual name received by a child stays dependent on the child history, p. whether the way child has been conceived or circumstances surrounding his birth, his physical appearance, preference of a sex (male or female), future prospecting which parents desire for the child. For them, an individual name choice is more than reassembling letters to obtain a melodious tone. It is rather a question of attributing individual names that have a significant impact.

After the birth of a child in this linguistic community, grandfather or family eldest must choose and give individual name to the new-born. Child can receive several names, one from each parent, and one from grandparents. Though the child's parents can also choose a first name for him, individual name that is attributed to him by grandfather or eldest prevails on others. Most of individual names in this community express a predominant anchorage in the belief and representations and constitute factors determining the choice of individual names.

3. Change Factors and Attempt of Typology of Individual Names with Tiv People

In a first time, we deal with change factors justifying individual names attribution and in a second time, on the basis of indexed factors, we propose an attempt of typological classification then we discuss of God concept problem that has been one of the reasons of religious missions in Africa.

3.1. Change Factors of Individual Names with Tiv People

Names that interest us are names given at birth and by which persons are usually called. Several factors underline their attribution with Tiv people. They are revealers of illustrations as interesting as the ones observed in most of linguistic communities of the world Mbandi, 1993; Essien, 2000; Leguy, 2005; Henrix, 2009; Sambiéni, 2014; Mangulu, 2014; Adjeran, 2013;). But the factors basing their attribution are in accordance with social realities of each community. Among the factors justifying the choice of individual names, we cite the most predominant that state as following: relationship with God, death, here below existence, various social realities, animals, fauna. Individual names attribution is sometimes interrelated to the sex of children who bear them. Individual names with Tiv people, far from being non justified choice, are a source of different, various and justified information. They express well determined social functions.

Names are classified following strict criteria. Also, rather recently, Leguy (2005, pp. 4-11) and Henrix (2009), for instance consider the signification, that is to say the message and the givers preoccupations, precisely the context as fundamental criteria. A language philosophy research conducted by Mbandi (1993, pp. 103-110) on personal name with N mbɛ-Gendza people enabled to establish the three following semiologico-pragmatic functions, p. (i) indexed or referential function, (ii) predicative or iconic function, (iii) symbolic function. Among these three, symbolic function appears to be the most significant (Essien, 2000, p. 129) and justifies our methodological approach. Essien (ibid.) rightly specifies: "[…] personal names are not mere tags that distinguish one person from another. They are serious

mental, emotional, psychological, linguistic and cultural matters, symbolizing the relationship between the name bearer and his / her cosmic world." These factors do not exclude establishment of a typology of individual names in Tiv linguistic community with regard to notability of indexed factors.

3.2. Attempt of Typology of Tiv People Individual Names

The majority of individual names can, with Tiv people, be understood as being messages sent either to one or well precise persons, either to community, or more to supernatural entities. Appearing as a small brief sentence made up of words of popular language, they seem to mean something. But it is not given to all to hear message thus issued: some do not even know always what means the name they bear, or do not know the reasons for which it has been chosen. As for all allusive formula, it is necessary to know enunciation context (here the choice of individual name) to accede to meaning of the message thus expressed.

Among these individual names bearers of messages, there are of different types and more or less esoteric. We can thus differentiate individual names addressed to supernatural entities and individual names more specifically addressed to persons. This section deals with establishment of a two-point typology of individual names with Tiv people with regard to the predominance of indexed change factors.

3.2.1. Individual names in relation with God

Individual names prefixed by Aondo (God) or Ter (Lord) maintain a very close relationship with Tiv people belief. As a profession of faith, these individual names invite to recognize God like omnipotent. Tiv people devote to him their powerlessness and express whenever and wherever his presence. It is a strong testimony to give these types of individual names to their posterity to magnify, to praise and to appreciate his favors towards begetters. In one word, these individual names praise God's attributes. It is also a sort of commitment for life to put oneself under the protection of Supreme Being, being subject of praise. It is a secular practice with Tiv people. It could not be bring close to importation of revealed religions that date from a more recent period. This relation is ontological and rhythm their everyday life. Individual names in (1) testify of this relationship that this community maintained and still maintains with God.

Title 1:

Individual names prefixed by Aondo (God) or Ter (Lord) in Tiv Language

	Aondo	*God*
(1)		
	ter	*lord*
	aondolumun	*God agrees*
	aondodoo	*God is good*
	Adodofa	*It is God who knows what I wish*
	aondonguvan	*God is close*
	aondoakula	*God guides*
	Aondoguuma	*God is alive*
	aondonguavese	*May God be with us*
	aondodoerdoo	*God has well done*
	msughaondo	*I thank God*
	Terumburmo	*God remembers me*

3.2.2. Individual names in relation with death

Individual names addressed to supernatural powers such as death are more often given by the child's parents themselves who thus express their wish of a prosperity based on a big family. The virtue of these names is known in numerous West African societies (Houis, 1963). With Tiv people, these individual names are attributed to children of families who have experimented many cases of stillborn children. These individual names are in general prefixed of *ku* with reference to death. They are given to mark resistance and very rare times conciliation (it is the case of *Mzamberku* which means I beg you death). Others are true provocation message addressed to death. Data in (2) well illustrate this analysis.

Title 2:

Individual names addressed to supernatural powers in Tiv language

(2)	**Kukighir**	:	*Death's door is closed*
	Kpega	:	*This child won't die again*
	Kulumum	:	*If death agrees*
	Kuhemba	:	*Death is wicked*
	Kude	:	*Death leaves us*
	Kuyem	:	*May death moves away*
	Mzamberku	:	*I beg you death*
	Kuhee	:	*Death does not respect anybody*
	Chiaku	:	*Fear of death*
	Kuwua	:	*Death has done its work*

Tiv people believe that by depreciating death, it could not any more kill their posterities. It will realise the tenacity of the begetters and especially their courage to face it without fear. They do not hesitate to give it orders: Kuyem (*May death move away*).Sometimes, in front of the powerlessness of begetters, they look for solution near the supreme Being as testify this individual name: Suurshaondo (confide oneself to God's will).These individual names express the will of the members of this linguistic community to keep alive their posterities for a long time.

Tiv people gave sometimes "antinomic names of death" to take back the expression of Houis (1963).Some people, born after several children died at birth or in early infancy bear particularly repulsive names with a view to ward off fate. Attribution of animals' names takes place in this logic and aims at diverting death attention. It will henceforth put their posterity at the same level as wild animals, individual names that are attributed to them being related to animals' names. They can be subject of various interpretations. There are descriptive individual names that originate from nicknames attributed to the person with a physical or moral characteristic or simply idiomatic expressions, or shortened glory titles. Likewise, popular belief sometimes alludes to intelligence, to bravery of some animals (respectively rabbit and monkey then lion) as resistance strategy in front of death. This analysis is illustrative of many tendencies observed in others linguistic communities, especially with Sabe people (Adjeran, 2013, p. 182). Data in (3) well illustrate these realities.

Title 3:

Antinomic names of death in Tiv Language

(3)	**alom**	*rabbit*	**kulugh**	:	*Tortoise*
	bagu	*monkey*	**nyam**	:	*Meat*
	begha	*lion*	**nyinya**	:	*Horse*
	bua	*cow*	**nomyongo**	:	*Ram*
	ichongo	*fox*	**nor**	:	*Elephant*
	ishu	*fish*	**yese**	:	*Scorpion*
	lyar	*buffalo*	**apu**	:	*Vulture*
	lyo	*snake*	**gafa**	:	*Scavenger*
	jaki	*donkey*	**tsoughul**	:	*Falcon*

Beyond the singular identification of child, attribution of individual names is a school of life; it conveys tricks displayed by begetters to keep themselves and to keep their close family in front of the throes of death. Individual name is a statement that must be absolutely read between the lines: what "is said" is not what we "want to say" (Lerot, 1983, p. 147; Rodegem, 1985, p. 70), because "we point out without naming" (Ntahombaye, 1983, p. 36).Its interpretation ineluctably proceeds both from the domains of sociolinguistic, semantic, pragmatic and enunciation.

If linguistic meaning is inherent in the sentence and stays invariable, real meaning or sociolinguistic meaning is function of linguistic competence of the listener to use his knowledge of the speech context and laws (Lerot, 1983, p. 148).If we can from an individual name only understand sometimes what it can mean - what is not always obvious as far as the formulas are often elliptical - it is however necessary, to accede to the message itself, to know the context that has justified its choice. Through the case of individual names to understand in relation to various social realities, we can appreciate how attribution of individual name can be significant of the organization and a social function.

4. Social Function of Individual Names

Contrarily to most of philologists and historians, linguists and logicians attempted to define functions of individual names. Let us limit ourselves to indicate the questions that set to sociolinguist definitions expressed by some of them; for many, individual name would be only a kind of deictic having only the function to designate and identify an individual. Benveniste (1976, p. 200) expresses this point of view when he proposes the following definition: "What we usually mean by individual name is a conventional mark of social identification such as it can constantly and in a single way name a unique individual. If individual denominations have had for only function to identify (such as singular numbers that would characterize each one a distinct person) systems of individual names certified in the various societies would appear widely dysfunctional. Indeed, what catches attention when we examine the anthroponymic system of a collectivity, it is the narrowness of individual names field: limited number of patronymics at the scale of a village or a region, first names often similar within a same lineage or even a same age class, anyway where necessities of distinction are yet the most predominant.

Without any doubt, we can argue that in many societies, individual nickname guarantees personal identification, avoids confusions due to the identity of family name and first names; but this argument does not entirely prevail on the conviction: on the one hand, nicknames have a social integration function as well as the one of individualization; on the other, they ensure only imperfectly the distinction among individuals (many of them are not nicknamed); finally and above all, necessary recourse to individual nicknames testify, if needed, distinctive weakness of individual names' system considered in its whole.

Besides, if persons' names had for only function to "name constantly in a single way a unique individual", we would wrongly understand why many societies institutionalize - and many others tolerate - that an individual receives a different name at each step of his biography - what complicates more identification processes. We can see it, empiric arguments do not lack to invalidate definitions that deal with individual name like an "index".

A reflection on the functions of individual names begins by recognition of a paradox: to what hold distinctive weakness of systems vowed, at first sight, to ensure personal identification? A series of examples, borrowed to distant and close societies will enable to take measure of this paradox and to better locate the debate's stake.

With Guidar people of North-Cameroon, any individual receives "during his existence two names: firstly at his birth, a name that indicates his birth rank, then three or four months later, a "nickname" that name him in a more personal way»(Collard, 1973, p. 45). First names are identical for all Guidar people who have the same birth rank; thus all eldest boys are named Tizi, all eldest girls Keza; besides, sexual distinction is only marked for the first four children; the fifth born will equally receive, Madi like individual name, the sixth Todu, etc. These ordinal first names "are if we want, numbers" (ibid.) labelling each one according to his seniority degree. We could think that nickname is unique, for distinction purposes; this is not the case: "It is in general father's name which is besides most often name-number. Thus, most of Guidar people have a name composed in fact of two names-numbers; their own and the one of their father" (op. cit., p. 48).That such a system enables personal identification (by the use of ordinal first name within the family, and the composed-name within the group), we will agree without difficulty; but there is not the only function: in fact, it classifies individuals according to their genealogy, so that homonyms are those who have the same native status.

The whole of names, we just see it, was attributed according to strict rules; every individual bears, besides, a patronymic that is transmitted, as its name indicates, in agnatic line; this patronymic functions as a lineage classifier, pointing out, on the one hand, the relatedness of all those bearing the same family name, confirming on the other hand, the prevailing patrilineal filiation type.

More than these names that classify more than they do not identify, one resort to nicknames to distinguish individuals among themselves or to diminutive of first names; but the bearing of these names, singularly individual those, is not general in the community; distribution of nicknames approximately varies from a socio-professional group to the other. If we continue further analysis, we notice that individual nicknames are reserved, in general, to men and their use is subordinate to a set of strict rules: we do not use them either in front of a stranger to the collectivity, or outside the community environment. Here again, identifier functions as a classifier: it indicates professional status, the fact of being native, the local membership.

Finally, the whole of these names functions as a code of which each element (first name, patronymic, patronymic diminutive, nickname) indicates the named subject membership to one "preordained class"(Lévi-Strauss, 1962b, p. 240): a sex, a birth rank, a native status, a socio-professional group are the most predominant change factors. Let us notice that different elements of this code do not only attribute positions to named individuals but they express relationships that those maintain among themselves (homonyms by their first name, they belong to alternated generations (grandfather or grandson) or fellow creatures (first cousins), homonyms by their patronymic diminutive, they belong to consecutive generations, etc.).If one had to compare such systems of individual names with others classificatory systems, one would willingly agree, with Lévi-Strauss (1962b) that they are similar to vegetable or animal taxonomies. The "individual" is "defined" there as a "species"

occupying a determined place in a "system" involving "many dimensions" (Lévi-Strauss, 1962b, p. 248).

Classifying animals and vegetables do not only consist in attributing to different species a particular position in taxonomy according to permanent and distinctive characteristics that we recognize to them. Scientific thought like "wild thought" distinguishes also plants and animals according to stages of their growth; as an example, Kissi people of Guinea name dixi rice sub-species that botanists identify like Oryzasativa L.O. indica (Kato) Gutschin; they use this unit to identify this sub-species, whatever the plant maturation stage; likewise, they have a very rich range of words or syntagm to designate different vegetation cycles: sanò designate "seed soaking", maiotolio "planted out rice", maiowil, "rice that shoots", maiofura, "rice that grows", maiodèdu, "rice in flowers", maiodite le "ripe rice" (see Portères, 1966, p. 24).

Like vegetable and animal taxonomies, a lot of anthroponymic systems are organized according to these two dimensions: individual receives, in the days or months that follow its birth, one or several permanent names (that indicates his native status, his seniority degree, etc.) then, during his existence, he is given others names that indicate each one a change of his statutory position.

With Nuer people of Sudan, child receives little after his birth two particular names, one attributed "on final decision of the father", the second by his maternal grandparents (Evans-Pritchard, 1971, p. 185-187); besides he "inherits" "of a cot paak, individual name to his clan and in honour title»(ibid.).Beside these permanent names, he receives, over time, others names that rhythm the great stages of his life: "A cow name" at the time of his initiation, his father or his mother's name (preceded of "son of") when he is too old for being called by his "cow name" and still too young for being called by a teknonym ("father of").

Most of anthroponymic systems are therefore animated by those two contradictory tendencies: attribute permanent positions to individuals, indicates status change that "mark" their biography" (Zonabend, 1980, p. 15). What do these different examples prove? Firstly, most of these anthroponymic systems deals with "individualization like a classification" (Lévi-Strauss, 1962b, p. 261); secondly, certified individual names in a society form a system of signs, relatively closed series of which each one is supplied with a distinct signified, several of them can besides name a same individual; thirdly, we already said it, the distinctive weakness of these systems is only the reverse of their classificatory richness; Finally, these systems classify individuals according to criteria that vary from a culture to the other, without one can yet say that the classification methods are in limited number like differences that characterize cultures and societies. The principle supports denomination on the basis of well-defined criteria. A set of parameters precises the meaning.

Must we conclude, on the basis of these examples that "individual name always remains on the classification side" (Lévi-Strauss, 1962b, p. 285)? Examples that we could draw in our contemporary societies seem, at first sight, to invalidate this generalization. Choice of the child first name, for instance, appears much more subordinated to particular purposes of parents and relatives than strict social rules. Individual name stock appears then varied and unsettled, to an extent that liturgical calendar must be periodically updated to register innovations, for lack of being able to hold back the flow. This lability does not only characterize inventories of contemporary individual names.

In the study he devotes to Mosi people of Haute-Volta anthroponymy, Houis (1963, p. 9) notices that it is purely unexpected that two individuals bear the same yure (individual name). Same situation occurs with Yanômami people of South America. Lizot (1973, p. 62-

63) notices that "some individual names are completely fabricated" and "usually we avoid giving a name already attributed". In these two cases, individual names form opened series and do not differentiate from the others nominal categories. "Individual names do not constitute (...) a separate linguistic category, at least formally. 'Individual names' category contrasting the one of 'common names' do not concern mooré people" (Houis, 1963, p. 7). "To form personal names, the entire lexicon is engaged.

Any stem is likely to get in the composition of an individual name" (Lizot, 1973, p. 61). Could it exist two extreme denominations formulas, one rigid giving one or names to an individual according to a pre-established code, the other more flexible, even asystematic, where the chosen name would make echo to particular circumstances or personal intentions? On the one hand, "individual names" seem to form "fringe of a general system of classification (....).When they come on stage the curtain rises on the final act of logical representation" (Lévi-Strauss, 1962b, p. 285); on the other hand, no mechanical pattern enables to account for their distribution in a social group; denomination then appears as "a free creation of the one who he names, a transitory state of his own subjectivity" (op. cit., p. 240) or "How many mothers, [notice Lizot (1973, p. 61)] during stays in the most distant groups asked me by carrying their child at arm's length: "Give him a name!".

Opposition between these two formulas, as real as it is, is however less clear than it appears at first sight. Let us notice that only individual names or nicknames are vowed to this anarchy. Family, clan names etc. remain in all above-mentioned cases, intangible classificatory references.

Finally, it is not so much individuation that overtakes classification, it is symbol that prevails on sign; in our societies, books (specialized dictionaries, religious or profanes magazines) index qualities one can attribute to different first names, codify residual metaphysics that is attached to them; in traditional societies, individual name is often, by its form like its content, a message towards numinous powers that express an intention, "the one to insure life against death" (Houis, 1963, p. 22).As such, the name use is subject to a set of rites that confirm the values that one invests in them.

Therefore, individual name can have a double status, the one of classificatory reference attributing to the named individual one or some determined positions in the social structure, the one of symbol sharing a world vision, organized system of representations and beliefs. These two functions - equally or not - gathered under a same individual name, whose respective importance varies not only from a society to the other but also from a type of name to the other within a same anthroponymic system deserves further analysis. Beyond functions attributed to individual names and regarding symbolic character that they contain, a discussion around these names would certainly invalidate established theories.

5. Discussion

Most of the works on anthroponomy remained static ideas descriptions (contexts of names' attribution, social functions of names), isolated historic markers, rarely highlighting of social dynamics that would enable to question some theories of which for instance religious missions in Africa that have been, in part, at colonization origin.

Africa colonization was an important stake of the colonial time and was at the centre of rivalries between great colonial empires. More than everywhere else, these empires expressed the desire to civilize African continent and to help it develop trade institutions. Mothers countries took over territories considered like unoccupied. By this support, they ensured natural resources control in exchange for what they developed social structures imported from industrialized countries: roads, ports, towns etc. Africa's colonization is at the

origin of a racial discrimination philosophy in which white man superiority was undeniable and incontestable.

The superior attitude of Europeans colonists, convinced to contribute to a healthy development of African people, caused a high assimilation of native peoples to European culture. People therefore lost their culture, their beliefs and their traditions for foreign civilization; it is what is called acculturation. Colonial business of Europeans countries went also with religious missions that wished to evangelize African continent. This meeting with religious culture has only emphasized African people acculturation. The assumption of God ignorance was raised to justify these religious missions. Abundance of ideas put forward suggests that one starts from the interpretation of individual names' attribution to confirm or invalidate this assumption.

Names with Tiv people as with others linguistic communities in Africa, clarify the relationship of these communities with God. The simple fact of existence of a cosmogony in each of them reveals knowledge of God. Better, Tiv linguistic community clearly identifies Supreme Being by *aondo* or *tor* (God). That supposes that its existence is ontological. Several names exalt faith and acknowledgement of Supreme Being favours. This exaltation is more perceptible when it comes to praise his power, to solicit his protection, his blessing, his presence or to recognize that he is the Creator of universe (Compare the examples above-mentioned).Names being linguistic units, it is obvious that they are inherent in the culture of the community that uses it. Expressing belief in Supreme Being varies from a community to another. This variation could not be interpreted as the sign of God ignorance by a community. Supreme Being knowledge is a reality that depends on universal life. Each community expresses it through linguistic units as for instance names that it attributes to his offspring or through cultural practices.

6. Conclusion

At the end of this analysis of individual name with Tiv people of Nigeria and Cameroon, we could say that the anthroponymic system humanly has nothing extraordinary. It presents characteristics that can be considered as being very common to many others African linguistic communities. It offers typological order bundles to put in relation with practices that have been observed with other communities especially the ones linked to God and death that are also frequent with Sabe and Bebelibe people (Adjeran, 2014; Sambiéni, 2014). Names with Tiv people are an example of how Tiv community incorporated God in its existence, in its life conception and in its representation of Supreme Being. Therefore they justify how they can construct knowledge.

The first scientific interest of this work is that, going from the knowledge of the change factors that rule the attribution of individual names, we come to review classical historiography of African linguistic communities in general and Tiv people in particular. Work is therefore a contribution to a best knowledge of sociolinguistic realities and Tiv culture. It is usual to hear that sub-Saharan Africa does not or did not have writing tradition. It is justified if it is only the use of Roman, Arabic, Chinese letters, etc. but if one redefines writing, not on graphic plan, nor as visual manifestation, but by taking into account his function, one can say that individual name, with support that is bearer, undeniably plays writing role.

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