Onomastics and Indirect Communication Among The Kabre of Northern Togo

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the communicative use of allusive names among the Kabre of Northern Togo. The Kabre, like many other ethnic groups in Africa, have developed a verbal strategy that involves the use of personal names and animal names to indirectly communicate their feelings and opinions, particularly in conflict-laden situations. After providing a brief comparative analysis of African and Western concepts of proper names, the author presents a synopsis of the Kabre onomastic system and focuses on the category of allusive names which are used in the onomastic communication under consideration. He illustrates his analysis with examples from two subcategories of Kabre allusive names: the erotic names whose function is educational, and the polemical names which are vengeance-oriented.

Keywords: *Allusive names, animal names, erotic names, personal names, polemical names.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Kabre of Northern-Togo have developed a verbal strategy that involves the use of proper names to communicate their feelings and opinions, particularly in conflict-laden situations. Like many ethnic groups throughout Africa, they use a particular category of names, the so-called allusive names, to indirectly address messages to the protagonists of the conflict, and the indirect nature of this communication allows them to express a variety of grievances in spite of the power relationships in play. This article aims to pinpoint and analyze the category of allusive names within the Kabre onomastic system in order to reveal the complex nature of the message conveyed by those names. Because the idea of proper names as a verbal means of communication is contingent upon the definition of proper names, the first portion of this article is allocated to a discussion of the similarities and differences between the predominant Western concept of proper names and the African concept, with a view to offer an uncluttered analysis of Kabre naming practices. Following this comparison the reader is introduced first to the Kabre cultural context which constitutes the background against which the main categories and sub-categories of the Kabre onomastic system are described, and secondly to three categories of proper names, including the category of allusive names on which the emphasis of this article is placed. Finally, some examples of names from two contrasted sub-categories of allusive names are provided in order to illustrate the Kabre naming

practice: the subcategory of polemical names and that of erotic names. The analysis of the Kabre onomastic system undertaken in this article is based on research done on the Kabre community and on the author's own experience as a member of that community.

2. CONCEPTS OF PROPER NAMES

The concept of proper names is directly linked to John Stuart Mill's famous distinction between denotation and connotation (Mill 1964). According to this distinction, proper names are denotative terms, that is, terms which denote or refer to objects without signifying any attributes of these objects.

The majority of Western onomasticians[1] have endorsed Mill's terminology by displacing the connotation vs. denotation distinction to an opposition between two categories of meaning: the lexical meaning, i.e. the meaning of words, and the onomastic meaning, i.e. the meaning of names. This opposition is in turn contingent upon the divide between two dimensions of language: the onomasticon or the body of proper names, and the lexicon or the body of words that constitutes the rest of the language. According to this divide, proper names are characteristically devoid of any lexical meaning. Even when a lexical meaning of a proper name is acknowledged, it is acknowledged as the onomastician's construct rather than the actual property of the name (Witkrowski 1974). Some onomasticians such as Sir Alan Gardiner (1954) go so far as to make onomastic purity, i.e. the absolute absence of any lexical trace, the *conditio sine qua non* of the existence of a true proper name. According to this purist acceptation, a name like *Rumpelstiltskin* or its English counterpart *Tom-Tit-To,* would be, as W. F. H. Nicolaisen (1976) notes, the prototype of proper names.

Faced with this paradigmatic conception, several African onomasticians and African studies specialists[2] have been loudly protesting for decades that African

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[1]   This author is not ignoring the continuous discussion by Western onomasticians of the relationships between proper names and common names or nouns (see for example Wimmer, R. (1973), Nicolalaisen, W. (1976), and Wolf, U. (1985)) nor is he oblivious to the call by some linguists such as Paul Hoper (1990) for a redefinition of the very concept of proper names.

[2]   From the works of the earlier Western missionaries to the most recent works on African onomastics, the insistence on the linguistic transparency or lexical meaning of African names has been continuous. Constant Ndiga Nmbo (2004) for example states that Congolese anthroponyms are linguistic expressions reflective of Congolese thought, belief systems, and philosophy. He conceives of them as texts decipherable to those who have the linguistic competence and cultural knowledge to interpret them. As stated in Batoma (2006), the meaning of African names is a cluster of three layers of meaning: the lexical meaning which was defined above, the onomastic meaning which is based on each tradition of naming practices, and the socio-pragmatic meaning which is based on the cultural knowledge of the onomastic code of conduct, the interpersonal relationships of the partners of the onomastic communication, and the situations that generate that communication.

proper names not only have a meaning, including a lexical meaning, but more importantly that this meaning is made use of in everyday discursive practices. Maurice Houis (1983) summarizes African onomasticians' definition of proper names well when he writes: "it is necessary that names be first identified as signs of the language. They are practically not distinct from other linguistic signs at the level of form, signifiers and morphology. It is generally easy to explain their literal meaning."(p. 8). Indeed, African names, as signs of language can be divided into two morpho-syntactical categories: they are either nominal, that is, they are constituted of single words, or syntagmatic, that is, they are made up of sentences or parts thereof. Some methodological clarifications of Houis' statement will give us a more accurate picture of the complexity of the onomastic meaning of African proper names.

First, the semantic transparency of names mentioned above is not always apparent. The linguistic meaning of a name may be opaque due to the following reasons enumerated by Alexander Kimeyi (1989): a name may be a loan-word, that is, a word borrowed from a foreign language; it may stem from a secret language, derive from a dialectal origin, or result from linguistic change (p. 139). To these morpho-syntactic explanations one should add a more fundamental one, an explanation based on the oral nature of traditional modes of communication. African names are usually brief and figurative. Figuration and brevity, which characterize oral discursive practices according to Mamusse Diagne (2005, 2006) are used in the verbal act of naming, the former to awaken and capture the audience's attention and the latter to address the audience's limited capacity of memorization. It is possible, in principle to restitute the linguistic transparency of most names through linguistic means such as expansion, that is, the supplying of the suppressed syntactic or syntagmatic elements (Pere-Kewezima 2004).

Secondly, the linguistic meaning does not exhaust the onomastic meaning of a name, it can only help construct, deconstruct or understand it. Most African onomasticians agree that, as Philippe Ntahombaye (1983) puts it: "the linguistic structure of the name offers a basis for the first level explanation from which the other levels will branch off r (p.18). This first level explanation is called, interchangeably, first meaning, semantic meaning, denotative meaning, or literal meaning. The other explanatory level is described as second meaning or connotative meaning. This second level is of paramount importance to the onomasticians and is reached through a reconstruction of the motivations behind the name, that is, the reasons why a name has been bestowed on a name bearer. The aim of the onomastician is to recover, beyond and thanks to the linguistic meaning of the name, the original motivations of the name giver and this in order to establish a relationship between language and culture. One might call this level of meaning the cultural meaning of the name for it is a window on the history and philosophy associated with the name.

For many African onmasticians, their task ends with the reconstruction of the cultural meaning which is based on what they interpret/see as an objective recovery of the motivations behind the name. The recovery is objective since

any subjective interpretations that the onomastician encounters in his research is discarded as a false interpretation or, at best, an epistemological obstacle (Ntahombaye op. cit., p. 21). This methodological restriction is understandable but it keeps the onomasticians from looking beyond their constructs into what happens to the names in every day life experiences, that is, into intersubjective naming practices. The restriction is understandable given the disciplinary constrains of the research. It is also understandable given the onomasticians' assumption that users of names do not know the motivations of the name bearers and can, therefore, only use those names as identificatory or referential signs. Alexandre Kimenyi (1989) writes: "to the user, most of the names are purely symbols since their mere purpose is identification and nothing else because he is unaware of the namer's motives and message and sometimes the history behind the name itself." (p. 148). First, Kimenyi's claim cannot be backed up universally, for the shared or non-shared nature of the motivations depends on the community of users. In rural settings or closed communities (Turner 2000) where cultural knowledge is usually shared, the motivations behind a name are not always a private matter. Secondly, and more importantly, it is the essence of proper names in general and African proper names in particular to be lived up to, and the way a name bearer lives up to his or her name depends not only on the name's linguistic and/ or cultural meaning but also on how this meaning is used in social encounters, which leads us to the third level of onomastic meaning, the pragmatic level.

Following Gilles Gaston Granger (1982), Batoma (2008) has shown that one of the primary functions of proper names is that of interpellation. This is especially true of anthroponyms and zoonyms. Interpellation is a verbal act whereby a name giver or user calls upon the addressee of the onomastic message to respond or react in a way that depends on the linguistic or cultural content of the name, the intentions of the name giver or interpellator, and the context of interpellation. This use of proper names has been abundantly demonstrated and illustrated by research on African zoonyms, especially on dog names. Since the works of authors such as William Samarin (1965), who have clearly established how zoonyms are used for the purpose of indirect communication among humans, several authors have been more specific about the nature of that communication. For N'sougan Agblemagnon (1969) and Emilio Bonvini (1985), dog names are used as a means of avenging oneself against the offenses of a powerful person or a superior. For Wendy Schottman (1993) and Gyasi Obeng (1999), the use of dog names allows for a polite way of solving conflicts with someone in a superior position. Noleen S. Turner (2000, 2001) for her part reads zoonymic communication as a means for frustrated individuals to rid themselves of their frustrations without infringing the social ethics of their community. All the above authors have analyzed zoonyms as a verbal means for human interaction. They have also shown that, although zoonyms are preferred for this polemical communication, anthroponyms are also used.

We can summarize African onomastic theory of proper names by stating with Batoma (2006) that the onomastic meaning of a name is a cluster of several

layers of meaning. Three important layers have been defined here: the linguistic layer mentioned above, which is also called literal or denotative meaning; the cultural layer which is sometimes confused with the etymological meaning, and which, beyond the name givers' motivations that it describes, can provide the socio-cultural and philosophical precepts of a linguistic community; finally, the pragmatic or interpellative layer, which indicates the meaning that a name takes on in the context of its use, be it an interpersonal, a situational or a social context. It is important to note here that any of these layers, or a combination thereof, can be fore-grounded or back-grounded depending on the context of the onomastic communication.

The definition of African proper names provided above clearly implies the calling into question, if not the collapse, of the onomastic vs. lexicon divide on which many a theorist of Western onomastics is founded. It is safe to infer from what precedes that the theory of onomastics presented above is a theory that approaches proper names from a pragmatic point of view: its starting point is not names but naming as a verbal act, the act of interpellation. This theory conceives of proper names as semiotic traces of past naming acts and conceptual tools for new ones. It is also relevant to the purpose of this article to note with Francoise Armengaud (1985) that "the importance of names is less of a linguistic and logic nature than of a subjective, social and communicative one". Indeed, the analysis of Kabre naming practice undertaken here is but an illustration of the communicative nature of African names. In order to establish the geographic and socio-cultural context of this analysis, it is important to give a brief description of the Kabre community in the following paragraphs.

3. A SYNOPSIS OF THE KABRE ONOMASTIC SYSTEM

The Kabre constitute about 23% of the present population of Togo. The Kabre language, also spelled Kabiye, Kabye, Kabure or Kabrais is a Gur (Voltaic) language pertaining to the greater Niger-Congo language family. The number of native Kabre speakers is estimated at 730,000, with approximately 700,000 speakers living in Togo, 30,000 in Benin and a small number in Ghana. Essentially an agricultural people, the Kabre of Togo live in the Kabre massifs located in the northern part of the country. A small percentage of the Kabre population lives in the central and southern regions of the country where they are employed as agricultural workers.

The sophisticated agricultural skills[3] of the Kabre have allowed them to cultivate for several centuries a terrain that is relatively infertile and vulnerable to erosion due to the lack of a protective tree cover. Kabre farmers produce

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[3]   The Kabre agricultural knowledge and techniques have earned them the following description by Leo Frobenius:" No other people in Africa work their fields as intensively as Kabre, here was a black people of Africa … who have attained the heights of science » (quoted in Piot, 1999).

millet, corn, peanuts, yams, sorghum and manioc. While Kabre farmers are essentially crop producers, they also raise some livestock, especially small animals and poultry. They are mostly used for trade, sale or sacrificial purposes and rarely for household consumption. Sheep and goats make up most of the livestock, although wealthier families sometimes own cattle. Among the household animals there are cats and most especially dogs. Research has shown that when these mountains were entirely covered by forest, the Kabre were primarily hunters and secondarily farmers (Verdier 1975). This explains the important presence of dogs today among the domestic animals.

Dogs have a special status in relation to the other animals. They are close enough to man to deserve to be named (in fact they are the only animals to be so singled out) and they are close enough to other animals to never reach the status of pets. For mythological reasons they are maintained in a state of half wildness as it were, which confers on them an unavoidable character of taboo (Verdier 1975, 1982). Through their function/role as hunters and guardians, dogs turn out to be their masters' indispensible companions. But at the same time they are their worst enemies and traitors because they are believed to be at the root cause of man's death (Verdier, op.cit.). At once man's companion and traitor, the dog takes the place of man in certain sacrificial rites; it is as if he shows his present fidelity by paying for his original treason with his life. If dogs have, as I wrote earlier, the rare privilege to be named, the category of dog names is nonetheless limited in relation to the Kabre onomastic system as a whole.

Lastly, it is fitting to point out that Kabre society is a hierarchical one based on a system of masculine and feminine age groups, as well as initiation rites, its educational corollary. Initiation rites are at once a process of gender differentiation based on the Kabre metaphysics of the original androgyny of humans (Piot 1999), and a process of structuring moral awareness and religious sentiments through an internalization of three basic experiences : community life, mystical life and the evocation of the ancestors (Keyewa 1997). The brief description of some aspects of the Kabre community just presented above determines, to some extent, the symbolism inherent in the Kabre onomastic system which is the object of the following section.

This system is complex[4], as are most other African onomastic systems with which it shares several characteristics in common. Roughly speaking, it can be divided into three name categories using three different classification criteria which are not mutually exclusive: linguistic, cultural, and sociopragmatic. From the linguistic viewpoint, Kabre proper names, like most African proper names are, as stated above, linguistic signs that contribute to the meaning of everyday discursive practices. According to this criterion, Kabre proper names fall into

[4]   Kabre onomastic system, particularly the anthroponymic system, is open and creative. Any person in a ratified condition for creating names can create new names, that is, names that have never existed before, as long as they are meaningful and fit the linguistic and socio-cultural criteria of a name creation. Thus, it is not uncommon to encounter people whose names are unshared, that is, names which have never been borne by anyone else before them and which may never be borne after them.

two subcategories: nominal and syntagmatic. The cultural category is based on the specific traditions of naming practices. This criterion allows for the classification of proper names in relation to the conditions that govern their choice and their bestowal within each tradition. Its application gives us two subcategories of names: automatic names and non-automatic names. These two categories of names are also defined by some authors as unique and given names (On.ukawa 1998).While the choice of the latter rests on the intentions or motivations of the name giver, the choice of the former is somewhat constrained by the circumstances surrounding the birth of the individual named. In the case of personal names or anthroponyms, birth day and birth rank are examples of such circumstances. It is worth noting at this juncture that, on the surface, the more a name appears automatic, the lesser degree of meaning it has. This is due to the de-motivation process whereby the meaning of a name becomes congealed and forgotten when, for different reasons, it is not frequently contextualized in discursive practices through the use of interpellative strategies such as intonation, choice of name, and expansion of name. The third criterion, the socio-pragmatic criterion, determines the classification of names according to the meaning effects they are supposed to produce on the life of the named individual and on the community of which he is a member. Roughly, three subcategories of names can be drawn out of this criterion: ontological, pedagogical, and allusive.

Ontological names are names whose function is to express, and to preserve the true qua ontological identity of the name bearer over time. The true identity of the name bearer, as opposed to his multiple socio-cultural identities, is often determined in the Kabre naming practices through divination. According to Kabre metaphysics, children come into the world with pre-world identities and are assigned specific missions. This pre-world existence can be revealed through a mediated interrogation of the infant or rather his or her double or soul[5]. Education can only help channel such identities, it cannot change them (Piot 1999). Ontological names are also sometimes called big names (Patokideou 1970, Keyewa 1997) or secret names. They are rarely used in everyday communication, and when they are used they are used with care. The belief in the expression of the true identity of the name bearer through ontological names is so entrenched in the Kabre metaphysics that these names can be used, and are often used as a last resort in life-and-death situations. For instance, after every medicinal means has been tried, in vain, to save a person's life, one can attempt, in an ultimate effort, to call him or her back to life by uttering his or her ontological name in a ritualistic manner.

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[5]   The mediated interrogation of a newborn takes place several days after its birth. The diviner or *tɩw*, surrounded by a group of sages, questions the infant about his or her origin and the reasons for coming among the community. The spirit or soul of the infant speaks through the momentarily transformed and child-like voice of the diviner. The information collected through this process will be used for different purposes, including naming the child properly and monitoring his or her psycho-social development.

By pedagogical names is meant the plurality of names given to and /or taken by Kabre throughout their human odyssey which is punctuated by rites of passage. The function of such names is essentially an educational one: it is to give incentive to, and to aid named individuals to realize the multiple socio-cultural identities which make them complex and mature beings, that is to say, community beings. Examples of pedagogical names are warrior names such as *ñasɩŋkpe* (scare them away and return home safely), labor names such as *Talʋtenay* (reach its end, i.e. finish up the job), erotic names such as Kacawatʋ (she hates to be cold[6]). These names reflect the values attached to what the Kabre perceive as the essential human activities: courage and bravery on the battle field, perseverance in the work place, and caring and nurture in the relationships with the opposite sex. These names are given and or taken at various stages of life, mostly sanctioned by rites of passage[7] and constitute a synchronic and diachronic plurality like the Baatonu names analyzed by Wendy Schottman (2000).

Contrary to ontological names whose rare utterance is devoid of daily narratives, the utterance of pedagogical names is often accompanied by narratives which are, in fact, onomastic strategies allowing the contextualization of the meaning of the name and hence, its negotiation. Intonation, choice, amplification and poetic commentary of the name are four such onomastic strategies. As research shows, the intonation with which a name is uttered is not without impact on the meaning of that name and hence, on the message that the utterance of the name conveys as well as the reaction of the name bearer. The intonation with which a name is uttered can index anger, fear, desire, love and other psychological states. Intonation transforms a single-word name into an integral onomastic utterance. This is because, as Mikhail Bakhtin (1986, 85) put it, "if an individual word is pronounced with expressive intonation it is no longer a word, but a complete sentence". Likewise, since the Kabre, like the Baatombu, bear a synchronic as well as diachronic plurality of names, the choice of one name in particular circumstances can constitute an attention getter, if not a genuine communication cue a-la-Gumperz (1982) leading to the reception of the onomastic message.

Traditionally there is an onomastic code that determines the use of people's names based on age class, status, gender, and other restrictions related to name taboo. But the violation of that code can be a strategic move that can be interpreted along the following Gricean lines (Grice, 1975): "S/he (the interpellator) has used a name that s/he is not allowed to call me, therefore s/he

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6   Bestowed on a young man reaching the age of marriage, this name functions as a piece of advice both to the name bearer and to the community at large regarding the ethics of sex relationships. I give a more detailed explanation of this name in the third section of this paper.

7   The initiation of Kabre males comprises five initiation rites whereas that of the Kabre females comprises only one rite. This difference accounts for the fact that men tend to be given more names than women. Women may end up bearing the same number of names in usage as men, but the pool from which men's names in usage are chosen is larger than that of women.

must want to offend me or to honor me, or to call my attention to something particularly important or unusual, that is, convey an important message". The interpellated then goes on to discriminate the onomastic message based on the specific context of interpellation. As for the amplification of the name, it is contingent upon the syntagmatical nature of Kabre names mentioned above: one can expand or shorten a person's name (Pere-Kewezima (op. cit.), comment on it in order to praise, blame, exhort or convey a particular message.

By allusive names is meant the names whose choice is motivated by a particular social situation and whose specific and precise socio-pragmatic meaning is perceived only by those initiated into the situation (Calvet 1984). In other words, the name is allusive to the extent that its content, which expresses the opinion or the position of the name giver, can only be deciphered as a precise message by the individuals concerned by the said situation. As stated above, naming is a speech act involving at least four components: the name giver or interpellator, the addressee of the onomastic message or interpellated, the carrier of the message who can be the interpellated, and the message itself, that is, the content of the name. The distinctive feature of the allusive message, however, is that the number of receivers is determined by the context that generated it. Let it be noted that, from a linguistic point of view, most allusive names are syntagmatic and, from a cultural point of view they are non-automatic names since their choice and bestowal are mostly based on the name giver's intentions. As for the pragmatic or interpellative standpoint, Kabre allusive names are, for the most part, names which convey a polemical message, particularly when bestowed on dogs, that is, when dogs are used as carriers of an onomastic message which is addressed to human beings[8].

Three characteristics define the polemic nature of onomastic messages. First, the situation generating onomastic speech acts is a gloomy and conflict laden situation (Retel-Laurentin & Horvath 1972) in which power relationships and the status between the giver/enunciator of the name and the receiver of the onomastic message play an important role. In such a context, a direct and dialogic exchange of words is out of the question: one cannot respond directly to the criticisms of the head of the family, to the injustice committed by the boss, or the reprobation of the community. As N. Agblemagnon (op. cit.) notes, one can only respond indirectly and, as it were, coldly. One responds indirectly not necessarily out of politeness for the addressee as some authors such as Gyasi Obeng (op. cit.) and Wendy Shottman (1993) have maintained, but also in order to either console oneself by attempting to salvage one's social self-image, or by avenging oneself against the offender (Batoma 2008). But an addresser in a superior position might also choose to use this indirect communication out of contempt for the addressee or in order to belittle him.

Second, the discursive status of the onomastic message is polemical in the sense given to this term by discourse analysis theorists such as Dominique

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[8]   This type of strategic communication, termed zoonymic communication by Batoma (2008) has been theorized by many African onomasticians.

Maingueneau (1983); that is to say, the giver-enunciator of the name translates the addressee's actions into terms compatible with his own discursive categories as opposed to those of the addressee, in order to better disapprove or reprobate them. In this sense, polemical communication is the opposite of dialogical communication in which, according to Francis Jacques (1985), each interlocutor has the semantic initiative. Face to face encounters which are the model for dialogical communication are therefore inappropriate for polemical communication which can only function on an indirect mode (Batoma 2008). In face to face encounters involving polemical communication, emotions run high and the risk of misspeaking one's thoughts is great. In such a heated communication taking back one's misspoken words does not often work whereas indirectness allows for a delayed and measured response. Such a response, which comes after some time has passed, a "cooling off period" if you will, allows for a more meaningful vengeance. As the French saying goes, "la vengeance est un plat qui se mange froid" (vengeance is a dish better served cold).

Thirdly, in the case of dog names, the polemic content of the onomastic message is reinforced by the symbolic representation of dogs in Kabre culture. It is important to point out, at this juncture, that there is no formal difference between Kabre dog names and Kabre personal names. Kabre dog names are unlike Batombu dog names which can never be the same as personal names, for to associate a dog with a person would constitute a grave insult in Baatombu community (Wendy Shottman, op cit.); they are like Kinyarwanda and Kirundi dog names of which Alexandre Kimenyi writes:" they always have something to say about the enemies, the unfriendly neighbors, death or personal experience. It is therefore, not possible to tell out of context whether a name is a personal human name or a dog name" (op. cit., 122). As the quote suggests, it is always possible to differentiate between a dog name and a personal name based on the naming or enunciation context. In addition, Kabre often precede the utterance of a dog name by a whistling sound which is a clear mark of dog calling.

The symbolic representation of dogs we alluded to above is formed through a metaphoric correlation between the name and its bearer in which the name reflects certain characteristics of the bearer. This correlation between the name and its bearer has been described by many authors under various terms such as suggestion, name aura, name physiognomy. It is, as Gerhard Eis describes it, a connotative meaning suggested by the utterance of the names themselves (die Existenz einer von den Namen ausgehenden Suggestion) (Eis 1970, 111). All these terms are related to what Reinhard Krien (1973), following Heinz Werner (1929) calls expressive field of language (expressive Umfeld) and were primarily used to establish a correlation between personal names and the character of their bearers. Gerhard Eis was one of the first contemporary onomasticians to apply name physiognomy to animal names or zoonyms (Rufnamen der Tiere) in a systematic way. But contrary to the positive connotations inherent in the German zoonyms studied by Eis, Kabre dog name physiognomy entails a negative image associated with the unfriendly nature of

the naming context and with dogs' hybrid nature (half wild). There is also the image mentioned above of the dog as man's sworn enemy[9]. The fact that the dog, itself associated with filth and duplicity, embodies a verbal grievance against an individual, necessarily bestows on the interpellated individual the plethora of undesirable canine traits. The dog's name then not only serves the purpose of indirectly communicating feelings and opinions, but also, by placing the interpellated at the level of the dog, suggests a reversal of the power relationship in play. This reversal constitutes the main goal of zoonymic communication analyzed in Batoma (op. cit.) that is, vengeance. Indeed, vengeance is what it is all about in the allusive communication conveyed by dog names. But as has been suggested, this vengeance is not vindictive but vindicatory or, as Raymond Verdier (1992) would put it, it is civilized, not savage, since it aims at repairing what is considered to be a wrong or an infringement on the rights of the name giver or interpellator. Despite its insulting character, it does not seek to silence the interpellated, but to still the interpellator's thirst for vengeance and, at the same time provide the addressee the opportunity to respond in the form of another dog name.

4. SOME EXAMPLES OF THE COMMUNICATIVE USE OF KABRE NAMES: POLEMICAL VS EROTIC NAMES

Some methodological precautions are in order at the outset of the following examples.

First, the examples represent a snapshot of the Kabre onomastic system. They are a glimpse into the naming practice and the complex socio-cultural construction of identities and other name games that the system involves. The aim here is not to provide the meaning of the names of particular individuals in particular settings or circumstances, which would be the object of a different type of analysis, but rather to reveal the cultural pre-constructs and the moral precepts that inform the Kabre onomastic speech acts. A better way to achieve this goal is to give examples of two contrasting sub-categories of names: polemical names and erotic names.

As stated above, there is no formal difference between polemical names and erotic names, but there is a huge communicative difference between them. On the one hand, although erotic names are ritually provocative[10], they are playful

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[9]   All things being equal one can compare the negative image of Kabye dogs to that of the monkey in German volktheory (Volksage ueber dem Affe) as described by Gerhard Eis (Eis 1970, 42-45). According to this theory which has its origin in Christianity, the monkey is associated with the ugliness and the evil character of the devil whose instructions he always follows.

[10]   Erotic names constitute a sub-category of initiation names taken by Kabre young men at the age of 23-25 years when they undergo their third initiation rite. During the initiation ceremony the initiates are allowed to give themselves names that convey their feelings,

and their aim is ultimately an educational one: their purpose is to warn, give advice, or coach in matters of love and sexual relationships, and they are usually chosen after a long observation of the person named. Polemical names on the other hand are often incident-driven, insulting and vengeance oriented, particularly when they are bestowed on dogs, as stated above. Furthermore, in the case of polemical communication involving the use of dog names, the bearer of the name is never the addressee or interpellated; the bearer of the name is a pseudo-addressee, whereas the bearer of an erotic name, or any personal name for that matter, can be the addressee. This is because the dog names considered here do not name in the sense of identifying an individual through a name, they can only interpellate, but the interpellated individual is never a dog; he or she is always a member of a human community.

It is worth reminding the reader at this juncture that the meaning of the names provided here as examples is not a congealed meaning that is waiting to be reconstructed by the onomastician. Instead, it is a cluster of linguistic and cultural meanings that gets contextualized based on the intention of the interpellator, his relationships with the interpellated, and the interpellative situation. This contextualization is possible thanks to the onomastic strategies that we mentioned briefly above and which we will define more thoroughly in a future article.

Finally, each example starts with the name in the Kabre script followed by its literal translation into English. The second line represents the English translation or equivalent of the literal meaning. The rest of the text is a cultural and philosophical comment on the name.

4.1 POLEMICAL NAMES

lonaɖalɩm ɩkpeŋ póɣta
"The water in the valley does not flow up the mountain"
Water flows downhill. Water always flows from top to bottom.

This proverbial metaphor, reinforced by the everyday experience of the reality it depicts, suggests the idea of a hierarchical structure of the social system and the cultural values of humility and respect it entails. This name is the response of a superior to the disrespectful action or attitude of an inferior who needs to be reminded of his status and place. The onomastic message draws its interpellative force from its proverbial origin and the commonsensical nature of the experience.

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opinions and desires with regard to the cultural standards that have informed their education up to this stage of their human odyssey. These self-bestowed names denote the initiates' transgressive attitudes toward Kabre social morals and are derived from two main taboo areas: food and sex.

Ma-ñɪntʊnawɛ
"What do I have to do with them?"
What do I care? I do not give a damn. I couldn't care less.

In this onomastic message the name giver downplays the impact of his detractors' actions on his self-esteem and his integrity. She refuses to listen to their scandal mongering or pay attention to their scheme. Doing so would satisfy their desire to distract her from the essential tasks in life. It would also vindicate their false allegations in the public's eyes, for justifying and defending her integrity would amount to admitting to a wrong doing. Silence, on the other hand, attests to wisdom in this situation. It is perceived as a sign of strength and moral superiority. It is also interpreted as the expression of contempt and belittlement of the adversary/opponent.

Ma-lapɑmatɛ
"I did it to myself".
I should have known better.

This name is a self-reflection based on an assessment of the polemical situation in which the name giver has been ill-treated by an ungrateful person. This assessment leads the name giver to a feeling of regret, but it is a feeling of regret which does not imply a mea culpa; the interpellator does not incriminate herself. She seems to say: "I should have known what a crook you are. I am the victim of my own lack of discernment" The feeling of regret is not self-pity either. On the contrary, it is a subtle psychological vengeance against the interpellated through an appeal to what is left of his moral conscience and his cultural sense of pride and honor.

Pɑmaɣsɪ
"They should think"
They better think twice

This name is a warning, even a threat uttered by the interpellator who advises his detractors to think twice before they continue their gossip or carry out their evil scheme. They should anticipate or measure the serious consequences of their actions. The onomastic message implies the interpellator's awareness of the scheme weaved against him, and his readiness to take steps to put an end to it.

Pa-wɪnam
"They will have a hard time with me".
They won't take me away easily. I won't take this lying down.

This name is the response of the name giver to a group of people who disapprove of his life style. The name giver seems to acknowledge that the balance of power is not to his advantage, either because of the sheer number of his opponents or the weight of society backing them. Although he knows that he is waging an uphill battle against a powerful adversary, he claims his righteousness and expresses his confidence in his determination and his ultimate victory.

Tetʋfɛrɩɣpacimɑ
"Dirt will pay their debt"
They can't take it with them. They can't get away with it forever.

Dirt is where the dead are buried. It is a metaphor for death. In this polemical context death is perceived as the ultimate vengeance for the name giver. This representation presupposes a belief in the ultimate justice or retribution by ɛsɔ (God) or atɛtʋnaa (ancestors). This name is the response of the name giver to what he feels is the injustice of a superior who abuses his power. One can conceive of it as the consolation of the powerless, that inward vengeance which we call consolation or solace.

4.2 EROTIC NAMES

Ka-cawɑtʋ
"She does not like the cold".
She hates to be cold.

Implication: you need to keep her warm.
Subtext: Unless you protect the object of your love from the rigor of the cold, you will lose her to some other man.
Lesson: Love relationships need to be nurtured. Cold is used here as a metaphor for a whole host of female needs, including physical, moral and economic needs. Also, the name advises the young man not to take the success of such relationships for granted. This name is bestowed onto a young man by his peers as a piece of advice on how he should behave toward the opposite sex. Caring and nurture are recommended to him as the pillars of a successful and durable relationship with the opposite sex.

Pɑɲcana
"Even if you shined in beauty"
Even if you were the most handsome man

Implication: I would not go out with you for that reason alone.
Subtext: You need to embody additional qualities or virtues for me to even consider the possibility of a relationship between us.
Lesson: Beauty is certainly an important quality in a partner. It is also an important ingredient in the formation of a love relationship and its durability, but it should be complemented with other qualities in order to lead to the harmonious life of a couple.

This name is taken by a girl. In this message addressed to boys she expresses her feelings and her cautious attitude toward the opposite sex. The name is also a statement of her moral stand and the expression of her expectations from her present or potential suitors.

Palaahʊntʊ
"One does not sacrifice feathers".
Feathers do not matter (in a sacrifice of a poultry bird)[11].

Implication: What matters is blood.
Subtext: A man should not limit his relationship with a woman to light-hearted banter (French marivaudage).
Lesson: A fulfilling and harmonious relationship between a man and a woman should go beyond pure platonic love to include actions.

This name is taken by a young man or bestowed onto him by his peers. It expresses the name giver's or the name bearer's attitude toward the importance of being practical and down-to-earth in a relationship with the opposite sex. Blood symbolizes the substance, that which is essential, that which matters in a relationship. Feathers, on the other hand, represent the unessential, that which is secondary or superfluous.

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[11] Both the blood and the feathers of the sacrificed poultry bird are consumed by the ancestors. In addition, they are used as symbols. The traces of blood left on the ground by the chicken which fights for its life are perceived as a language through which the ancestors communicate their attitude toward the sacrifice as an expiatory gesture: they can express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction, their acceptance or refusal of the sacrifice, or their demand for additional expiatory measures. Feathers, on the other hands, constitute the empirical evidence of the sacrifice both for the ancestors and in the yes of human observers.

Palɑhʊntʊ
"One does sacrifice feathers".
Feathers do matter (in a sacrifice).

Implication: Do not discard or underestimate the importance of the feathers (in a sacrifice)
Subtext: Never underestimate the psychological and moral comfort words/conversation bring in a relationship with a woman.
Lesson: This name, whose message is the opposite of the preceding one, is taken by a young man, or bestowed onto him by his peers. It warns against the excessive emphasis placed on sex and other physical and material components of a relationship with a woman; it also suggests the exercise of the virtue of words, communication and playfulness as complementary desiderata for a successful and harmonious relationship.

Pɑhɑpayele
"Let them not give if they do not feel like it".
They should not feel obligated to give.

Implication: a true gift comes from the bottom of the heart.
Subtext: Do not try to gain/obtain my consent or buy my love with acts that are based on false generosity.
Lesson: A true gift is the expression of a sincere and generous disposition of the giver. It should, therefore, not be used as a means for reaching other goals. The onomastic message applies to giving in general, but in this example it refers to the particular cultural context of dowry. According to that social arrangement, a young man is advised to provide services to his future in-laws throughout the duration of the engagement by working in the fields of his future father-in law and giving a certain quantity of food to his future mother-in law every year. This name is a message addressed by a young woman to her present or potential suitor. It urges him not to confuse means and ends, merit and love.

Sɪnɣasɔ
"Remain standing", "Do it while standing".
Do it while standing since you can't wait.

Implication: To make love while standing (in a standing position) is indicative of hurriedness and emanates from impatience and self-control.
Subtext: Control yourself, take your time, etc.
Lesson: This name which on the surface sounds like an invitation to a quickie is, in reality, the teaching of erotic virtues through admonishment and scolding. The bearer of the name, a girl or young woman, tells her actual or potential suitor that patience and caring are cardinal values in things of love and sexual encounters. Using the Kabre imaginary she likens hurried sex to a dog's

behavior and looks upon it as the sign of sexual immaturity or lack of consideration for her person, all things that make the impatient suitor ineligible for her love. Although the erotic context is clearly the genesis of the name, its meaning can be extrapolated to cover a more general moral scope.

The polemical tone which seems to contradict the hospitable intention of the name bearer should be understood within the Kabre cultural context in which some verbal exchanges which sound like insults are used as pedagogical means of education.[12]

5. CONCLUSION

The pragmatic study of languages, with the renewal of concepts such as meaning, use, context, and contextualization, has led some researchers to recommend a redefinition of the concept of proper names. Some African studies scholars, using communication phenomena studied in the social sciences, have also suggested that proper names be analyzed based on naming practices in particular cultures. The author of this article, following these methodological recommendations, undertook an analysis of the communicative use of proper names among the Kabre of Northern Togo. After a brief comparative summary of cultural and methodological approaches to the concept of proper name, this author defined three main categories of Kabre names: the ontological names whose purpose is to capture and express the ontological identity of the name bearers, the pedagogical names which express the plurality of their socio-cultural identities, and the allusive names which are used to convey messages in an indirect way. The emphasis of this article is put on this last category of names because of the communicative strategies these names entail. Moreover, using examples of Kabre names, this author has shown that indirect communication based on the use of allusive names is polemical in nature, particularly when the names are bestowed on dogs. The article ends with the apparently contradictory suggestion that in this type of communication, the *polemos* turns out to be the carrier of a dialogic rather than agonistic force, in such a way that what is in a Kabre polemical names is, in the last instance, a promise of peace and reconciliation, but a peace and reconciliation without renunciation or easy compromise.

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[12] See Suzanne Lallemand (1975) for an analysis of the use of insults as pedagogical tools among the Mossi of Burkina Faso. A similar practice of using carefully chosen offensive verbal exchanges for educational purposes can be observed among the Kabre of Northern Togo.

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