



## A STUDY OF GHANAIAN HAUSA PERSONAL NAMES

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### **Abstract:**

This study attempts at undertaking a comprehensive study of personal names among Ghanaian Hausa. It particularly looks at the socio-pragmatic usage of the Hausa names. This paper argues that the Hausa give names to their children by considering the social, cultural, and religious philosophy of the Hausa speech community. The philosophy behind these Hausa naming practices goes a long way to help in the peculiar identity of the Ghanaian Hausa. This, to a very large extent, hints that there is a link between names and personal identity as far as naming practices among the Hausa in particular, and Africans in general are concerned. The study, using interview, observation and the researcher's introspection as a data collection method and Linguistic Relativity as a theoretical framework, reveals three categories of names used by the Ghanaian Hausa. These are Judeo-Islamo-Christian names, Hausa names of Arabic origin and Hausa traditional names.

**Keywords:** identity, naming practice, Judeo-Islamo-Christian names, Hausa, onomastic

### **1. Introduction**

Onomastics is a discipline dedicated to the study of proper names in general. It has two sub-disciplines: anthroponomastics which studies names of people and toponomastics which is dedicated to the study of names of places (Al-Zumor, 2009; Ennin and Nkansah, 2016). Anthroponomastics constitute issues of concern for philologists, anthropologists, linguists, psychologists and even the literati. This interest of scholars from various fields of studies may stem from a hint regarding the essence of names. Names are, indeed, pointers to certain facts about the cultural system of the people (Atakpa, 1997; Ennin & Nkansah, 2016; Obeng, 1998; Sekyi-Baidoo, 2019).

The Hausa consider names as identity markers and a kind of biography for the child. The name of a typical Hausa person reveals a lot about the cultural, social and

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religious aspirations of the person. The Hausa name their infants when they attain *bakwai* (seven days) or one week; for the Hausa, seven days make a week. The paternal grandfather of the baby is responsible for selecting the name otherwise, the responsibility lies on the shoulders of the father of the infant. The name given is superintended by the imam of the town or community in which the parents live. The names are selected from a host of sources such as Judeo-Islamo-Christian, names of illustrious companions, Islamic saints, Arabic, and traditional. These sources, therefore, give Hausa names this structure: a given-name which comprises the first three sources of Hausa names and day name which also consists of the Hausa traditional names. It is the given-name that is officially given on the *name-giving* day and, the day name is later conferred on the infant unceremoniously (Mohammed, 2023).

The study aims at achieving the following objectives: i. to explore the sources of Ghana Hausa personal names, ii. to discover the types of Ghana Hausa personal names. The study seeks to answer the following questions: i. What are the sources of Ghanaian Hausa personal names? ii. What is the typology of Ghanaian Hausa personal names? And iii. What is the philosophy behind Ghanaian Hausa naming practice?

## 2. The Hausa of Ghana

Hausa is a language spoken by the Hausa people. The term is used in referring to both the language and its speakers. It belongs to the Chadic languages which is a branch of the Afroasiatic language family phylum (Newman, 2009; Sarkin-Gulbi and Ahmed, 2018). The Hausa are Sahelian people who are mainly found in Northern Nigeria and south eastern part of Niger. However, migration for trade and jobs has made it possible to find a significant number of Hausa people in some parts of West African countries such as Ghana, Benin, Burkina Faso and Togo (Sarkin-Gulbi, & Ahmed, 2018).

The migration of the Hausa to Gold Coast (now Ghana) took three main phases. First, some of them came in groups – in caravans of kola nut. The traders had to live in Gold Coast while gathering their goods that would be sent to the Sahelian regions for sale. In the process, some quarters called *Zango* (corrupted *zongo* by the natives) sprang up. Second, the migration of the Hausa to Gold Coast was through colonial policy on security in the Gold Coast Colony. The Colonial Administration recruited Hausa soldiers from Nigeria to help them in their war against the Ashantis between 1873- 1874. This force, after the war, was regularized into Gold Hausa constabulary (GCHC) – a Gold Coast security force, the majority of whom were Hausa from northern Nigeria (Aremu, 2015; Ntewusu, 2014; Twumhene, 2019; Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, 2007; Boateng & Darko, 2016; Tankebe, 2008). Third, the migration of Hausa into Gold Coast took place individually. Some Hausa entered Ghana on an individual basis mostly to look for jobs in the Gold Coast Colony. These temporary quarters founded by the traders finally became permanent settlements because some of the traders finally had to stay. These became homes for any Hausa who migrated to the country and any person of northern Ghana descent and Islamic religious persuasion. Because of the northern and Hausa characteristics of these areas, they became suitable settlement places for some of

the ex-soldiers of GCHC to settle after their discharge from the service, especially 'the zongo communities in the urban centres' (Ntewusu, 2014).

### 3. Literature Review

A lot of studies have been undertaken on names by scholars of Onomastics, Literary Onomastics and Sociolinguistics because of the importance of names to the life of any entity that exists. Some of these studies are attempts to analyse, explain, to uncover the shroud of myths surrounding names, and to bring to the fore the relationships between names, language and society. Names are not mere labels in African society; they serve as a biographical account of the bearer. The bearer of the name is expected to behave in accordance with the philosophy surrounding the name he/she bears. For instance, Rahman (2013) examines the influence of religion on Pakistani personal names. He argues that religion plays a significant role in identity construction among Pakistanis. One's name singles him/her out as the adherent of any of the multiple religious groups in Pakistan. This, therefore, means that a lot of socio-cultural factors inform the choice of names for infants (Al-Qawasmi & Al-haq, 2016; Al-Zumor, 2009).

Names are not only limited to pointing to the bearer's identity in society, but they are also tools for communication (Abd-el-Jawad, 1986; Agyekum, 2006; Ansu-Kyeremeh, 2000; Mandende, Cekiso & Rwodzi, 2019). They communicate a lot of things about the name bearer and his/her cultural and social environment. Though from differing angles, Radding & Western (2010) argue that "*linguistic and geography each observes that a name's significance is connected to a society*". That might be why (Agyekum, 2006) argues that people who share the same family name have genetic relationships and are therefore expected to behave in the same way. This notion, therefore, counteracts the concept of the arbitrariness of names as claimed by some western Philosophers of language (Eugene, 1981).

Personal names among some speech communities bring to the fore beliefs and philosophy of the people. Abubakari (2020) for instance, explores the personal names of the Kusaal speech community of Northern Ghana. The paper particularly focuses on the pragmatics and semantics of these names. It argues that names are not given to Kusaas' infants in a vacuum without any underlying philosophy. Names among the Kusaas are meaningful and underpinned by the religious beliefs of the people. It is because of these beliefs that make it possible to have the Kusaas bearing traditional, Islamic, or Christian names.

Mohammed (2023) explored terms of address and forms of reference in *Roko* poetry among the Hausa in Ghana. The study which is a literary onomastic one argues that the Hausa philosophy of the world and their cultural practices influence the choice of names for a Hausa infant. All these beliefs and practices showcase the Hausa understanding of the world and therefore reveal the real identity of a Hausa infant through the names he or she bears. This leaves us in no doubt that names are chosen carefully and consciously in order to reflect the worldview of the people.

Apart from names functioning as identity markers, they also have communicative functions as explored by Batoma (2009). The study investigates the communicative functions of the personal names of the Kabre speech community of Northern Togo. It argues that among the personal names of the Kabre people, there are some categories of names that have communicative functions. These names indirectly communicate the feelings and opinions of the bearer of the name, and, by extension, the name giver. They are, therefore, insinuating. This naming practice of the Kabre people concurs with the findings of the present study where the Ghanaian Hausa have sentential names which are also insinuating.

Many studies have not been undertaken in Ghanaian Hausa personal names. Most of the Onomastic studies on personal names in Ghana are on non-Hausa speech communities. Therefore, the present study intends to fill this gap in order to bring to the fore the untapped linguistic resource in Ghanaian Hausa.

### 3.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that underpins this study is the Theory of Linguistic Relativity propounded by Edward Sapir (1884-1939), a Professor of Anthropology and Linguistics at the Universities of Pennsylvania, Chicago, and Yale and his student, Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941), a fire-prevention engineer in Hartford by profession and a linguist by passionate avocation (Stam, 1980); hence, the common designation of the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis as “*the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis*” (Lucy, 1997 p.294).

Whorfian Hypothesis claims a relationship between language and the way the speakers of the language think. This means that the language a particular group of people speaks influences their thought. That probably explains why no two cultures are the same. This may be the result of different languages spoken by different people of the world.

The theory is in two forms – stronger and weaker forms. In its stronger form, the theory holds “*that in some way the language of any given culture is the causal determinant of the patterns of thinking in that culture*” (Stam, 1980 p.306). The theory postulates that people’s language determines their worldview and their perception of their world’s experiences. If people’s cultural experiences of which language is the most common determinant influence their perceptions of the world realities, that probably explains why there are different cultures because of the different languages of the world. It is clear that no two different languages have the same cultural practices or experiences, not even dialects of a language. To this effect, Sapir quoted in Stam posits that “*[n]o two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality*” (1980, p.306). That is why while some cultures perceive a name as a sheer label (Al-Saeedi, 2016), others consider it as an identity marker (Rahman, 2013). Some cultures have just one word for a concept, while others use several words to explain a concept.

My choice of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis as a theoretical framework guiding this study is because the essence of the hypothesis concerns the relationship between language and culture and how they influence one’s way of thought. Obviously, the study has a bearing on the hypothesis as it (the study) focuses on the use of linguistics devices

(names) to explore a Hausa naming culture which is exhibited through the use of language. This culture of naming which the study seeks to explore is quite unique from the other types that are portrayed in other cultures. This is because where language differs, perception will also differ as Sapir quoted in Stam posits “[t]he worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached” (Stam, p.306).

#### **4. Materials and Methodology**

The data for this study are primary data which were collected through interviews and my introspection as a Ghanaian Hausa native speaker. With regards to the interview, I purposively sampled 20 elders 10 middle-aged men from Accra Sabon Zongo whose ages range between 40 and 80. I chose Sabon Zongo because most of the inhabitants are native speakers of Hausa and they adhere to most cultural practices of the Hausa. Each of the participants gave me his/her name, his/her parents’ names, and the names of their grandchildren if any. This saved me the time of having to interview a lot of people. This also offered me the opportunity of collecting the names used by four generations of Ghanaian Hausa people in Sabon Zongo as part of my primary data collection. I resorted to the registers of the local *makaranta* (an Islamic seminary) located in the community where most of the learners and teachers are Hausa. I complemented these by observing and taking notes of names used in those communities.

#### **5. Results and Discussion**

In this section, I analysed and interpreted the Ghanaian Hausa personal names. I looked at the sources of the first category and put them into groups and types according to their sources. I then analysed the names by looking at their meanings per the Hausa philosophy of the world and the socio-cultural circumstances that motivate the use of those names.

##### **5.1 Typology of Ghanaian Hausa Personal Names**

The Ghana Hausa personal names are derived from several sources. The sources that dominate are the ones that relate to Islam and Arabic due to a long relationship of the Hausa with Islam. The data analysis revealed three types of Ghanaian Hausa personal names. These are Judeo-Islamo-Christian names, Hausa names of Arabic origin, and Hausa traditional names. The use of these names reveals the multiple identities of the Hausa and their philosophy of the world.

##### **5.1.1 Judeo-Islamo-Christian Names**

These types of names are derived from the Qur’an, especially the ones that are names of the prophets of Islam. The Hausa believe that names have an impact on the bearer of the name. Good names have positive impacts and vice versa. In order to have their values reflected in the behaviour of the child, the names of these prophets are then given to the

child. This practice portrays the hopes and aspirations of the child's parents for the child. Some of the names revealed in the data are presented below.

<b>Males</b>	
<b>Hausa</b>	<b>English Gloss</b>
<i>Adamu (m) Adama (f)</i>	Adam
<i>Alyasa-'u</i>	Elias
<i>Ayuba</i>	Job
<i>Bunyaminu</i>	Benjamin
<i>Dawud/Dawuda</i>	David
<i>Hudu</i>	-
<i>Haruna</i>	Aaron
<i>Ibrahim/Ibrahin</i>	Abraham
<i>Islamail</i>	Ishmael
<i>Isaka/Isaaku</i>	Isaac
<i>Iddris/ Idi</i>	Enock
<i>Issah</i>	Jesus
<i>Isu</i>	Joseph
<i>Ilyas / Ilyasu</i>	Elisha
<i>Musah</i>	Moses
<i>Nuhu</i>	Noah
<i>Sale /Salihu</i>	-
<i>Sulemana/ Sule</i>	Solomon
<i>Yakubu</i>	Jacob
<i>Yahayya</i>	John (the Baptist)
<i>Yunus/Inusah</i>	Jonah
<i>Zakari</i>	Zakariah
<i>Zurkanaini/ Zurka</i>	-
<b>Females</b>	
<b>Hausa</b>	<b>English Gloss</b>
<i>Hawwa/ Hawaawu</i>	Eve
<i>Saratu</i>	Sara
<i>Hajara</i>	Hagar
<i>Hannatu</i>	Hanna
<i>Mariam/Maryma/Meri</i>	Mary

As can be seen from the names above, they have been categorised into males and females names. The male ones are strictly names of the prophets of Islam that have been mentioned in Qur'an by way of address or reference. However, the female category of the Judeo-Islamo-Christian names are the names of the wives of the prophets, such as *Khadija*, *Saratu*, mothers of the prophets such as *Amina*, and the ones who lived exemplary lives like *Hannatu* (Hanna) and *Mariam* (Mary). These names are strictly used either in male sense or in female sense. They are therefore not gendered.

### 5.1.2 Hausa Personal Names of Arabic Origin

Another Hausa naming practice is naming their infants with names of Arabic origin. Though these names are of Arabic origin, they have been modified to suit the philosophy and worldview of the Hausa. They are names and attributes of God, names and attributes

of the Prophet of Islam, Hausa ordinal names, the names of the Illustrious Caliphs, non-orthodox Arabic names, Hausa proverbial names, colour names, and suffixal names. The categories are presented below.

### A. Names and Attributes of God

The Hausa name their children with the names and the ninety-nine attributes of God of Arabic origin in the hope that the bearer of the name may emulate the beauty of the names and may live an exemplary life per the ethical concepts the names portray. Such names are prefixed by the term ‘abd’ which means a slave in Arabic (Ba’alabaki, 2005), plus the main attributes which indicate that the bearer is subservient to God, the ultimate bearer of the attributes and the names.

Name	English Gloss
<i>Awdullahi /Awudu/Abdullah</i>	the slave of God
<i>Abdul-Kareem</i>	the slave of the Generous one
<i>Abdur-Rahman</i>	the slave of Merciful one
<i>Abdus-Salam</i>	the slave of the Peaceful one
<i>Abdus-Samed</i>	the slave of the Dependable one
etc.	

### B. Names and Attributes of the Prophet of Islam

Apart from the Hausa names of Judeo-Islamo-Christian Origins (names of the Prophets accepted by the adherents of the Semitic religions), the Hausa name their infants after the Prophet of Islam – Mohammed. The Prophet had other names apart from the name ‘Mohammed’. These names are used with some modifications in Hausa. So, the name ‘Mohammed’ is used in Hausa with modifications that result in the forms indicated below.

Arabic forms	Hausaised forms	English gloss
<i>Muhammad</i>	<i>Muhammadu/Mamman</i>	the praised one
<i>Ahmad</i>	<i>Amadu/Ahamadu</i>	praise worthy
<i>Al-Mujtaba</i>	<i>Mujitaba</i>	the chosen one
<i>Al-Mukhtar</i>	<i>Muntari</i>	...
<i>Al-Muntakaa</i>	<i>Muntaka</i>	...
<i>Al-Mustapha</i>	<i>Mustapha/Almu</i>	...
<i>Al-Amin</i>	<i>Aminu</i>	the trust worthy
<i>Al-Mahee</i>	<i>Mahe</i>	the cleanser
<i>Al-Akib</i>	<i>Hakibu/Akibu/Shakibu</i>	the last
<i>Al-Hashir</i>	<i>Hashiru</i>	the resurrector
<i>Al-Bashir</i>	<i>Bashiru</i>	the precursor
<i>Al-Nazir</i>	<i>Naziru</i>	the warner

### C. Hausa Ordinal Names

The Hausa use what I call ‘ordinal names’ to name their infants. The Hausa ordinal name is to name one’s infant boys ‘Mohammed’. This is due to the Hausa obsession with the name ‘Mohammed’ and not because they want to know the number of males they have.

To differentiate between the children and to identify them, the name 'Mohammed' is suffixed with Arabic ordinal numbers. By this practice, the following pattern is generated:

<i>Muhammadu Awwal, Awwalu</i>	-Mohammed number	1 <sup>st</sup>
<i>Muhammadu Sani</i>	-	2 <sup>nd</sup>
<i>Muhammadu Salisu</i>	-	3 <sup>rd</sup>
<i>Muhammadu Rabi'u</i>	-	4 <sup>th</sup>
<i>Muhammadu Hamisu</i>	-	5 <sup>th</sup>
<i>Muhammadu Sadiu</i>	-	6 <sup>th</sup>
<i>Muhammadu Sabi'u</i>	-	7 <sup>th</sup>
<i>Muhammadu Saminu</i>	-	8 <sup>th</sup>
<i>Muhammadu Tasi'u</i>	-	9 <sup>th</sup>
<i>Muhammadu Ashiru</i>	-	10 <sup>th</sup>
<i>Muhammadu Hadi</i>	-	11 <sup>th</sup>

As you can observe from the names above, the ordinals occur after the name 'Mohammed'. These ordinals indicate the position of each male in the sequence of male children in the family. The Hausa is a polygynous society, the ordination of the children is done across the board. For instance, if wife 'A' gives birth to a male for first time the ordinal name may apply by giving the boy 'Muhammadu + the ordinal *Awwal* (first)we, therefore, have the structure 'Muhammadu Awwal', the first Mohammed. If a female is born after that, a female name of the parents' is given her. If the third birth happens to be a male, the child is then named 'Muhammadu Sani' which means the second Mohammed irrespective of who the mother is. This naming practice is limited to only the male children in the family, and this makes it a non-gendered term.

#### D. The Names of the Illustrious Companions

Among the names of Arabic origin the Hausa use in naming their children are the names of illustrious companions, both males and females. The names of male companions are used for male children while the female ones are used for female children. The use of these names is for identity and the emulation of the exemplary lives of these companions. Below are some of the names of the male and female companions.

Male Companions	
Arabic Form	Hausaised Form
<i>Abubakar</i>	<i>Bukari/bukkar/Buba</i>
<i>Umar</i>	<i>Mmaru</i>
<i>Uthman</i>	<i>Usman/Asuma</i>
<i>Ali</i>	<i>Ali / Aliyu</i>
<i>Usama</i>	<i>Husama</i>
<i>Hamza</i>	<i>Hamza</i>
<i>Abbas</i>	<i>Abas</i>
<i>Khalid</i>	<i>Halidu</i>
<i>Alhassan</i>	<i>Alasan</i>
<i>Husain</i>	<i>Huseni</i>



<i>Zubair</i>	<i>Zuberu</i>
<b>Female Companions</b>	
<b>Arabic Form</b>	<b>Hausaised Form</b>
<i>Khadija</i>	<i>Hadiza</i>
<i>A-ishatu</i>	<i>Shatu/ Aysha</i>
<i>Maimuna</i>	<i>Memuna</i>
<i>Fatimatu</i>	<i>Fati/Fatima</i>
<i>Zaynab</i>	<i>Zenabu/Abu</i>
<i>UmmulKulthum</i>	<i>Katumi</i>
<i>Āmina</i>	<i>Amina</i>
<i>Mariyya</i>	<i>Mariya</i>

As you can see in the above list of names of the companions, the Hausaised forms are the modifications of the Arabic form. This is done to suit the phonetics and phonology of Hausa. You must also note that the names listed above occurred most frequently in the data. The categories of the male names are the names of the four illustrious Caliphs, that is, the first four names, the blood relations of the Prophet such as Abas, his uncle, and the ones who made inroads in Islam such Khalid bn Walid. The most frequently occurring female names on the other hand are the ones who had affinal relationships with prophets such as Khadija, his wife, Fatima, his daughter, and consanguine relationship, such as Zainab, his daughter.

### E. Non-Orthodox Arabic Names

The non-orthodox Arabic names the Hausa use in naming their children are ones that are not known traditionally among Ghanaian Hausa, but are often used by the Hausa to name their children. The exodus of Muslim students to the Arab world to study, and the exposure of the Hausa people to the international community due to globalization may be responsible for the gradual shift from the orthodox names to the non-orthodox ones. These types of names are meaningful Arabic words that express the hope and aspirations of the parents, unlike the orthodox ones which have obscure meanings in most cases. The following are examples of the non-orthodox Arabic names used by the Hausa.

<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>English Gloss</b>
<i>Firdausu</i>	<i>Firdausu</i>	a name of paradise
<i>Sa'ad</i>	<i>Sa-adatu</i>	happy
<i>Muflih</i>	<i>Muflihatu</i>	successful
<i>Ikililu</i>	–	a crown
<i>Fauzan/ Faizu</i>	<i>Faiza</i>	victor
<i>Nabil</i>	<i>Nabila</i>	noble
<i>Najib</i>	<i>Najiba</i>	noble
<i>Fadil</i>	<i>Fadila</i>	virtuous
–	<i>Yasmin</i>	jasmine

As you can observe from the names above, some of the gender names such as Faiza, female and Faizu, male have the Arabic letter 'the rounded t' attached to the word. This marks the feminine gender. There are also other types of non-orthodox Hausa names of

Arabic origin used by the Hausa that are epicenes. They are used to name both male and female Hausa infants. For example, a name such *Firdausu*, *Sirina* and *Husama*, the Hausaised form of Usama, which are strictly male given-names among the Arabs have been recorded in the data to have been used for both sexes. The third type is the name that is used strictly only for females. There is no particle that marks it as a male name; however, the Ghanaian Hausa society uses it for males. The name that belongs to that category is *Iklilu*. The last category is the one that is also used strictly for females without any particle marking it as such. An example is *Yasmin*.

### F. Hausa Proverbial Names

These type of names are sentences and expressions extracted from the Quran which function like proverbs. They are usually insinuating which portrays the hopes and aspirations of the name-giver and the societal expectation of the child.

Name	English Gloss
<i>Barā-atu</i>	Freedom from obligation... Q9:1
<i>Huda(Allah)</i>	The Guidance of Allah Q2:120
<i>Lantana/Lantanalu</i>	By no means shall ye attain ... Q3:92
<i>Larai (ba)</i>	Without doubt ...2:2
<i>Nasaru (minalalahi)</i>	A speedy victory ... Q61:13
<i>Rahinatu/Rahi</i>	Held in pledge ...Q74:38
<i>Rubbamā</i>	It may be that...Q15:2
<i>Sayakūlu</i>	They will say: ... Q2:142
<i>Tawa (tawakkaltu)</i>	I put my trust ... Q11:56
<i>Yatasu (Yakhtassu)</i>	He specially chooses...Q3:74
<i>Yazidu</i>	He adds... Q35:1

The type of the above names is chosen from Qur'anic sentences because of the ethical messages the name contains. As you can see above, because the names are in sentences, they are difficult to pronounce. They are usually reduced to phrases or words for ease of pronunciation. The full Qur'anic sentences from which these names have been extracted are as follows:

The Transliterated names in Qur'anic context	English gloss
<i>Barā-atun min al-Allah wa Rasulihi</i>	Freedom from obligation (is proclaimed) from Allah and His Messenger Q9:1
<i>Kul inna hudallahi huwa alhuda</i>	Say: 'The Guidance of Allah, - is the (only) Guidance'. Q2:120
<i>Lantanalu bira hatta tunfikun mimma tuhubbun</i>	By no means shall ye attain righteousness unless ye give (freely) of that which ye love ...Q 3:92
<i>Dhalika al-kitabu laraiba</i>	This is the Book; without doubt ...Q2:2
<i>Nas(a)rum minallahi wa fat-hunqarib</i>	Help from Allah and a speedy victory ...Q 61:13
<i>Kullu nafsin bimā Kasabat Rahina</i>	Every soul will be (held) in pledge ...Q74:38
<i>Rubbamā yawaddu alladhina kafarū Lau kanū muslimīn</i>	It may be that the disbelievers wish they were Muslims. Q15:2

<b>Sayakūlu</b> al-ssufahā-u min al-nāsi mā wallahum an qibilatihim kanu alaiha	The fools among the people will say: "What has turned them from the Qibla to which they were used?...Q2:142
Innee <b>tawakkaltu</b> ala al-Allah Rabbee waRabbikum	I put my trust in Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Q11: 56
<b>Yakhtassu</b> biRahmatihī mayyasha-u	For His Mercy He specially chooseth whom He pleaseth...Q3:74
<i>Yazidu fil al-khalqi māyashā-u</i>	He adds to creation as He pleases... Q35:1

### G. Hausa Colour Names

Colour names are among the type of names Hausa use in naming their infants. These names are used to depict the complexion of the child. These names are of Arabic origin, but they are usually modified to suit Hausa phonetical and phonological structure as can be seen below.

Name		Gender	English Gloss
Arabic Form	Hausaised Form		
<i>Abyad</i>	<i>Abyadu</i>	Male	White
<i>Baidaau</i>	<i>Bailaa-u</i>	Female	White
<i>Saudaa-u</i>	<i>Saude/Sauda</i>	Female	Black
<i>Aswad</i>	<i>Aswadu</i>	Male	Black
<i>Zarkaau</i>	<i>Zarkaau</i>	Female	Blue
<i>Safaraau</i>	<i>Safara/Shafara/Sahura</i>	Female	Yellow

As you can observe from the names depicting a child's complexion, the names are gendered. The names actually depict the skin colour of the bearers to a very large extent, in that most of the bearers of the names have their skin colour depicting the name. However, there was one respondent I came across during the data collection whose name, *Abyad*, white, is opposite to his complexion. Upon an interaction, he revealed that he was named after one Islamic historical figure called *Muhammad Abyad*, Mohammed the White. In such a circumstance, it is possible to have a bearer of a *skin-colour-name* whose complexion does not actually depict the reality. As the data analysis revealed, others in a similar situation were given such names because the sound of the name either appealed to the name giver or he/ she is ignorant of the meaning of the name.

### H. Suffixal names

Suffixal names are the type of names of Arabic origin that the Hausa use in naming their infants. The names are suffixed by the morpheme *deen*, which literally means religion or faith. The base word is always a noun that depicts a certain quality the parents want the child to emulate in his/her life. Below are some of the suffixal names analysed.

Name	English Gloss
<i>Badaruddeen</i>	<b>Moon</b> of the religion
<i>Jalaludden</i>	<b>Dignity</b> of the religion
<i>Jamaluddeen</i>	<b>Beauty</b> of the religion
<i>Kamaluddeen</i>	<b>Completeness</b> of the religion

<i>Liwauddeen</i>	<b>Banner</b> of the religion
<i>Misbahuddeen</i>	<b>Lamp</b> of the religion
<i>Nasiruddeen</i>	<b>Helper</b> of the religion
<i>Nizamuddeen</i>	<b>Orderliness</b> of the religion
<i>Nuruddeen</i>	<b>Light</b> of the religion
<i>Salahuddeen</i>	<b>Godliness</b> of the religion
<i>Sahmuddeen</i>	<b>Arrow</b> of the religion
<i>Shamsuddeen</i>	<b>Sun</b> of the Religion
<i>Sirajuddeen</i>	<b>Lamp</b> of the religion
<i>Tajuddeen</i>	<b>Crown</b> of the religion
<i>Taqiyuddeen</i>	<b>Immaculate</b> of the religion
<i>Zaharuddeen</i>	<b>Emergence</b> of the religion

### 4.1.3 Hausa Traditional Names

The Hausa people had their naming system and practices before their Islamisation. Though Islam has affected their naming system by adding Islamic and Arabic elements to it, they have been able to maintain the traditional ones which serve as the identity of a typical Hausa person. These names include *day names*, *circumstantial names*, *death prevention names*, *birth position names*, *manner of birth names*, and *physical feature names*.

#### A. Day Names

Among the Hausa, the name of the day of the week in which the child is born is normally given to the child. Because these types of names depict the day on which the child is born, they are predictable and gendered like most Hausa names. Unlike the Judeo-Islamo-Christian names, they are not given in a grand style naming ceremony; the child is unofficially called by that name by the parents and even the members of the community because such names are predictable. They are gendered names with the male ones preceded by the prefix *dan* (literally, the son of) serving as a male gender marker in most cases with the exception of the name *Balarabe*, a male Wednesday born whose male gender marker is 'e'; this is not predictable, as you can see from the examples below.

Male	Female	Day
<i>Danladi</i>	<i>Ladi</i>	Sunday born
<i>Dantani / Litini / Liti</i>	<i>Tani</i>	Monday born
<i>Dantalata</i>	<i>Turai/ Baturia/Talatuwa/Talata</i>	Tuesday born
<i>Balarabe</i>	<i>Balaraba</i>	Wednesday born
<i>Danlami</i>	<i>Lami</i>	Thursday born
<i>Danjimma</i>	<i>Jummai /Jumma/Jimma</i>	Friday born
<i>Asabe/Danasabe</i>	<i>Asabe</i>	Saturday born

#### B. Circumstantial Names

Circumstantial names are names given to a Hausa child based upon some circumstances surrounding the birth of the child. As you can see from the list of names below, while some of the names are gendered, some are not.

Male	Female	Occasion
<i>Dantune</i>	<i>Tuni/Tune</i>	a child whose parents lost hope of giving birth
<i>Gagarau/Gagare</i>	–	a male child born after attempts to abort the pregnancy
–	<i>Gwamma/Hakama</i>	a girl born when the parents expected a boy
<i>Mijinyawa</i>	–	a boy born to meet both grandparents alive
<i>Meriga</i>	<i>Meriga</i>	an infant born with the placenta
<i>Shekarau</i>	<i>Shekara</i>	a child born after one year of pregnancy
<i>Shawai</i>	–	a boy who suffers from sickness at early hours of birth
<i>Talle</i>	–	a child whose mother died during his birth / after
<i>Madugu</i>	–	a male child born when the parents are in a journey
–	Ayashe	A female born that has been abandoned

### C. Period Names

Among the naming culture of the Hausa are the names that depict the period in which the child is born such as the names below. Some of these names are gendered and some are not as you can see from the names below.

Male	Female	Period
<i>Anaruwa</i>	–	a child born on a rainy day
<i>Sha'aban</i>	–	a child born in the month of <i>Sha'aban</i>
<i>Bako/Bakondare</i> (Male)	<i>Medare</i>	a child born at the night
<i>Labaran/Dan-Azumi</i>	<i>Azumi</i>	a child born in <i>Ramadan</i>
<i>Sallau</i>	<i>Tasalla</i>	a child born on <i>Id</i> day
<i>Ranau</i>	<i>Ranau</i>	a child born in the afternoon
<i>Nahantsi</i>	<i>Nahantsi</i>	a child born in the early hours of noon
<i>Sammako</i>	<i>Sammako</i>	a child born in the early morning

### D. Death Prevention Names

The Hausa in the Pre-Islamic era believed that if a woman suffered from successive child mortality, it was attributed to a spirit that was always taking the child away and causing the baby's mother to grief. They believed that the antidote to this recurring child mortality was to give the baby an unpleasant name. By this, the spirit would not like the baby; therefore, the baby would escape death. This meant that the name had prevented the child from dying. This naming culture of the Hausa is still practiced in this era when most of the Hausa are Muslims. Some of the death prevention names found among Ghana Hausa can be seen below. It must be noted that some of these names are gendered while some are not. But there is no distinct gender marking particle with the names that are gendered. The distinction is made through a convention inherited from general to generation.

Male	Female	English Gloss
–	<i>Ajuji</i>	Waste dump
–	<i>Ayashe</i>	Rejected
<i>Bawa</i>	<i>Boya</i>	Slave
<i>Allah Barma/Allah Bira</i>	<i>Barmini</i>	God, preserve it for me

### E. Birth Position Names

The Hausa name their infants by the position they occupy in the line of birth of their parents. This naming practice is not like the Hausa ordinal names which serve as roll call for only the male children in the family. This, therefore, does not use numbers. These types of names are in the list below.

Males	Females	Situation
<i>Tagwaye</i>	<i>Tagwaye</i>	A set of twins
<i>Gado</i>	<i>Gado</i>	A boy/girl born after twins
<i>Gambo</i>	<i>Gambo</i>	A boy/girl after the one born after twins
<i>Tanko</i>	<i>Kande</i>	A boy/girl born after two or more males/females
<i>Dan Auta</i>	<i>Auta</i>	A boy/girl who is the last born of the parents

As you can see from the names above, the name *Tagwaye* is used in naming a set of twins. But the names given to them depend upon the position of the twins. That is, the first of the twins to be born is called, *Tagwaye Babba*, the elder twin. This is not gendered. The other twin that follows is named *Tagwaye karami* if it is a male, the female twin, on the other hand, is called *Tagwaye Karama*, the younger female twin. You can see that this is gendered. So, these names, no doubt, indicate the various positions of the twins. The names *Gado and Gambo* are not gendered. The female version of *Tanko* is *Kande* even though there is no particle to indicate the gender distinction; it is purely based upon convention. However, the particle *dan* is a male gender marker, for *Dan Auta*, a male last born.

There are some of the Hausa birth position names that are of Arabic origin which take the roll call of male-born children in the family. This is probably as a result of the premium the Hausa attach to male children being a patriarchal speech community. This also happens when the parents want to name all their male children, *Mohammed* because of the obsession of the Hausa with the name.

### F. Manner of Birth Names

In the Hausa naming tradition, children are named by considering the manner of their births. This can be seen below.

Name	English Gloss
<i>Tagwaye</i>	twins
<i>Mairiga</i>	the bearer/owner of shirt

In Ghana Hausa naming practices, an infant is named following the manner of birth of the child. For example, two children born in single-birth labour are traditionally called, *Tagwaye*. The elder is called *Tagwaye Babba* (not gendered) and the younger is called *Tagwaye Karami* for a male twin and *Karama* for a female twin (gendered). Those are the default names for Hausa infant twins. However, because of the Hausa people's long-standing relationship with Islam, the twins are given Islamic/Arabic names which, with the passage of time, have metamorphosed into Hausa traditional names for twins. In a

grand style naming ceremony, the Hausa infant male elder twin is named *Alhassan/Alasan/ Hasan*, which means good whereas the younger male twin is called, *Husain/Huseni* which is the diminutive form of *Alhassan*. In the situation where both are females, they name *Husena* and *Hasana* respectively. On the other hand, if the twins are of different sexes, and a male is the elder and the female is the younger, they are named *Alhassan/Alasan/Hasan* and *Husena* respectively. If it is the other way round (i.e., the elder one is a female and the younger one is a male), they are named *Hasana* and *Huseni*. The data however, indicate a shift, albeit a gradual one, from the Hausa traditional naming practice of twins to modern ones such as *Jamila and Jamilu*, beautiful, *Halisa* and *Hulaisa*, pure, and *Muniru and Munira*, light.

The term *Mairiga* is another Ghana Hausa traditional name that indicates the manner of birth of a child. The term *riga* in Hausa means shirt, so the combination *Mairiga* means the owner of shirt. This name is given to a child who is born in a placenta. The term literally means *the owner of a shirt*. A child who is born in this manner is named *Mairiga* which is an indication of the manner in which it is born. This name is not gendered.

### G. Physical Feature Names

The Hausa name their children by some physical features the children exhibit. Such physical features include the height of the child, the child's skin colour, the body size of the person (whether fat or slim), the shape of the head, etc. some of the names under this category have been shown below.

Male	Female	Feature
<i>Goshi</i>	–	protruding forehead
<i>Fari</i>	<i>Fara/ 'Yr Fara</i>	fair
<i>Jatao</i>	–	fair in complexion
<i>Guntu/Gajere</i>	<i>Guntuwa/Gajeriya</i>	short
<i>Dogo</i>	<i>Doguwa</i>	tall
<i>Baki</i>	<i>Baka</i>	dark in complexion
–	<i>kumatu</i>	big cheeks
<i>Cindo</i>	<i>Cindo</i>	a child with more than five fingers
<i>Tsiriri</i>	<i>Afiruwa</i>	a slender boy / girl

As you can see from the names above, some of them are gendered with irregular gender markers such as *Gajere*, a male short person, and *Gajeriya*, female short person, *Dogo* a tall male person and *Doguwa*, a female tall person. The gender marker in the name *Gajeriya* is the particle *ya* while the Gender marker for *Doguwa* is the particle *wa*. You can see that the gender marker in these names is irregular. Some of the names are also neutral, that is, the same form is used for both sexes. For example, the name is used for both males and females. Some of the names also which are gendered have different forms for the different gender without the use of gender markers. A typical example is *Tsiriri*, a slender male and *Afiruwa*, a slender female. The name *kumatu*, is used exclusively for a female with big cheeks.

One thing worthy of note is that these names are not given in a grand style naming ceremony held by the Hausa when a *sunan yanka* (the slaughtering name) is being given. The names are a spontaneous response to the Hausa culture. Therefore, these names are acquired later in the child's life as some of the physical features do not show immediately the child is born.

## 5. Recommendations

This study will be a good reference source for researchers in African Onomastics, and it will particular be of immense help to students of sociolinguistics, ethnolinguistics, social studies, cultural studies and ethnohistoric studies. Given the scope of this study, which is limited to Hausa personal names, further research can be undertaken in Ghanaian Hausa naming practices as some of the names are no more popular among the youth, especially the Judeo-Islamic-Christian names and the Hausa tradition names.

## 6. Conclusion

This study explored Ghanaian Hausa personal names. These include Hausa names of Arabo-Islamo-Judeo-Christian origin which are the results of Hausa's encounter with Islam, and Hausa traditional names which were the names the Hausa used before their contact with Islam. These names identify the Hausa as the speaker of the Hausa language and their peculiar culture. Unlike the former category which identifies the bearer not as a Hausa, but as a Muslim. So, the combination of both categories identifies one as a Muslim and a Hausa. Therefore, their usage gives the bearer a complete identity.

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## Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.



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