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IDOMA PROVERBIAL NAMES AS A VEHICLE OF EX-
PRESSION: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC VIEW

Abstract: This paper is a presentation and analysis of proverbial names of the Idoma people of Nigeria. A total of fourteen proverbial names are written in Idoma, translated into and analyzed in English within the purview of literature and Sociolinguistics. Proverbial names, and names in general, like proverbs are a vehicle for expression in apt language and are considered an important aspect of the Idoma oral lore. The analysis reveals that Idoma proverbial names are a vehicle of expression and convey very deep meaning and interpretations. They also serve didactic purposes where a name advises against societal ills or suggesting the need for people to embrace humility as the case may be. Socio-linguistically, these proverbial names are not just arbitrary labels but socio-cultural tags with their functions and meanings. Proverbs and proverbial names therefore stand as the fortress and custodian of the people's wisdom.

Keywords: African, Idoma, proverbs, names, naming practice, sociolinguistics, oral literature.

Introduction

Naming is an essential and universal process which people use to identify what surrounds them as a way of communication around the world. Everything around us has to be identified by giving it a suitable name, to enable us to distinguish between these things. Names are therefore a source of identity for people, places or things. Many scholars and linguists have focused on the investigation of how names can reveal social contexts, cultural insights, linguistic features, and historical background of a society. For example, Lyons (1977) states that, "the functional semantic of words has been seen as that of naming, as far as we can sign or indicate the history of linguistic estimation". Mahrabian and Piercy (1993) mention that the name gives an impression, either positive or negative, and has a corresponding impact in social interaction. The onus lies on every human being blessed

with a child to give such a child a name. Although the basic responsibility of naming a child may be that of the parents, other relations, grandparents or friends can name a child born to a family such a person has ties with. Naming of a child may be done in an organized social ceremony, religious ceremony, or in a cultural scenario, possibly in a home, a place of worship or a social centre. Among the Idoma people of the Lower Benue, there are various categories of names. A name may be of religious inclination, cultural or ethnic leanings. In the ethnic or cultural category of names in Idomaland are proverbial names.

This paper identifies some Idoma proverbial names, translates and analyses each. Names are decided by the parents of the child born. In most cases however, the father is said to own the child more than the mother and since he also has absolute control over the family, he therefore, most often than not decides the name. There are instances however where the father confers with the mother of the child to agree on a name. This paves way for parents of a child to decide on a name they deem fit for their child and may wish to speak out to the world by giving a proverbial name to the child. Proverbial names are wise sayings, apt expressions full of meaning but in a name form. They are expressions with deeper meaning than what they portend to say on the surface.

Proverbs are an essential ingredient in speech and the power of proverbs is uncontestable. They are applied in the course of discussions and where appropriately used, go a long way in resolving disagreements, arguments or statements. Proverbial names are given at the instance of indirect reaction to immediate family issues and in response or attack to allusive expressions contained in such names. A child that is delivered by a mother who has not been lucky to produce a child for many years can give a "late comer" daughter the name Eleggum which means they have left me behind. This is a reaction to make a general statement to express what disturbs the particular person giving the name.

This research presents fourteen Idoma proverbial names commonly used amongst the Idoma people of the Lower Benue, Nigeria. Each is written in Idoma, translated into English and analyzed, indicating reasons for such names being given to a child. It is pertinent to note that various works of literature have

been carried out on proverbs. In view of that, the next section identifies and reviews some literature related to this study.

Related Literature

Various research works have been carried out in the genre of proverbs. The current research is critical because studies of Idoma proverbs still have not received much attention. Though some studies on this important oral genre of the Idoma people have been carried out, it cannot be said to be as extensive as can be seen in other tribes. We therefore present here a brief review of existing literature on the studies of proverbs, naming and proverbial names. It is important for us to review studies of Idoma proverbs here because such studies contain proverbs and sometimes, proverbial names. Proverbs and proverbial names are on the same platform in the folklore family as both serve almost the same purpose. While the proverb may contain a group of words, a proverbial name of just a word is equally a proverb. A proverbial name is therefore a proverb in a name form. Proverbs are also sources from where proverbial names can be derived. Hence the significance of this review on proverbs and proverbial names.

Akinnaso (1950) discusses the sociolinguistic principles that underlie the construction of Yoruba personal names. In so doing, he gives two general conclusions on the naming practices among the Yorubas. He says that a personal name can be meaningful and meaningless depending on the differences in expectation on the socio-cultural significance of names. Furthermore, he asserts that the linguistic manifestation of a personal name will differ in degrees of complexity according to the types of meaning they encode. This study reports that the Yoruba naming system generally provides a structured perspective in terms of what the individual stores, processes and makes sense out of the information about his own experience and how he views the world. According to Akinnaso, the construction of Yoruba names requires the integration of both socio – cultural and grammatical knowledge in order for the linguistic form to be derived.

Dathorne (1966) in his “Proverbs and Riddles in Africa” looks into the value of proverbs and riddles in Africa. The work holds that proverbs and riddles complement each other. It observes that the main issue in riddle is the question while the

proverb provides the answer. The proverb, the work observes, usually comes in a statement form, indicating a conclusion. In folktales for instance, the proverb may provide a summary of the tale at the end. That succinctly explains the entire issue in the tale or the fable.

The importance and function of proverbs in a traditional African setting is emphasized by Omijeh (1968) as he reviews Bini proverbs which he refers to as indispensable in buttressing ideas or opinions in discussions. Bini proverbs, he opines, are adequately applied even in their traditional names, thereby conveying certain messages, opinions, emotions, challenges and beliefs in names given to people. Specifically, the work gives highlights on proverbial names which reflect on Bini beliefs, responsibilities, hopes, conduct and human behavior. Examples of proverbial names in each category are also given and explained. With its main focus on Bini proverbial names, the work is of significance relevance to this present research on Idoma proverbial names.

Echeruo's (1971) work reviews Igbo thoughts, through proverbs. This relates to the Idoma way of expressing the mind through proverbial names. Though they are names, they are proverbial expressions. This work by Echerou (1971) is a comment on one of Shelton's articles which is "to penetrate somewhat into collective rural Igbo thought" and some opinions held of his wrong translations and understanding of the Igbo proverbs used in the said article. He makes reference to a number of proverbs so presented and wrongly interpreted from what the Igbos actually think of such proverbs, and how they would have naturally translated them. Echeruo affirms strongly that Shelton made very serious and unacceptable translation errors in Igbo proverbs in his articles. He asserts that the thinking of Igbos through their proverbs is certainly not as Shelton claims. He therefore gives interpretations and explanations of some Igbo proverbs in line with the Igbo way of thoughts. Examples are also given as extracts of Shelton's interpretations of some Igbo proverbial expressions.

In an interesting work on Hausa literature, Skinner (1980) reviews the various oral genres with interpretations to the oral data used. The genres include tales, proverbs, praise songs, poetry, plays and songs. Proverbs that find a place in this study on Idoma proverbial names are referred to in Hausa as "Karin Ma-

gana". Skinner puts it that proverbs are widely used in Hausa culture. These writers observe it to be the same way they are used in speech amongst the Idoma people of the Lower Benue. Skinner analyses various kinds of proverbs which include hyperbole, wellerisms, irony, litotes and absurdity. The work is a master piece in Hausa literature.

In his reaearch work, Amali (1984) presents a collection and analysis of over three hundred Idoma proverbs. The proverbs are written in Idoma and translated into English. Amali observes that proverbs are a major tool in speech among the Idoma people as may be also the case elsewhere. He holds that proverbs are employed in speech for metaphoric expressions and to drive home major points in any discussion. These qualities and effects in Idoma proverbs are also found in Idoma proverbial names, which is the main focus of the present study.

The main genres of literature with specific reference to Africa are the focus of Achufusi (1986) where she presents an in-depth analysis of traditional African oral genres which include title songs, folktales, and proverbs. Others are poetry, consisting of song texts, funeral dirges, praise songs, incantations and greetings. Proverbs, which is the area of interest to this paper is said to provide succinct and vivid expression and is referred to as a linguistic tool which is indispensable in discussions. Proverbs are as put by Achufusi, constantly and extensively applied in discussions and they carry deep meanings. In a similar vein, proverbial names speak volumes as they convey deep meanings as well.

According to Egblewogbe (1988) proverbial names generally come from personal experiences of the name bearers and the name givers as well as the circumstances surrounding the birth of the child, which have denotative and connotative meanings. He says that the use of personal names is socially restricted among the Ewes and identifies age and gender as social variables responsible for their restriction.

Nwadike's work (1989) highlights on the term proverb and its wide usage among the Igbo people of South East Nigeria. It asserts that the Igbo people take the usage of proverbs in speech as a very essential tool for expressions. Recognizing the fact that proverbs are applied in the course of serious discussions such as in traditional meetings and other high-level discussions, they

convey deep thoughts and meanings. The paper links the origin of Igbo proverbs to four main sources which are from past generations, from creations of elders based on observations on issues, society and social contacts as well as from praise names of the Igbo people. An interesting aspect of the work is on the “Users of proverbs” which authoritatively affirms that proverbs and usage of same are not for the young or minors but for the elderly. Further to that, it is equally on proverbs. The paper also discusses the functions of proverbs, observing that proverbs are not used in isolation just for the sake of citing them. Proverbs are used in speech as it relates to the issue in focus and to buttress points.

Amali's (1992) bibliographic work is a collection of more than a thousand entries on various aspects of Idoma language and literature. They include amongst others, references on proverbs, folktales, poetry, songs and culture. The work also avails the user addresses of some established scholars on Idoma language and literature for easy contacts on the subject. These researchers find it a valuable reference source for scholars on the study of Idoma language, literature and culture.

Proverbs in Idomaland play a major role when applied in the processes of the dispensation of justice. This is the focus of Amali in his study (1998) where he highlights on the importance of proverbs in the process of the dispensation and upholding of justice. This portends that since the dispensation of justice is essential and indeed significant for peaceful societal existence, application of proverbs to facilitate such processes is therefore germane. Amali is of the view that the proverb is a tool which is employed in a final pronouncement by a judge or a prosecutor to drive home his points in the judgment. He presents and analyses a number of Idoma proverbs which are usually employed for different situation as may be warranted.

Another work by Amali on the sources of Idoma proverbs (1999) brings to bare the various sources of Idoma proverbs. He asserts that proverbs are drawn from various sources such as traditional poetry, instruments, talking instruments, folktales, riddles and through interviews with individuals. He stresses that the Alekwo traditional oral poetry of the Idoma people is a potent source of Idoma proverbs. The various sources of proverbs as discussed in the study are expected to serve as guide to parabiographers in their research works on Idoma proverbs.

Similarly, Amali (2000) assesses the image of women as projected in Idoma proverbs. It portrays women, some of which are givers or carriers of proverbial names, as indispensable in family or societal lives of the Idoma people. As put by him, women play significant roles such as in the building and sustenance of organized and productive family systems. Such significance and importance of women are elucidated in Idoma proverbs on women. Amali presents in the paper twenty-six Idoma proverbs on women and each is analyzed in context and occasion for appropriate usage.

In her article on personal names, Schotman (2000) also discusses the traditional names among the Baatonu people of northern Benin. According to her, a Baatonu person acquires multiple names as he progresses in life and at each stage in life, some of the names are shed off. The study, however, reveals that giving names to the children "is not" the sole prerequisite of the parents or relatives. They may be given by any person in the community, even a stranger. They can, however, transmit personal messages through proverbial names.

In a research work on the literary aspect in the study of oral literature, Akporobaro (2005) discusses various aspects of the genres of African oral literature generally. He highlights on forms and the basic genres. The six-chapter study focuses on, among others, proverbs, songs and poetry. This research on Idoma proverbial names derives relevance from its section on proverbs.

Nkem (2008) is an introduction to the various genres of oral literature as well as other aspects related to the study of oral literature. It is a five-chapter book focusing on various segments of oral literature and analysis of the oral genres namely prose, poetry, drama and proverbs. Of particular interest and relevance in this study is the section on proverbs since this present work is on proverbial names and of the proverb family. The study asserts that proverbs hold a "commanding status" in speeches in traditional African cultures. In the same vein, proverbial names can be said to be of great significance for they actually convey weighty inner feelings in just a single name.

In the foregoing review of related literature, works which find relevance and significance to this study on Idoma proverbial names have been reviewed. The next segment of this research

presents, interprets and analyses fourteen selected Idoma proverbial names in context and circumstance for usage.

Data Collection

Information and data for this research were sourced from available literatures on the subject of the study and from an organized personal interview of a knowledgeable informant in the field.

Idoma Proverbial Names: Data Analysis

For the analysis of the data collected for this study, a total of fourteen Idoma proverbial names are here written in Idoma language and translated into English for the purpose of our current analysis in which the significance of proverbial names is discussed. Furthermore, the context under which each name is used is also stated as done below.

1. Idoma proverbial name: Oteikwu

	Ote wi kwu a lece i ge taŋ
Translation:	Hunt is death, it is hazardous, Human beings do not go hunting.

This is a proverbial name which cautions human beings of the danger involved in the hunting occupation. “Ote” in Idoma means hunting. Hunting however is an occupation in which accidents can occur leading to death, as a man who goes for hunting is exposed to hazards of hunting. For instance, he may come face to face with some dangerous animals and reptiles. There are also situations where he faces other hazards such as accidental release of bullets or poisoned arrows. This may occur where another hunter sees a fellow hunter from afar and mistakes him for an animal thereby shooting him down. By this name which is given to male children, despite the fact that hunting is death, the people of the world still dare it and go hunting. If somebody in the family has died as a result of a hunting accident, and a new baby boy is born into the family, this name can be given to him. This is to mark the earlier accidental exit of a member of the family. The meaning of this Idoma proverbial name can also be related to other situations in human life. That is to say that despite obstacles, challenges or difficulties that a man may face over anything he intends doing, he takes up the challenge to go on and do it. So despite the fact that one can easily die from a hunting exercise,

he can still bravely go for hunting and be successful. The hazard involved in it is no deterrent factor.

2. Idoma proverbial name: Alechenu

Alechenu Oguda lo Ogbo nmo

Translation: If care is not taken, or unexpected the novice would kill Ogbo (animal).

The meaning of this is clear. It is still a hunting exploit and a hunting occupational proverbial expression which establishes that the game of hunting is a matter of luck. In a particular hunting expedition, a very successful hunter may return from the bush empty handed whereas the novice comes in with a big animal. The name refers to situations where one makes successes or achievements which are unexpected. It may also refer to a situation where somebody achieves a feat which may have been seen to be impossible of such a person. Proverbial names express the mind or situations which unfold both for individuals or the community as a whole. This proverbial name can be given to a male child in a situation where the unexpected has happened. Therefore, any happening of the individual or of the traditional community can be expressed through proverbs or through proverbial names as put by Amali (2001:1): "Ideas expressed through proverbs know no bounds. They cover every aspect of the human experience including those things regarded as very personal, secret and otherwise." The name Alechenu may therefore be given to a child by a parent or relation who may have had some unexpected achievements. It is for a joyful happening. It can also be given to a child who has come to a family after several years of expectation for a child. Just when they were not hoping for one, a child is born.

3. Idoma proverbial name: Ewaoda

Ewa oda ko ondunu, ofie wa ko o-
lodu

Translation: People are novelty (wealth) for the owner; a slave is meant for the wealthy.

Ewaoda is a male proverbial name that expresses group or ethnic solidarity in Idomaland advocating unity of purpose, that togetherness is greatness. This proverbial name can be given to a child

in a family where the value of working together as a group is significant. It expresses the usefulness of having a crowd solidly behind an individual or a group. When an individual has a large number of people he can surmount all forces against him. The crowd is therefore considered as wealth for him. The crowd is wealth for the owner but it is only the wealthy who affords a slave. Since in Africa “names become automatically associated with people, with their character and characteristics”, this name can be given by a person who has or may have achieved some great feats from the assistance of the population of people he has with him. In this case, he gives praise to them by naming a child Ewaoda to reaffirm the wealth of having a large number of people or a crowd.

4. Idoma proverbial name: Onyilokwu

Onyilo kwu Onyilo wa

Translation:

Man dies, man comes

This proverbial name is more or less of reincarnation, in an instance where somebody had died from the family to announce the re-emergence or rebirth of the man who had died earlier. Rather than give the actual name of the deceased, the name Onyilokwu is given. This asserts and relates to their spiritual or traditional belief that man dies and man comes back by way of reincarnation. People come into the world by birth and leave by death. This lays credence to the statement by Osaji (1987:19) that “names have traditional and spiritual connotations”. The belief in birth and death and reincarnation is attached to this name. It is an allusive name to shield the pain from the loss of a relation.

5. Idoma proverbial name: Elaipu

Ela yi ipu, ale eche i jeŋ

Translation:

When matters remain in the stomach; people of the earth do not know them.

This proverbial name can be related to the Yoruba saying that “the stomach is not storage only for food”. The name Elaipu therefore suggests that the stomach also harbors matters. Elaipu is a feminine proverbial name amongst the Idoma people, given as a response to a situation within the family or society where the

person directly affected would want to warn that people do not know his mind. A person that is aggrieved or pained in any situation can give this name to his child as a source of relief to attack his detractors. A similar proverbial name that can be given in a similar situation is Abogonye. This is a masculine name which means a hand goes into somebody's stomach to take out words. It means nobody can predict a man who has said nothing. Proverbial names, like proverbs, "are highly symbolic and metaphorical often taken from something very imaginative" (Omijeh 1968:44). Nobody knows the mind of a person except when the mind is expressed. In a situation like this, proverbial names like the one above become significantly useful as they "emphasize those things which are uppermost in the minds" of people (Omijeh 1968:44)

6. Idoma proverbial name: Emiene

	Emi ene owoicho mi okwu
Translation:	When they plan evil against you God plans your prosperity.

In human life there exists a belief in God or gods. In traditional African beliefs, there exist the worship of gods and idols and the belief in their supremacy as redeemers. The proverb is "a wise saying based on people's experience and is a reflection of the social values" (Akporobaro 2005:69), in an individual or a given community. Basically nobody knows what befalls another. Where you may be planning evil against somebody, God or the gods, such plans may turn against you. "Emiene" can be hailed as a proverb or given as name to a female child targeted at one's detractors who plan for the downfall of man. An aggrieved member of a family or a community or society consoles himself with such a proverb/proverbial name to indicate that man does not determine one's future.

7. Idoma proverbial name: Ejelikwu

	Ejelikwuη, ikwu bio oche ge ηmo
Translation:	They have given to death.

This is a phrasological proverbial name. It means that those who have wicked intentions or evil plans against others are warned that death does not necessarily accept their prayer. A proverbial name such as the one above suggests a "commanding position in

the rhetorical arsenal of African cultures” in the belief in the unseen (Okoh 2008:123). Death, to the traditional African man, is inevitable and so nobody offers a person to death. However, death comes calling on its own and takes lives at will. This proverbial name Ejelikwu is therefore given to a male child born after a family may have previously lost children to death. This name signifies pains and fears in the mind of the family, rhetorically putting it as if this is not another child for death since the family is besieged with the tragedy of frequently losing children.

8. Idoma proverbial name: Onyemeche

Onye me eche

Translation: Who sees tomorrow or who sees the world.

This is a rhetorical statement. It tells us of the unpredictability of the world or of the future. A person may decide to give this name to a female child when people have taunted him. The name is given to assert that the success of tomorrow lies in the hands of God. It is also a warning to people that the one who sees today does not see or know what the future holds. A similar Idoma proverbial name to the one above is Onyemochi. This is a rhetorical question which means “who sees tomorrow”? It asserts that nobody knows what tomorrow holds. That warns that whatever another day holds for every individual is not known to anybody. It calls for caution and humility. Such proverbial names are “philosophically conceived and intended to deepen and amplify the listener’s perception of the realities of life” (Akporobaro 2005:92). It serves as a reminder to people of the uncertainties of life.

9. Idoma proverbial name: Enokela

Enokela i cheŋ ela i kaŋ

Translation: When the sun of the matter has not risen, the matter would not be discussed, resolved or settled.

This proverbial name is given to male children. It stresses that all issues are resolved as destined. Nothing ever takes place before its set time. Therefore, it is only when the day sets for a resolution or settlement that issues can be resolved. It is therefore necessary for people to hold on to the realities of life, and believe in

the power of the Supreme for things to happen as destined. It is a name given to a male child and indirectly serves as a reminder to relations or others everything in life happens at its set time as “when the sun of the matter has not risen, the matter would not be discussed.”

10. Idoma proverbial name: Ekedegba

Ekedegba ko ome ogwiji bi oyi bee
he to ogo

Translation: They talk of the generation
of snakes.

The bottom line about this name is that while we are expecting that bad things and happenings come to an end, more of such bad things and happenings are coming up. The reference to snakes here is to signify the negativity and danger posed by snakes. So while we hope for snakes to end their generation, the snake (vip-er) goes ahead to bear more vipers which is an indication of more dangers. This proverbial name which is given to male children may be interpreted to pose a warning to people to beware of eminent dangers.

11. Idoma proverbial name: Amiche

Ami iche a moo ochi η

Translation: You can see today, you can't see
tomorrow.

This is another Idoma proverbial name about unpredictability and uncertainties of life. There are no compasses or radars to forecast what tomorrow holds. It is a name similar to Onyem-eche, earlier analyzed in this study. This name suggests that people should maintain humility and make the best of the day or the moment since we are not sure of getting into the next day. It is also to make reference to people who may be full of themselves with arrogance and pride because at this point in life, they feel they have got all. Tragedies do occur, life changes, people fall and a man of high esteem today may be grounded the next day. Such proverbial names or expressions are meant to constitute a bag of wisdom and advice to the young especially. Wisdom is an essential tool in societal life to guide individuals to take wise steps and decisions to avoid failure. Akporobaro (2005:73) observes that “people fail because of natural wisdom and from lack

of listening to the wisdom and advice of the old.” Amiche is a name given to male children. The name may be given to a child born into a family and the name giver uses it tactically as a reminder and a warning to people to bear in mind that nobody knows what situation he can find himself in the next day. It calls for caution.

12. Idoma proverbial name: Onyemowo

Onye mo owo m?

Translation: Who knows or sees your personal god?

This is an illusion. The Idoma traditional society believes in the existence of personal gods. This is in line with the spirit of idol worshiping basically, and the belief in God for those who have embraced Islam or Christianity. This refers to god for the idol worshipper or God for one who believes in the most high God, creator of heaven and earth. Although idol worshiping is not presently a popular practice amongst the Idoma people, it is not completely out of existence. In pockets of villages and families, it is still to be seen as manifested by the existence of the worship sites. This proverbial name, “Onyemowo” poses a rhetorical question. It asserts the invisibility of one’s personal gods and nobody knows, or sees the spirit (god) of the other. The strength of your god is therefore hidden and unknown to any other person. However, it can also hold in the modern religions of Christianity and Islam where the worship of God is practiced and He is regarded as Supreme. Every soul is believed to be a creation of God and nobody sees this Supreme God. Onyemowo is a name given as a proverbial statement to female children to warn people that nobody knows the God you worship, which is to say too, that nobody knows what God can do for any individual. It is a proverbial expression to warn that nobody should be undermined for what he is today; as we do not know what his God would turn him to tomorrow or what greater height he may attain.

13. Idoma proverbial name: Owoicho

Owoicho wo oche

Translation: God is King.

Owoicho in Idoma means God. This name asserts that God is King. A king is the highest person in any society and referring to

God as King, means He is above all and sundry. Nothing and nobody is above God. The Idomas name male children Owoicho to assert and affirm their belief and trust in God as the most high. It is a way of saying that everything is about God and He has done you good, including giving you the child. So where a child is named Owoicho, it signifies that God is supreme, and has done so much for people.

14. Idoma proverbial name: Ikwubiela

Ikwu bie elle ece

Translation: Death spoils the matters of the world.

This proverbial name is usually given to female children in Idoma. It signifies the uncertainties of life and the devastation of death in the lives of people. While you are planning to achieve certain things in life, death may just strike thereby interfering with your plans. Sometimes this name is given too when a child is born and the mother dies soon after the birth. Such a baby girl can be named Ikwubiela.

Conclusion

There is a strong interface between a people's language and their cultural practices. The Idoma proverbial name system and practice is a marker of the people's belief, ideology, culture and philosophy. The names are best understood and analyzed when one has insight into the ethno-pragmatics, socio-cultural norms and the language and culture of the Idomas. Idoma proverbial names are therefore an aspect of linguistic relativity. This paper has claimed that names are not mere arbitrary and meaningless labels but rather have indexical relationship to socio-cultural meanings and functions, places, time, people and events. This study has reviewed fourteen Idoma proverbial names. The study further suggests that proverbs amongst Idoma people of the Lower Benue "embellish the language of expression and make it stronger" (Amali, H. 2003:74). It is in the same light that proverbial names are used to express the inner mind and thoughts of people. Proverbial names convey messages which may be directly connected to the individual, relations, neighbors, friends, groups of people or to the traditional society in general. Meanings are derived from each proverbial name and situations for

use of each name are known to the people. This therefore suggests that where a proverbial name is given, members of the community are able to decode the meaning and give the interpretation as well as the reason such a name has been given. The message in the mind of the giver of the name is thus passed as desired since proverbial names, just as “proverbs express some truth, philosophical thought, or abstract idea.” (Okoh 2008:126).

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