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Suna Linzami:

Hausa Names as Ethnographic Identifiers

ABSTRACT

The full expression of the Hausa title of this paper is suna linzami, ga barawo, kaimi'. This Hausa proverb translates as 'a person's name is like a horse's bit [it steers him], and to a thief, it spurs him [to escape]'. This Hausa proverb reflects the ethnographic nature of traditional Hausa naming conventions in which an individual's name becomes a virtual personal diary encoding not only who they are in the scheme of life, but also in the community and the circumstances of their birth. The emphasis in this paper is on allowing critical categories and meanings to emerge from the ethnographic nature of Hausa naming conventions, rather than imposing these from existing models. An etic perspective, by contrast, refers to a more distant, analytical orientation to experience. The coming of Islam in Hausa societies introduces new, more spiritual naming conventions rooted in an acknowledgement of the attributes of Allah as well as the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad and his companions (the Sahabas). In northern Nigerian Muslim Hausa societies, the increasing Islamism since the 1980s when a more ascetic and radical interpretation of Islam came into force through Izala (for which, see Kane 2003), there has been greater gravitation towards acquiring more Islamic names.

Keywords: *Ethnography, Hausa Names, Hausa Societies, Identity, Islam, Maguzanci, Nigerian Muslim*

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1.0 Introduction

This paper, based on an ethnographic study of Hausa names in Kano, northern Nigeria, provides a cultural interpretation of Hausa personal naming conventions from the perspectives of emic and 'lived experiences' as a unified whole, which has its own structural relationships within the world in which the name itself is a 'living diary' of its bearer. This approach differs from the linguistic analysis of names, as provided, for instance, by Newman

and Ahmad (1992, p. 159) in their hypocoristic analysis of Hausa names, which 'involves modification in a given name, by affixation or reduplication, in order to indicate attitudinal information about the affection of the speaker toward the person referred to'. No ethnic group in Nigeria receives queries about its origin and identity than the Hausa (Skinner, 1968). Almost every other ethnic group is known, fixed and often locked. For instance, despite any internal dialectical variations, a Yoruba is seen essentially as a Yoruba. The Hausa, on the other hand, thanks to their language and their mobility, have been more difficult to define and identify, but essentially by outsiders. The common understanding used to be that anyone who can speak the Hausa language is classified as 'Hausa'—an absurdity, since not everyone who speaks the English language, even if exclusively, could be termed 'English'. The view as it refers to the Hausa was first proposed by Charles Orr in April 1908 when he provided a contradictory understanding of what constitutes the Hausa by arguing that:

The first thing to note is that the word "Hausa" merely denotes "language". A pagan talking his unknown tongue in the Kano market will be met with 'ban ji *hausanka* ba' – I don't understand your language. In other words, a native will claim to be a Hausa merely because he speaks "the language," and it is not uncommon for pagans and even Fulanis to describe themselves as 'Hausawa', merely because they speak that language. In Hausa-land proper, the real Hausa, as distinguished from Fulanis, Pagans, Bornuese, etc., is, as is well known, called a *Habe* and this is unquestionably the correct title for the race. In enquiring about ancient rights and customs one refers always to the old *Habe* kingdoms to distinguish what are more loosely called Hausa States (Orr, 1908, p. 278).

What Orr overlooked – perhaps because he had no access to latter documents, was that the term '*Habe*' is a pejorative Fulani address term used by them to refer to any non-Fulani and not just the Hausa. However, Palmer (1908) published 'The Kano Chronicle' – an English translation of the history of Kano originally written in Arabic. The exact original author was not known, but it was clear that it was commissioned by the Kano Royal Palace. In his introduction to the document, Palmer notes that:

...The Fulani called any conquered negro people "Habe". For this reason it seems better to keep the word Hausa to express the post- A.D. 1000 and pre- A.D. 1807 inhabitants of Hausaland, provided that it is not used indiscriminately of any peoples who speak the "Hausa" language. In fact, *Habe* is a far wider word than *Hausawa*, and practically means any negro race...The name in itself (*Habe*) proves nothing (Palmer, 1908, p. 62).

While this admits a distinct group of people to be referred to as the Hausa, it seems to limit their existence only to 1805-1807 – active periods of the Fulani Jihad in Kano. The Jihad, however, did not get rid of the Hausa. It only supplanted the Hausa leadership of the various kingdoms with Fulani rulers. Thus, the Fulani at first being predominantly Muslim referred to any non-Fulani as '*Habe*', even if the person was a Muslim.

This accounts for their referring to the old Kano kings as *Habe* prior to the Fulani rule which started in 1805 (Ibn Salih's Taqyidl Akhbar in Ado-Kurawa 1989). Similarly, in a much more contemporary climate, Holthouse and Khan (1969, p.107) maintain that although Hausa is commonly used as a tribal term, it is a linguistic one, referring mainly to those people in north-western Nigeria who speak the Hausa language from birth and to people of various tribal origins who have adopted the Hausa language and culture (emphasis added). The emphasized part of this statement is certainly uncharitable to the non-Hausa whose personal identity is obliterated merely by being able to speak the language. This dilemma faces the Fulani on a more interpersonal scale.

Having acquired a series of kingdoms through sheer force (Hiskett, 1973; Last 1967), the Fulani rulers of most of the old Hausa Kingdoms (linguistically six, which are Daura, Kano, Katsina, Zazzau [Zaria], Gobir, Rano; with the listed seventh being Biram) seemed to have promptly lost their original Fulfulde (Fulani) language and gravitated towards the exclusive use of Hausa. Their 'brethren' already widespread among Hausa communities and people did not make many efforts in retaining the language either and gradually also lost their ability to effectively communicate in it. What resulted, therefore, was a paradox of linguistic anthropology — Fulani ethnic individuals unable to speak their language and instead speak the Hausa with exception of a few families, who stick to the language at home.

When the Nigerian political climate started heating up in the turbulent 1970s after the civil war and the future of the country was being decided, northern Nigerian individuals were accused of hogging and holding on to power (both under Military and democratic settings). While not uniformly from the same ethnic group, power brokers and leaders in the north of Nigeria adhered to fundamental core values that are at the base Islamic values — thus cutting across ethnic and linguistic barriers — which seems to give such individuals a uniform 'community' structure. Thus Nigerian journalists then faced the dilemma of what to label the rulers and other power brokers in their feature articles, especially when recounting leadership and ethnicity in Nigeria. To solve the problem, they simply came up with the term, *Hausa-Fulani* to refer

to anyone in the north of Nigeria who speaks Hausa, even if they are Fulani or other ethnicities. This is more so because up to 1975, the term was never used in any writings on northern Nigeria. However, both the Hausa and Fulani do not use these terms as personal labels — preferring their ‘unbundled’ identities of being either *Bahaushe* (Hausa) or *Bafulatani* (Pulaar). An emic view of the Hausa divides them into two additional groups bound by space, culture and identity, but delineated by religion. In this perspective, the ‘original’ non-Muslim Hausa, often labelled *Maguzawa*, remain the quintessential referents of Hausa culture. The Hausa that embraced Islam in about the 13th century through horizontal West African conversion by Malian *Wangara* merchant-clerics constituted a third identity of what simply came to be referred to as Muslim Hausa. While the differences between the two groups are clear when it comes to religious practices, they are less clear when it comes to language, culture and naming.

2.0 Hausa Naming Conventions

Setting aside the arguments about the origin of the ‘Hausa’ name itself (Skinner, 1968), it is worthy to note that Hausa is the most widely spoken language with colonies of speakers in Dahomey, Togo, Ghana, Cameroons, Chad and many of the greater centres in North Africa and Sudan (Kirk-Greene, 1963). This widespread naturally means some form of metamorphosis in naming conventions as the Hausa community comes in contact with indigenous populations – thus giving another, transnational perspective on Hausa naming conventions. I will, however, start with the core conventions used by the Hausa, regardless of religious affinity — a process that would suggest a reflection of the ‘quintessentially African’ Hausa. This means that the Hausa use at least two naming conventions. The first is ‘African’ and reflects the worldview and philosophy of the Hausa. The second is Islamic rooted as it is in the religion of Islam, which the Hausa embraced in about 13th century. Most writers of Hausa naming processes often combine the two categories without separating them (Ryan, 1981); while some focus most of their attention on nicknames, rather than proper names (Daba, 1987; Yusuf, 1973, 1979). The separation is critical because it gives us an opportunity to understand the ‘pure’ Hausa worldview.

3.0 Hausa Names from Non-Islamic Perspectives

These are names usually associated with the ‘pure’ traditional Hausa often found among the non-Muslim Hausa, referred to as *Maguzawa* (Barkow 1970, 1973; Greenberg, 1947; Piłaszewicz, 1995). While the names under this category are not derived from Islam, they are not un-Islamic, as they do not refer to any ‘pagan’ practice, belief or world-view. Interestingly, non-

Muslim Fulani is not referred to as *Maguza wa*, thus retaining their identity regardless of religious affiliation.

3.1 Being, Sickness and Death

The non-Muslim Hausa based their naming conventions on ecological and cosmological observations — using time, space and the seasons to mark their births. Based on this, the first naming convention uses the circumstances of birth. This category of names is used to refer to the arrival of a child either after another child's death, the death of a parent, sickness of the child immediately after being born or a simple structure of the child that seems out of the ordinary. As shown in table 1 below, examples include:

Table 1

Hausa names associated with being, sickness and death

Name	Lived-in Marker
Abarshi	Derived from the expression, ' <i>Allah Ya bar shi</i> ' [May Allah make him survive] for a male child born after a series of miscarriages. A female child is named <i>Abarta</i> . A protectionist naming strategy where the child is not given full loving attention after birth until even evil spirits note this and ignore, and thus let him be. Variants include <i>Mantau</i> , <i>Ajefas</i> , <i>Barmani</i> , <i>Ajuji</i> , <i>Barau</i> .
Audi	Child born of a posthumous father. Variants include <i>Maida</i> , <i>Maimako</i> , <i>Mayau</i> or <i>Kamaye</i> [replacement], <i>Abaici</i> .
Auta	Last born of a mother after whom she stops. Variants include <i>Dangware</i> , <i>Dan Auta</i> , <i>Shalele</i> .
Bakutu	Female child born with obesity.
Balasha	Good looking child of the 'cute' category.
Mairiga	Born with a caul.
Cibi/Maicibi	Child born with umbilical hernia.
Gagarau	Tough. A child who survives several attempts at being aborted.
Gambo	Child born after twins. Variants include <i>Gaddo</i> , <i>Leko</i> , <i>Gambaje</i> (female only).
Kadarko	Child born in-between twins.
Kanta	Male twin.
Auwa	Female twin.
Kyauta	Similar to <i>Tune</i> , but more reverential as <i>kyauta</i> or gift is seen as <i>kyauta daga Allah</i> [gift from Allah].
Shawai	Derived from ' <i>Sha-Wuya</i> ' to suffer; thus, a child who suffers immediately after birth. Used for both male and female children, although mainly female.
Shekarau	Derived from ' <i>shekara</i> ', a year. A male child born after an unusually longer period of gestation. A variant of this name is <i>Boyi</i> [hide/hidden]. A female child is named <i>Shekara</i> .
Tanko	Child born after three female children. Variants include <i>Gudaji</i> , <i>Tankari</i> , <i>Yuguda</i> / <i>Iguda</i> / <i>Guda</i> .
Kumatu	Born with big cheeks.
Tarana	Female child born in the daytime.

Table 1

Hausa names associated with being, sickness and death

Name	Lived-in Marker
Dela	Child born after a series of male children. Variants include Delu, Duduwa, Baranka, Kande, Iggi/Ige.
Talle	Child whose mother died at their child-birth. A variant is Tallafi.
Tune	Child born long after the mother had given up on giving birth to another child. Variants include <i>Dantune</i> , <i>Tune</i> , <i>Tunau</i> , <i>Tuni</i> [all derivatives of 'tuni', remind' – viz; the child's arrival is a reminder of her ability to conceive.

Each of these names reflects a philosophical worldview, spiritual resignation or slight humour. They, therefore, encode the traditional Hausa perspective of living and dying, as inscribed on their children.

3.2 Wealth and 'Being-Owned'

Slaves prominently featured in the political and social structure of the traditional Hausa society, especially in the old commercial emirates of Kano, Zaria, Daura and Katsina. Their roles were clearly defined along socially accepted norms and they were expected to perform given assignments demanded by their masters. Slaves in Kano were divided into two: domestic and farm-collective. Trusted and therefore domesticated slaves were mainly found in ruling houses, as identified by Imam Umoru (Ferguson, 1973) and prized because of their loyalty to the title-holder. Farmyard slaves were often captured during raids or wars and not trusted because of the possibility of escape. They were usually owned by wealthy merchants or farmers and put to work mainly in farms (Dunk, 1983; Harris, 1931, Hill, 1976). Although the institution of slavery as then practiced was eliminated in traditional Hausa societies, the main emirate ruling houses still retain vestiges of inherited slave ownership reflected even in the categorization of the slaves. For instance, according to Stilwell (2000, p. 398), 'in Kano royal slaves were distinguished between first-generation *bayi* (slaves) and those born into *cucanawa* (slavery).' At the height of slave raids and ownership, particularly when owning a slave was an indication of wealth, the names of the slaves often reflected the status of the owner, as pointed out by Harris (1931). Examples of these names are shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2

Hausa names associated with slaves and those being-owned

Name	Lived-in Marker
Nasamu	Given to the first slave owned by a young man determined to become a wealthy man.
Risku	Name given to a second slave acquired.
Arziki	First female slave owned by a man.
Nagode	Female slave given away to a person as a gift.

Table 2

Hausa names associated with slaves and those being-owned

Name	Lived-in Marker
Baba da Rai	First gift of a male slave to a son by his father.
Allah Bar Sarki	Slave given to a courtier by an Emir.
Dangana	Male slave of a latter-day successful farmer or trader, although later given also to a child whose elder siblings all died in infancy. The female slave variant is Nadogara.
Baubawa	Name given to slaves with different faith from the owner.
Zamangira	Female slave bought by a second wife in a polygamous household.

The changing political economy of Hausa societies since the coming of colonialism has created new social dynamics, which included the outward banning of slavery in an increasingly Islamicate society. Therefore as Harris (1931) noted, many of the names associated with slaves and ‘being-owned’ in Hausa societies became unfashionable and disused, which is more “probable to be used without any idea of their original meaning, it is thought that some record of them may be of value” (p. 274). An example is *Anini*, usually a slave name, but later used to refer to a child born with tiny limbs. The ‘smallness’ is also reflected in the fact that *anini* was a coin in Nigerian economy, usually 1/10th of a penny — a bit like the small Indian copper coin, ‘dam’. Further, with the coming of Islam, slave names were eased out and replaced by conventional Muslim names as dictated by Islam. I will discuss that later. Retained, however, are slave names that also served as descriptors of the functions of the slave, even in contemporary ruling houses. Examples of these slave titles which are rarely used outside of the places include:

Table 3

The changing of Hausa slave names associated with Islam and politics

Slave Name	Slave Function
Shamaki	Looks after the king’s horses and serves as an overseer of slaves.
Dan Rimi	King’s top slave official who looks after all weapons.
Sallama	King’s bosom friend [usually a eunuch], same role as Abin Fada.
Kasheka	Shares household supplies to the king’s wives [usually a eunuch].
Turakin Soro	Guardian of the inner room.
Abin Fada	Go-between.
Majasirdi	Prepares the horse’s saddle.
Malafa	Head gear protection.
Kyankyandi	Mobile wardrobe attendant.
Babban Zagi	A runner in front of the king.
Jarmai	The head of an army.
Lifidi	Head of armored warriors.
Mai Tafari	Dane gun saluter.
Mabudi	Looks after the keys of the palace.
Kilishi	Prepares sitting place for the king.

These names are almost exclusively restricted to the palace and rarely used outside its confines. Cases of the nicknames of individuals bearing these names remain just that, but have official connotation outside the palace.

3.3 Seasons in the Sun

The days, weeks and seasons are calendars around which the traditional Hausa society structured its activities, just like any other society, ancient or modern. In the case of the Hausa, however, events in the seasons were often commemorated in the naming process — serving both as a reminder of the immediacy of the time of birth, as well as diary of the event. The following are examples of names based either directly on time of birth, seasons or an event that characterizes a season, as presented in Table 4 below:

Table 4

Hausa names associated with birth, seasons or an event that characterizes a season

Name	Gloss/Lived-in Marker
Sammako	Born at dawn
Ranau	In the afternoon
Na-Hantsi	Early morning
Dare	Night birth
Shuka	Planting period
Nomau	Harvesting period. Variants include Dankaka, Kakale, Kaka
Damina	Rainy season
Mairuwa/Ana-Ruwa	During actual raining
Marka	During rainy season
Ci-Gero/Mai Gero	Millet harvest
Ci-Wake/Roro	Beans harvest
Ci-Dawa	Corn harvest
Korau	Times of food prosperity
Safari	Cold season

As shown in Table 4 above, these names reflect not only the farming tradition of the Hausa society, but also their dietary preferences. Grains acquired later such as rice and wheat do not figure in the Hausa naming convention based on crops, considering their peculiar waterlogged needs. Related to names given according to the farming season are those given according to the day of the week. These names are presented in Table 5 below:

Table 5

Hausa names associated with the days of the week

Name	Day of the Week
Altine	One born on Monday (fe. Atine). A variant is <i>Danliti</i> .
Dantala	Tuesday. Talatu is the female variant, while <i>Maikudī</i> is a universal variant.

Table 5

Hausa names associated with the days of the week

Name	Day of the Week
Balarabe	Born on Wednesday (fe. Balaraba). Variants include <i>Bature</i> (fe. Baturiya), <i>Danbala</i> , <i>Labaran</i> (Ar. Ramadan), <i>Laraba</i> (fe), <i>Tabawa</i> (fe).
Danami	Born on Thursday; (fe. Lami).
Danjumma i	Child born on Friday. Variants include, <i>Juma</i> , <i>Jummai</i> , <i>Jume</i> , <i>Limmo</i> , <i>Lumma</i> , <i>Ummo</i> . Pulaar child born on Friday is <i>Maude</i> .
Dan Asabe	Child born on Saturday. Female variant is <i>Asabe</i> , while <i>Asibi</i> is universal.
Danladi	Child born on Sunday. Also <i>Lado</i> . Female variants include <i>Ladi</i> , <i>Ladidi</i> , <i>Ladidinma</i> , <i>Ladingo</i> .

As shown in Table 5 above, the naming of individuals according to the day of week is quite widespread in other cultures. According to Migeod (1917, p. 39), among the Efe (Benin) and the Twi (Ghana) “boys and girls are named according to the day they are born”.

4.0 Islam and Muslim Hausa Names

The coming of Islam to Hausaland in about 13th century altered the way the traditional Hausa named their children and created the second category of Hausa beside the first ‘traditional’ *Maguzawa*. This second category became the Muslim Hausa, who abandoned all cultural activities associated with traditional Hausa beliefs. This was not an overnight process, however, taking as it did, centuries. Even then, a significant portion of Muslim Hausa material culture remains the same as for traditional Hausa. The point of departure is in religious or community practice, which for the Muslim Hausa is guided by the tenets of Islam. Affected in this point of departure is naming conventions. This is more so because Islam encourages adherents to give their children good meaningful names. These names must therefore not reflect anything that counters the central faith of the bearer or reflect reversion to the pre-Islamic period in the lives of individuals. Thus, forbidden are names that connote idolatry, names that are befitting of God alone (for example, the King of Kings), names of tyrants or idolaters (for instance, Pharaoh), names with bad meanings such as *Harb* (war) which Prophet Muhammad ordered their bearers to change to something more meaningful.

Daba (1987) in his study of Kano Muslim Hausa address terms studiously avoided the naming conventions of the non-Muslim Hausa, because, as he indicated, his main focus was on the Muslim Hausa. In his categorization of the Muslim Hausa naming process, he suggested that in Kano a child can have three types of official names: *sunan gaskiya* (real name), *sunan yanka*

(personal name) and *sunan littafi* (Islamic name). Both *sunan gaskiya* and *sunan littafi* are derived from the Islamic naming convention, while *sunan yanka* tended to be considered *Maguzawa* naming and is often frowned on. It is interesting to note a shadowy acknowledgement of traditional Hausa naming, even if avoiding it. In this regard, Daba (1987, p. 28) erroneously argues that “the main difference between the Muslim and the non-Muslim usages is that the former do not give non-Islamic traditional name as a *sunan yanka* to their child while the latter do”. Yet, there are many individuals in contemporary Kano, who, despite the increasing Islamism, insist on retaining or using *sunan yanka* that reflect the traditional Hausa naming system, so long as these do not reflect an un-Islamic attribute.

In my discussion with some of them, they do admit, however, that they are under pressure from their families to give their children an Islamic name and use only the *sunan yanka* as a nickname. It should be emphasized, however, that there is a distinction between Arabic names and Islamic names. In the first instance, not all Arabs are Muslims, so not all Arabic names reflect Islamic or Muslim attribute. Secondly, Arabic names are in most cases personal to the cultural ecology of the bearer—and therefore may not sit well when translocated to a radically different social setting. Thus, we have cases of ‘lost in translation’, as many Muslim Hausa who give Arabic-sounding names to their children, are not aware of the exact meanings of these names and focus on the phonetic sounds of the names. It is perhaps not surprising that such phonetic poetics are most common with female names. Examples are presented in Table 6 below:

Table 6
Hausa female names associated with Arabic concords

Hausa Name	Arabic Gloss
Samira	Cat
Fauziyya	Saved
Yasmine	Insufficiency
Yazida	Additional
Yusra	Ease
Mahjuba	Secluded
Intissar	Seeking for victory
Ifrah	Happiness
Sakina	Knife
Safinah	Ship
Aaliyah	Tall, Towering.

As shown in Table 6 above, these common Arab names are not necessarily derived from Islamic sources (either the Hadith or the Qur’an) but are yet used

frequently by Muslim Hausa as affirmation of righteousness. It is certain that giving Hausa girls names with equivalent Hausa meanings as these Arabic names would lead to protests in communities. A further reflection of this is the way transnational events weave their way into the Muslim Hausa naming practice. The Gulf War (2 August 1990 – 28 February 1991), codenamed Operation Desert Storm (17 January 1991 – 28 February 1991) was waged by a UN-authorized coalition force from 34 nations led by the United States against Iraq in response to Iraq's invasion and annexation of Kuwait and led to a spate of Muslim Hausa male babies named 'Saddam', after the then Iraqi president, Saddam Hussain. Similarly, after the tragic events of 11th September 2001 when a series of four coordinated terrorist attacks launched by the Islamic terrorist group *al-Qaeda* upon the United States in New York City and Washington, D.C., many parents in Kano named their male babies 'Osama' after Osama bin Laden, the leader of *al-Qaeda*. All these are in apparent synchronization with the ideals of those behind the attacks, thus a form of solidarity through naming. Additionally, the Muslim Hausa have been able to 'domesticate' Arabic names, giving them a more local phonetic value. Examples are shown in Table 7 below:

Table 7

Hausa names associated with Arabic concord and a more local phonetic value

Hausa	Gender	Arabic Gloss
Indo	Female	A'isha
Abu, Bukar, Habu	Male	Abubakar
Gagare	Male	Abubakar
Ada, Ado	Male	Adam
Guruza	Male	Ahmad (Muhammad)
Almu	Male	Al-Mustapha
Bilki	Female	Bilqees
Da'u	Male	Dawud
Binta	Female	Fatima
Auwa	Male	Hauwa
Iro	Male	Ibrahim
Ilu	Male	Islma'il
Jibo	Male	Jibrin
Dijangala, Dije	Female	Khadihaj
Daso	Female	Maryam
Babuga	Male	Umar
Abu	Female	Zainab

On the other hand, names rooted in attributes of Islam are universal to all Muslims. It is these that the Muslim Hausa and indeed Islam favor. These universal Islamic names include, for instance, the 99 names of Allah, which

indicate His attributes. Muslims are required to affix ‘Abd’ [servant] next any of the 99 names of Allah as a perpetual reminder of the attribute. Examples are illustrated in Table 8 below:

Table 8

Hausa names associated with the 99 names of Allah

Attribute	Gloss	Hausa Naming Variant
Al-Malik	The King, The Sovereign Lord	AbdulMalik
Ar-Rahman	The Compassionate, The Beneficent	AbdulRahman
As-Salaam	The Source of Peace	AbdulSalaam
Al-Mu'min	The Guardian of Faith	AbdulMu'min
Al-'Aziz	The Mighty, The Strong	AbdulAziz
Al-Jabbaar	The Compeller	AbdulJabbaar
Al-Ghaffaar	The Great Forgiver	AbdulGhaffaar
Al-Wahhāb	The Bestower	AbdulWahab
Ar-Razzāq	The Ever Providing	AbdulRazzaq
Al-Karīm	The Bountiful	AbudlKarim

As illustrated in Table 8 above, ‘Abdul’ refers to the servitude of the attribute – thus *AbdulGhaffaar*, for instance, means the ‘Servant of the Great Forgiver’. Next are names that are derived from the Prophets, with various names of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam being most favored. Examples of commonly used names of Muhammad by the Muslim Hausa are shown in Table 9 below:

Table 9

Hausa names associated with Prophet Muhammad

Name	Gloss
Muhammad	Highly praised
Ahmad	Most commendable
Mahmud	Praised
Shahid	Witness
Bashir	Bringer of glad tidings
Nadhir/Nazir/Munzir	Warner
Mahdi	He who is well-guided
Mujtaba	Elect
Muzammil	The Wrapped
Nasir	Helper

Each of these names is rooted in a particular historical incident that surrounded the life of Prophet Muhammad. The names are therefore historical reminders of what happened and as well as reflects the attributes of the Prophet. They are therefore favored and prized next to those describing the attributes of Allah.

5.0 Conclusion

As Suzman (1994, p. 254) points out, in the Zulu society ‘traditionally, personal names were unique and meaningful, emerging from circumstances at the time of the child's birth.’ In old Benin, Schottman (2000, p. 79) also reports that ‘a *Baatonu* child is born with a birth rank name. A typical characteristics of the pregnancy or delivery as well as notable circumstances surrounding the event of the child's birth can be at the origin of another name.’ In Ethiopia, ‘Amharic names are especially interesting for the bulk of them are based on metaphorical expressions’ (Leyew, 2003, p. 184). This is very much the same as in other African societies, including the Hausa of northern Nigeria. The Hausa personal naming convention, however, has undergone a transformation. The quintessential traditional and non-Muslim Hausa used ethnographic markers rooted in nature, being, non-being and acquisition, among others, that show the relationship between the Hausa and their environment.

Despite their non-Muslim nature, their naming convention rarely alluded to the ‘pagan’ life of the Hausa. Other societies across Africa also face their own transformations. Ivor Ngade (2011) reports that in Cameroon, the Bakossi people simply turn to online baby dictionaries to choose baby names devoid of the age-old traditional naming practice. Consequently, currently preferred ‘sensual’ and exotic names include ‘Whitney from Whitney Houston; Kelly from Kelly Clarkson; Angelina from Angelina Jolie; Vanessa from Vanessa Paradis; Tracy from Tracey Chapman; Michael from Michael Jackson’. He laments that ‘the more parents adopt and familiarize with non-Bakossi names, the greater tendency there is to depart from the ancestral naming practices that carry the values and beliefs meant to construct Bakossi identity. The coming of Islam in the Hausa society introduced a new and more spiritual naming convention rooted in their acknowledgement of the attributes of Allah as well as the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, and his companions (the Sahabas).

In the northern Nigerian Muslim Hausa society, increasing Islamism since the 1980s when a more ascetic and radical interpretation of Islam came into force through *Izala* (Kane, 2003), there has been a greater gravitation towards acquiring more Islamic names. As Ngade (2011) pointed, this is similar to the case of “Bakossi [Cameroon], where the local people were converted to Christianity bearing new names” (p. 119). This automatically meant taking the baptismal oath of denouncing tradition in favour of Christianity and if possible seeing some of the traditional beliefs as being ‘wrong’. The situation in Islam, however, differs in that Muslims can adopt a name they like—so long as it does not connote anything un-Islamic. The further entrenchment of Islam among African communities, however, creates a yearning for a larger transnational community of the Muslim Umma (community) which increasingly sees a dilution of traditional African names among the Hausa of northern Nigeria.

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