ISSN(O): 2320-5407 | ISSN(P): 3107-4928

ISSN NO. 2320-5407

International Journal of Advanced Research

Publisher's Name: Jana Publication and Research LLP

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REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-59681

Title: Personal Name Attribution among the Dogon of Mali: A Socio-Onomastic Analysis of Naming Motivations and Cultural Practices.

Recommendation:
Accept with Minor Revisions……

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓		
Techn. Quality		✔		
Clarity			✓	
Significance		✓		

Reviewer Name: Faheem Abdul Muneeb

Reviewer's Comment

The manuscript examines personal naming practices among the Dogon of Mali from a socio-onomastic perspective, focusing on the meanings attributed to names, the circumstances surrounding their selection, the people involved in the naming process, and the social and cultural functions of personal names. The subject is relevant to sociolinguistics and African onomastic studies, particularly because personal names provide an important means of understanding the relationship between language, family experience, religious belief and collective memory. One of the article's principal strengths is that it moves beyond the morphological and semantic description of names to examine the motivations behind their attribution. The classification of names into theophoric, event-related, descriptive, ordinal, twin and sacred categories provides a useful framework for presenting the findings. The examples collected from Sangha, particularly those associated with religious beliefs, family experiences, ritual events and birth order, give the article a valuable empirical dimension. The manuscript is generally well organised and its central

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argument is clear. A few clarifications and refinements would further strengthen its methodological consistency and analytical presentation.

The first point concerns the geographical and cultural scope of the study. The title refers broadly to the Dogon of Mali, whereas the fieldwork was conducted in Sangha, in the Bandiagara region, during January and February 2025. The authors appropriately acknowledge in several places that naming practices may vary across Dogon communities. It would nevertheless be useful to make the geographical scope more explicit in the introduction and methodology. A brief indication of the particular community or locality from which the examples were collected would help readers understand the context of the findings. The authors may also clarify whether the expressions and names discussed belong to a particular Dogon linguistic variety or whether the study draws on accounts from speakers of different varieties. This would be especially useful because the article examines the linguistic formation and reported meanings of personal names.

The methodology section provides a reasonable account of the qualitative research design and identifies 30 participants, comprising 20 men and 10 women, selected purposively on the basis of their knowledge of Dogon traditions and naming practices. This is useful information. However, the abstract mentions observation, content analysis and individual interviews, while Section 1.3 identifies semi-structured interviews and documentary review as the principal data-collection techniques. Section 2.1.1 subsequently refers to fieldwork, individual interviews and observation. The authors should harmonise these descriptions by specifying briefly how observation was conducted and what material was subjected to content analysis. If observation was used as a supplementary source, its contribution to the study should be explained. This small clarification would ensure that the abstract, methodology and presentation of findings describe the same research procedures.

The description of corpus construction in Section 1.4 could also be made more informative. The authors state that a substantial number of personal names were collected and that the analysis concentrates on examples considered most relevant and representative. However, the actual number of names collected is not reported. It would be useful to provide the approximate size of the corpus and, if possible, indicate how the examples were selected for detailed discussion. This does not require a complete inventory of all the names. Even a brief indication of the number of names collected and the criteria used to select the examples would improve the transparency of the research. It would also help readers understand the relationship between the six analytical categories and the larger body of collected material.

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The discussion of naming agents in Section 2.1.2 is particularly interesting because it demonstrates that the attribution of a name may involve several members of the extended family rather than being exclusively an individual parental decision. The involvement of grandparents, uncles, other relatives, ancestors and, in certain situations, the Hogon provides an important insight into the social organisation of naming. The authors could develop this observation slightly by clarifying the distinction between proposing a name, participating in the decision and giving final approval. This is relevant because the summary of findings on page 10 states that the biological father is consulted and the eldest family member gives final approval, whereas the earlier discussion indicates that the father confirms the name eventually selected. The authors should ensure that these descriptions are consistent and accurately reflect the accounts of the informants. A clearer explanation would strengthen one of the article's important findings concerning the collective character of naming practices.

The typology presented in Section 2.2 is one of the manuscript's strongest contributions. The six categories provide an accessible way of organising the different motivations identified in the fieldwork. The authors also correctly acknowledge that the categories are not mutually exclusive and that a single name may reflect more than one motivation. This is an important point and should be retained. However, the distinction between theophoric and sacred names could be explained more clearly at the beginning of the typology. Section 2.2.6 states that the distinction is functional: theophoric names refer directly to the divine through their linguistic form, whereas sacred names are associated primarily with the ritual circumstances of attribution. This is a useful distinction, but some examples appear in both categories. Baraama, Binrunseru and Lɛɓɛseru, for instance, are discussed earlier in the theophoric category and appear again in Table 3 on sacred names. The authors should briefly explain why these examples are included in both categories and how the different analytical dimensions are being distinguished. This would make the classification more systematic without requiring any change to the proposed framework.

The discussion of theophoric names in Section 2.2.1 is valuable because it connects the reported meanings of names such as Amasomu, Baraama, Binrunseru and Lɛɓɛseru with religious beliefs and ancestral memory. The authors appropriately distinguish informants' interpretations from independently established linguistic etymologies. This methodological caution is important, particularly where individual forms are segmented into elements such as Ama, bara and Binru. The authors should maintain this distinction consistently and, where possible, indicate whether a proposed segmentation is supported by linguistic analysis or is based on the explanations provided by participants. A short clarification of this kind would help readers distinguish cultural interpretation from morphological or etymological claims.

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The discussion would also benefit from a brief indication of whether the meanings attributed to these names are shared by several informants or were reported by particular individuals.

The section on event-related or circumstantial names is another strong part of the manuscript. Examples such as Amaigɛrɛ, Yasigi, Ɔgɔdana, Ɔgɔbara, Ɔgɔtɛmɛlu, Amɔn and Yamɔn illustrate how names can preserve the memory of family difficulties, ritual ceremonies, deaths and significant events surrounding a child's birth. The discussion of Amaigɛrɛ, in particular, shows how a name may express the family's hope for the survival of a child following earlier losses. Similarly, the interpretation of Yasigi in relation to the Sigi ceremony connects individual naming with collective ritual memory. The authors could strengthen this section by providing a little more context for the meanings of the individual components of these names, where such information is available. The reported association of Yasigi with a ceremony occurring in a sixty-year cycle is especially important and could benefit from a brief indication of the source of this information. These additions would make the cultural explanations more accessible to readers who are not familiar with Dogon traditions.

The discussion of descriptive names in Section 2.2.3 is concise and appropriately cautious. The examples Apiri and Yapiri are associated with physical characteristics, particularly fair or light skin, and the authors identify a possible relationship between the masculine and feminine forms. The observation concerning the prefix ya- is interesting. It would be useful to clarify whether this pattern is also visible in the ordinal and twin names presented later in the article. A brief comparison could help distinguish a recurring gender-marking pattern from a feature limited to particular sets of names. The authors are right, however, not to assume that the physical characteristic associated with a name necessarily carries a particular social value. This distinction should be preserved.

The presentation of ordinal names in Table 1 on page 7 is useful and provides concrete evidence of the relationship between naming and birth order. The table identifies distinct masculine and feminine forms for the first five birth positions and for the tenth and eleventh positions, while ordinary names are reported for the sixth to ninth and twelfth and subsequent positions. The authors correctly observe that the distribution is discontinuous and should not be presented as a regular numerical sequence. One small improvement would be to clarify what is meant by "ordinary names" in the table. Does this mean that children in these positions receive names without a specific ordinal designation, or that no particular forms were reported by the informant? Clarifying this distinction would make the table easier to interpret. The authors may also briefly indicate whether the forms were independently confirmed by other participants or were obtained primarily from the interview with Niaba Dolo.

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The discussion of twin names and Table 2 on page 8 provide another useful dimension of the study. The distinction between first-born and second-born twins, together with the masculine and feminine forms, illustrates how naming can identify a particular family configuration. There is, however, a small inconsistency in the presentation of the second-born twin's name. The table gives the masculine forms as Asɛ / Asɛgɛ and the feminine forms as Yasɛ / Yasɛgɛ, while the accompanying discussion refers principally to Asɛgɛ and Yasɛgɛ. The authors should clarify whether these are alternative forms, variant pronunciations or different versions reported by the informants. It would also be useful to explain briefly the naming of Ana and Yana for children born after a pair of twins, since this is an interesting additional observation that is currently mentioned only in the accompanying text.

Section 2.2.6 and Table 3 on page 8 offer a useful account of sacred names associated with ritual offerings, places considered sacred and spiritual intervention. The distinction between the linguistic reference to the divine and the circumstances of ritual attribution is relevant to the overall typology. The table would benefit from slightly more precise wording in the explanations of Lɛɓɛseru, Binrunseru, Lɛɓɛniju and Amaseru. In particular, the repeated description of a woman who was previously unable to conceive and subsequently gave birth following a libation could be shortened and presented more consistently, with the specific spiritual or ritual reference identified for each name. The authors should also clarify the terms "patriarch", "Ama" and "Lɛɓɛ" where necessary, so that readers can understand the relationship between the figures or powers being invoked and the naming practices described. This is especially important because the table attributes the ritual offerings to different benefactors.

The discussion in Section 2.3 successfully brings together the findings under three broader dimensions: spirituality, social memory and the classification of individuals within the family. This synthesis is useful because it demonstrates how the six categories can be understood in relation to a smaller number of wider sociocultural functions. The authors could make the relationship between the six categories and these three dimensions slightly more explicit. For example, a brief sentence explaining how theophoric and sacred names relate primarily to spirituality, event-related names to social memory, and ordinal and twin names to family classification would help consolidate the analytical framework. Descriptive names could also be mentioned in this synthesis so that all six categories are represented in the discussion.

The summary of findings and conclusion appropriately emphasise the qualitative and exploratory character of the study. The authors are also right to acknowledge that the findings do not establish the frequency or geographical distribution of the different naming categories across all Dogon communities. One point requiring consistency is the statement in the summary that the eldest family member gives final

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approval, which should be aligned with the description of the father's role in Section 2.1.2. The conclusion could also briefly restate the significance of the study's contribution: documenting the motivations behind personal name attribution and showing how names preserve religious meanings, family histories and social relationships. This would give the article a slightly stronger concluding emphasis.

Finally, the manuscript would benefit from a careful editorial and bibliographic review. There are several spacing and grammatical issues, including merged words and missing spaces between sentences, which should be corrected throughout. Examples include "community.The," "unveiledthe," "suchas," and "fatheris" in different sections. The spelling and presentation of Dogon names and linguistic symbols should also be standardised, particularly the use of ɛ, ɔ and other special characters. The references should be checked for consistent bibliographic formatting. The entry for Minkailou (2017), for example, requires fuller and more consistent publication details, while the personal interview entries for Niaba Dolo and Moctar Douyon should follow the same format. The authors should also ensure that all in-text citations correspond to the reference list and that the French abstract is proofread for spacing and grammatical consistency.

Overall, the manuscript makes a useful contribution to the study of Dogon personal naming practices by examining not only the meanings of names but also the family, religious and social circumstances that influence their attribution. Its empirical examples are valuable, particularly the names associated with birth circumstances, ritual practices, ordinal position and twin births. The proposed six-category typology offers a useful starting point for further socio-onomastic research. The suggested revisions are primarily intended to improve the clarity of the methodology, ensure consistency in the presentation of naming practices, clarify the relationship between overlapping categories and refine the linguistic and cultural explanations accompanying the examples. These improvements can be made within the existing structure and do not require a change to the study's overall approach or central findings.

Final Recommendation

Decision: Accept with minor revisions.