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Islamic/Arabic Names and their Implications for Cultural Identity in Ghana

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Abstract

This paper examines the implications of Islamic-naming and cultural identity from a multi-cultural perspective, using some Ghanaian experiences. This exploration is rooted in the contemporary social and religious transformation in the Ghanaian, particularly, Muslim societies. The activities of Muslim revivalists, who have sought to Islamise African societies at the expense of the indigenous culture and heritage, question the future of the African traditional worldview and heritage. More so, the rapid spread of Western education is accelerating the pace of globalisation, leading to further Westernisation of Muslim societies. Undoubtedly, the youth of today see themselves, more than ever before, as part of a new world order that is at variance with their indigenous traditions and values. This study explores how a Muslim could maintain an

Islamic identity without an Arabic name, the cultural value of a name, and the role of cultural diversity with respect to names in Islam. Analysis of scriptural texts such as the Qur'an, Hadith, historical sources, and oral interviews revealed that the philosophy and process of naming new-born children in Ghanaian, particularly, Akan settings are not different from Islamic processes and motives of naming. The study also argues that the supposed "Islamic" names are more of Arabised racial identities which pre-date the advent of Islam. Thus, we conclude that, technically, "Islamic" names do not necessarily need to be in Arabic, but even when they do, they may still portray deep indigenous philosophical and religious beliefs.

Keywords

Arab/Islamic names, Christianity, culture, Ghana, identity, Islam values

Introduction

Until recently, scholars were not much interested in the study of names least to talk about their implications on African cultural identities. Many social scientists, for example, have, sometimes, even overlooked the implication of the names of people whose lives and heroic activities they studied.[1]

Interestingly, recent scholarship has shed new light on the fact that human beings are more than just 'names'[2]. The African continent offers a fascinating background that helps to understand that names carry more philosophical meaning apart from the fact that they evaluate nature and essence, and provide a string of relationship between the living and the dead.[3]

This study analyses Islamic/Arabic names and their implications for Ghanaian cultural identity. The focus on Islamic or

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[1] S. Wilson, *The Means of Naming: A Social and Cultural History of Personal Naming in Western Europe* (London: Tylor & Francis, 1998), x.

[2] J.K. Hyde, *Literacy and its Uses: Studies on Late Medieval Italy* (Manchester: Manch. Univ. Press, 1993), 120; S. Mutunda, "Personal names in Lunda Cultural Milieu", *International Journal of Innovative Interdisciplinary Research*, 1/1 (2011), 14; T.J. Markey, "Crisis and Cognition in Onomastics", *Names: A Journal of Onomastics* 30/3 (1982), 138; L. Adamic, *What's your Name?* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942), 72.

[3] B.O. Igboin, "An African Religious Discourse on Names and Identity", *Filosofia Theoretica: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture and Religions*, 3/1 (2014), 26-40.

Arabic names has become necessary partly because of the wave of contemporary transformations that Ghanaian societies and, more particularly, Muslim societies are undergoing. The activities of Muslim revivalists who have sought to Islamise African societies at the expense of indigenous culture and heritage have put to question the future of the African traditional worldview and heritage. Moreso, the rapid spread of Western education is accelerating the pace of globalisation, leading to more Westernisation of Muslim societies. Undoubtedly, the contemporary youth, who see themselves as part of the external world, are losing allegiance for their indigenous traditions and values.

The study employs the decolonial theory with specific focus on religion and the identity politics. More importantly, Samuel Huntington's seminal work, wherein he demonstrated the resilience of religion in the identity politics, offers a useful basis for analysis. He argues that future wars will not only be fought on political grounds but on cultures, since religious identities will be the primary source of power contestations.[4]By exploring Arabic/Islamic encounters with African societies, it is possible to demonstrate how enduring African values and heritage are, and how Africans have succeeded in preserving their naming practices. This paper argues that while Western (Christian)and Islamic values have competed with African traditional values, their philosophical underpinnings in naming are not different from naming traditions in Africa.

The study is structured into five parts. The first part analyses the relevant literature in the discipline. This is followed by a section which analyses the Arabic and Islamic origin of the name, Ghana. Importantly, the study further delves into the philosophy of naming in Ghanaian societies and ends with the conclusion.

Literature Review

Contemporary scholarly works have been examining the place of African identity in public life. This question has become relevant because the African identity has become a subject of manipulation by external forces. For centuries, the African continent had

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[4]Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 183;J.B. Yusuf & H.A. Abdulsalam,"Time, Knowledge, and the Clash of Civilisations: An Islamic Approach", *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*, 1/1 (2011),51-53.

experienced activities of Arab invaders with their push for Islamic conversion or *da'wah* and its implications on the African heritage. This was followed by European imperialism in the 19th century, which also came with its cultural baggage of Christianity. These developments have had an impact on African identities and cultures in diverse ways. While the implications of the activities of external forces on African politics and cultural heritage have received considerable attention,[5] there has been marginal interest in the practice of naming, especially the use of Arab/Islamic names and their implications for the African cultural heritage.

This study focuses on Ghana, which offers the prospect for revealing the impact of Arabic or Islamic names on African identities. The point is that Africans have been subjugated by foreign empires. This experience of imperialism began with the Arab conquest of parts of Africa and the associated extensive trading activities. This was followed by the partitioning and colonisation of Africa by Europe in the 19th century. As an outcome of these forms of imperialism, it has been frequently argued that Africans have come under cultural onslaught.

The cultural implications of imperialism in Africa have been repeatedly amplified by scholars who use the decolonial theory. The same theory is used in this study with a focus on religion and identity politics. It analyses the structures of the age-old Eurocentric epistemological tradition, its supposed universality, and the superiority of Western culture. This brings to focus the perspective introduced by Samuel Huntington in his seminal work on the resilience of religion in the identity politics of the post-coldwar period[6] and argues that future wars will not only be fought on political grounds but on the grounds of cultural and religious identities, which will be the primary source of power contestation.

For its operational definition of identity, this study borrows from Mary Bernstein, who argues that the term, "identity", describes diverse phenomena as in multi-culturalism, ethnicity, and race.[7] The focus of analysis on identity politics is limited to African languages, ethnicity, and indigenous names. It demonstrates that while external forces have undermined African cultures in diverse

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[5]G.N. Uzoikwe, 'European Partition of Africa. An Overview'. In A. Adu Boahen (ed.), *UNESCO General History of Africa*, vol 8(1985). Abriged edition.

[6]S. P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations", Foreign Affairs, 72/5 (1993), 22-49; S. P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remarking of the World Order* (N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 180-183.

[7]Mary Bernstein, "Identity Politics", *Annual Review of Sociology,* 31 (2005), 47-74.

ways, it is becoming clear that there has been an increasing cultural re-awakening among Africans in recent times. Identity politics has been ongoing in Africa and the continent has been in cultural conflict with external forces over centuries prior to the decolonial and Huntington prognoses. The Arab conquest of Africa and the extensive trade networks they created, coupled with the European partitioning and subsequent colonisation of the same continent, have been enduring in reshaping the African political institutions and cultural values.

The foregoing analyses by previous scholars demonstrate that Africa is not only undergoing identity crises but is also experiencing a decline of its heritage in world politics on account of several factors. From the perspective of WaThiong'o, the African identity crisis cannot be understood in isolation without analysing the social and political forces which have and are deconstructing the uniqueness of the continent's heritage.[8] Central to his argument is the point that imperialism and neo-colonialism are reconfiguring the African continent with external cultural values which stand in contrast with the African reality.[9]The Berlin Conference of 1884 not only partitioned Africa among specific European countries but also resulted in the exportation of different European languages such as English, French, and Portuguese into Africa. The implication is that the imperial languages became the national languages in Africa and would, subsequently, reconfigure African identities in diverse ways.[10] Beside the dominance of European languages collectively serving in many cases as *lingua franca* in Africa, imperialism has equally introduced foreign religions which have virtually undermined the traditional African cosmic view.

Naude argues that the Western tradition of thought is hegemonic within the world system which not only defines concepts (thoughts) for the rest of the world but forcefully imposes its values.[11] Terms such as religion, democracy, human rights, and feminism were conceptualised in the Western context and imposed on the world as the ultimate truth without regard to the cultural

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[8]WaThiong'o, *De-colonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1981); L. G. Kuusisto, et-al., "De-colonising Religious Education Curriculum", *Journal of Religious Education,* 43/1 (2021); Naude Piet, Decolonising Knowledge: Can Ubuntu Ethics Save Us from Coloniality? *Journal of Business Ethics,* 159/1 (Sept. 2019), 23-37

[9]WaThiong'o, ibid.

[10] V.Y. Mudimbe, *The invention of Africa: Gnosis, philosophy, and the order of knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

[11]Piet, ibid, 23-37.

diversity of African communities. Western coloniality introduced what is termed as modernity in which the non-Western thought has been inferiorise and subalternised. Uzoikwe argues that Western colonialism was perpetrated in Africa, and among other arguments, it was affirmed that the black race needs to be civilised along Euro-Christian religious values.[12]

While Western imperialism was the mainstay of its might, European civilisation and ideas were boosted by the instrumentalisation of Christianity.[13] WaThiong'o likens the metaphor of the impact of the European-backed religion on the African identity with a 'master armed with the bible and sword.' By this, he meant that imperialism controls the African economy, politics, and cultures. There was no distinction between the roles of colonial administrators and traders, on the one hand, and Christian missionaries in the propagation of European political and cultural hegemony in Africa, on the other. Beyond the fact that these diverse groups share a common agenda to dominate the continent, they also aim to impose their culture and cosmic view on the African continent. From the perspective of Mbiti, the rationale behind Western imperialism in Africa cannot largely be divorced from the Christian missionaries' agenda.[14] However, while many scholars have analysed the Western imperialism in Africa, the Arab factor in the African identity crisis is yet to be heard. Quite revealing, most of the analyses tend to overlook the Arab/Islamic factor in the challenge equation of the African identity crisis.

There has been a raging debate about whether Arabic can be classified among indigenous African languages. This view has attracted mixed reactions partly because the influence of the Arabic language is ubiquitous in Africa. Hunwick refers to Arabic as the Latin of Africa because of its ubiquity in Africa as Latin was in Europe in the medieval era.[15] On the other hand, Stewart[16] and Robinson[17] argue that the Arabic language has been Africanised

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[12]Uzoikwe, ibid; see also: J. B. Yusuf, Dupuis' discourse on Asante in the 19th Century: An evaluation of the Islamic themes in the *Journal of a Residence in Ashantee* (1824). In E. Abakah & S. Osei-Kwarteng, eds. *The Asante World* (pp.129-150). (London: Routledge, 2021), 133;

[13]Mudimbe,ibid.

[14]John Mbiti, *African Philosophy and Religion*(Johannesburg: Heinemann, 1969).

[15]John O. Hunwick,"West Africa and the Arabic Language", *Sudanic Africa*, 15 (2004), 133-144; David Robinson, *Muslim Societies in African History*(New York. CUP, 2004).

[16]Frances Stewart, ed., *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: Understanding Group Violence in Multiethnic Societies* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan 2008).

[17]M.D. Robinson, Personality as Performance: Categorization Tendencies and their Correlates, Current Directions in Psychological Science, *13/3*. (2004), 127-129.

and given strong roots in the continent. Consequently, Arabic provided Africa with the literacy and the first documented history. They made reference to Muslim historians documenting the historical records of ancient Ghana, Mali, and Songhay, among others. Thus, without Arabic, Africa would have been referred to as a dark continent.

The argument further becomes complex as Arabic is classified as part of the Afro-Asian languages since it is a widely spoken language after indigenous African languages. Despite its origin in the Middle East, Arabic is the official language of North Africa and although it is unofficial in Africa south of the Sahara, it is spoken by many people in this sub-region. The significance of Arabic in Africa cannot be discussed without analysing its religious relevance in Muslim life.

Islam attaches considerable religious significance to the use of the Arabic language in diverse ways. A new convert is expected to pronounce his/her testimony of faith in Arabic. One is equally expected to learn the rudiment of the Qur'an in Arabic when undertaking daily prayers.[18]Even more, the Qur'an, which is the sacred text of Muslims, is written in Arabic and the adherents of the religion are encouraged to recite it not only for spiritual guidance but to gain salvation in the hereafter. Apparently, in a tradition attributed to Prophet Muhammad, he is quoted to have implored Muslims to "love the Arabs for three reasons: because I [the Prophet] am Arab; the Qur'an is Arabic; and the tongue of the people of paradise is Arabic."[19]These diverse claims come with consequence as the followers of Islam are motivated to learn, read, and understand the holy book in Arabic. The Arabic language, thus, becomes a central and integral part of the Muslim's quest for religious identity.

Arabic, partially, became a dominant language in Africa as an outcome of the impact of Islamisation of some groups. The Islamisation of Africa was the result mainly of trade and the Arab/Muslim political interests which culminated in military conquests.[20]While Islamisation resulted in the Arabisation of North Africa, Africans south of the Sahara, largely, embraced the wave of Islam but retained their indigenous languages. In terms of numbers, North Africa has become an overwhelmingly Muslim

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[18] David Waines, *Introduction to Islam* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995).

[19]M.M. Ibn Manzŭr, *Lisān al-Arab,* vol.1. (Beirŭt, DārLisān al-Arab, 1994), 7

[20]Peter Clarke, *West Africa and Islam: A Study of Religious Development from 8ᵗʰ to the 20ᵗʰCentury* (London: Edward Arnold,1982).

majority region with 85% of the population being Arabic-speaking natives.[21] On the contrary, as at 2010, the population of Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa was 29.6%.[22] Therefore, West Africa provides an interesting basis for analysis. Per the Pew result of 2010, the Muslim population in West Africa is 55.6%.[23] This has implications for the Arabic language in terms of religious life. The resilience of Islam manifests in the impact of Arab culture on the adherents of the religion. Thus, Africans not only embraced Islam but the Arab culture. One of the aspects in which Islamic culture is deeply rooted in Africa is Arabic names. The extent to which Arabic names are Islamic has been a matter of controversy. Many conservative Muslims may view Arabic names as Islamic while liberal Muslims may think otherwise.

Africa represents a unique continent in which names not only convey deep religious meanings but portray political events or the life people encounter. Unsurprisingly, scholarly works have argued that Africans are incurably and notoriously religious.[24] The extent to which these statements find favour in African life can partly be seen in the manner in which children are named. According to Igboin, African names evaluate nature and essence as well as provide a string of relationship between the living and the dead.[25] It is now becoming clear that African names are more than a mere designation of individuals but have spiritual, psychological, and physical significance. For Mbiti, African names are tied with circumstances of childbirth, including political and social issues which may have a bearing on the personality of the parents.[26]

Notwithstanding the fact that African names have received a marginal interest in recent scholarships, the traditional names of the Akan people have attracted some attention in sociolinguistic and anthropological perspectives. Agyekum examines Akan personal names from linguistic and anthropological perspectives and upholds that naming is an essential aspect of the Akan society

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[21]https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2011/01/27/future-of-the-global-muslim-population-regional-sub-saharan-africa/, 22/10/2022

[22]https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2011/01/27/future-of-the-global-muslim-population-regional-sub-saharan-africa/,22/10/2022

[23]https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2011/01/27/future-of-the-global-muslim-population-regional-sub-saharan-africa/, 22/10/2022

[24]J.S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1989), 1; E.G. Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion* (London: Clowes & Sons, 1962), 9.

[25]Igboin, ibid, 26-44.

[26]Mbiti, ibid.

of Ghana[27] and that names are not "arbitrary labels but socio-cultural tags that have socio-cultural functions and meanings." He surveyed different categories of personal names, including names based on day of birth, names based on family belonging, and names based on circumstances of birth.

Also, Beidelman[28] found in his study of the Kaguru of Tanzania that the Bono subset of the Akan of Ghana assigns similar importance to personal names. On the other hand, Dakubu[29] looks at the personal names and naming practices of the Dagomba ethnic group of northern Ghana. She indicates that the Dagomba are among the ethnic groups in the popularly Muslim north where personal names are mainly derived from Arabic. Among the Dagomba people, the religious circumstance of naming is either indigenous (i.e. traditional) or Arabic (i.e. Muslim), with the latter often superseding the former. On Dagomba names, Abdulai Asuro's[30] PhD thesis is very instructive. However, he looks at the Dagomba names in the context of the Dagbani tradition. The indigenous categorisation of names reflects socio-linguistic and historical uniqueness.[31]

Like Agyekum, Dakubu also considers the origin of Dagomba names from a linguistic perspective. Among the Gur-speaking people of northern Ghana, written resources on names are rarely available.[32] For the Tallensi, Meyer Fortes[33] has done a detailed study but focused mainly on the traditional names of the Tallensi. Ansu-Kyeremeh[34] also gives descriptive accounts of many interactive or communication functions of the personal names of the Bono. Undoubtedly, from a non-Western perspective, personal names are often connected with social status or may have cosmic

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[27] K. Agyekum, "Sociolinguistic of Akan Personal Names", *Nordic Journal of African Studies,* 15/2 (2006), 206

[28] T.O. Beidelman, "Kaguru Names and Naming", *Journal of Anthropological Research,*30/4 (1974), 281-293.

[29]M.E.K. Dakubu, "Personal Names of the Dagomba", *Research Review (New Series)*, 16/2 (2000),

[30]Abdulai S. Asuro, "Names That Prick: Royal Praise Names in Dagbon, Northern Ghana", UMI Dissertation, 2008

[31]Dakubu, ibid, 53

[32]Dakubu, ibid, 53

[33] M. Fortes, "Names Among the Tallensi of the Gold Coast". In J. Lukas, ed. *Afrikanistische Studien, Diedrich Westermann Zum 80: Geburtstag Gewidment*(Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1955), 337-49

[34]K. Ansu-kyeremeh, "Communicating *Nominatim*: Some Social Aspects of Bono Personal Names", *Research Review* [New Series], 16/2 (2000).

significance and religious implications, or, sometimes, take on gender dimensions.[35]

Ansu-Kyeremeh, however, sets the stage by questioning the view that 'there is nothing in a name' and contends that personal names buttress human interactions with the world and their environment as a means for fostering human communication.[36] Awedoba[37] reviews how Kasem personal names communicate within the linguistic nomenclature of the Kasena people. He studied the "collocational patterns" of Kasem names and their relevance as "gender determiners."[38] Yet, he also focused on the linguistic aspects alone. Kruger[39] also reflects on some personal names of the Bulsa; yet, apart from the fact that he dwelt principally on traditional names, he also treated these names in a limited space.[40]Other limited studies have been conducted on the personal names used by some other ethnic groups in Ghana including the Builsa,[41] the Mossi,[42] the Talni,[43] the Bimoba,[44] and other Ghanaian linguistic groups whose settlements overlap into neighbouring countries like Burkina Faso[45] and Togo.[46] However, aside from the possible concentration of the latter category of research on the traditional or linguistic components alone, the findings are not presented in a language that is accessible to English readers.

This study revisits the debate on Islamic/Arabic names by offering analyses on the Ghanaian context. Much attention has been paid to various aspects of Islam in many parts of Ghana over the

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[35]Ansu-Kyeremeh, ibid,19

[36]Ansu-Kyeremeh, ibid,19

[37] A.K. Awedoba, "Kasem Norminal Genders and Names", *Research Review [New Series]*, 12/1&2 (1996).

[38]Awedoba,ibid, 8

[39]F. Kruger, *Ubergangsriten in Wandel* (Hobenschaftlam: Kommissionsverlag Klaus Renner, 1978). Citedby: Dakubu, ibid,53

[40]Dakubu, ibid,53

[41]S. Dinslage & S. Steinbrich, 'Ethnologische Symbolanalyse am Biespiel der Namengebung in Westafrika". In W. Krawiets, et-al. eds, *Sprache, Symbote und Symbolverwendung in Ethnologie, Kulturanthropologie, Religion und Recht.* Festschrift fur Rudiger Schott zum 65.Geburtstag (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1993), 3-50. Cited by: Dakubu, 53

[42]M. Houis, *Les NomsIndividuels chez les Mossi [Initiations et etudes africaines 17]* (Dakar: IFAN, 1963), See: Dakubu, ibid,53

[43]Dinslage & Steinbrich, ibid, cited by: Dakubu, ibid,53

[44]J. Zwernemann, "Personennamen der Moba", *Afrika und* Ubersee, 55 (1971/72). Cited by: Dakubu, ibid,53

[45]Dinslage & Steinbrich, ibid, Cited by: Dakubu, ibid,53

[46]R. Cornevm, *Les Bassari du Nord Togo* (Paris: Editions Berger-Levraul, 1962), 128-133. Cited by: Dakubu,ibid,53

years where considerable scholarship has been expended in various capacities by prominent scholars like Trimingham,[47]Clarke,[48] Hiskett,[49] Wilks,[50] Levtzion,[51] Adu Boahen,[52] Dumbe,[53] and Sey.[54] Yet, surprisingly, Islamic names, which are an aspect of the religious life of Muslims, have escaped attention. Moreso, the rapport between Islamic and indigenous names in Ghana has been overlooked in cultural, historical, or religious studies. Nonetheless, a study of the relationship between Islamic or Arabic names and the indigenous names shows visible interactions between the two, which this study elaborates.

Arabic and Islamic Origin of the Name Ghana

The name, "Ghana," cannot escape attention in a discussion on Arabic names.[55] While the successive colonial governments referred to what is now called Ghana as "Gold Coast Colony and Protectorate", the forefathers changed the name to "Ghana" prior to independence in 1957.[56] The question arising is what does the word, "Ghana," mean? The reason why the country was named "Ghana" is not clearly known. While its Arabic origin cannot be contested, it is contended that the country was named "Ghana" as a reflection of the then defunct empire of ancient Ghana, which was also very rich in Gold. Another narrative argues that since the word "Ghana" is derived from the Arabic word *Ghina* (wealth),[57]the country was named Ghana because of the abundant natural

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[47]J.S. Trimingham, *Islam in West Africa* (Oxford, O.U.P., 1959)

[48]P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam* (London, Edward Arnold, 1982).

[49]M. Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa* (London, Longman, 1984)

[50]I. Wilks, *Islam in Ghana History: An Outline* (Legon: Institute of African Studies, 1962); I. Wilks, "A Note on the Early Spread of Islam in Dagomba"', *Transaction of the Historical Society of Ghana* 8 (1965); I. Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1975); and: I. Wilks, *Wa and the Wala: Islam and Polity in Northwestern Ghana* (Cambridge: *C.U.P.*, 1989).

[51]N. Levtzion, *Muslims and chiefs in West Africa: A Study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in the pre-Colonial Period* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).

[52]A. Adu Boahen., et-al., *Topic in West African History, 2nded* (London: Longman, 1986).

[53]Yunus Dumbe, *Islamic Revivalism in Contemporary Ghana*(Sweden: Södertörn University Press, 2013)

[54]M. Sey, 'Muslim Community in Ghana: The Contemporary Scene', *Jurnal Syariah*,5/2 (1997). J.B. Yusuf, "Muslim Leadership in Ghana: A Critical Study" (PhD thesis, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Brunei, 2018).

[55]L.H. Ofosu-Appiah, "Ghana-An Historical Introduction". In *The Encyclopaedia Africana: Dictionary of African Biography,* 1 (New York: Reference Publications Inc., 1977), 167

[56]James K. Brukum, "The northern territories of the gold coast under British colonial rule, 1897-1956: A study in political change." PhD thesis, University of Toronto, Canada, 1997

[57] See: Imam Rashid, *An African Identity* (Accra: Media Graphics & Press, 2005)

resources it is endowed with.[58] Similarly, it has also been argued that some of the ethnic groups in Ghana migrated from ancient Ghana to their present-day locations.[59] Thus, the significance of naming is underscored here since it highlights the vision of the founding fathers of this country.

Briefly, Ghana is a small, virtually rectangular, country located in the south-western part of what the Arabs called *bilad-us-sudan* (land of the blacks). It is bordered by Ivory Coast in the west, Burkina Faso in the north, Togo in the east, and the Gulf of Guinea in the south. These were borders demarcated by the British during the partitioning of Africa which sometimes resulted in deadly encounters between the 'monarchs' and the Germans, settled intermittently with armed confrontations.[60] Consequently, the settlements of many ethnic groups living in Ghana overlap into neighbouring countries such as Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Togo, and as far as the French Republic of Benin and Nigeria in the farther east.[61] Ghana is traditionally said to be inhabited by between forty-six[62] and fifty[63] linguistic groups. Official estimates quote more than fifty ethnic groups[64] and, by implication, a corresponding number of languages. Each of these groups has unique cultural elements that preserve its ethnic identity.

Ghana is a religiously pluralistic country. While Christianity commands the majority with 70%, Muslims represent 20%, according to the 2021 Population and Housing Census. There are other minority religious groups too.

Islam is said to have been introduced to Ghana between the 14th and the 16th centuries when a handful of Muslim traders of Mande origin entered Begho in what is Bono Region today to

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[58] Abdul R. Hussain, *Our African Identity*. Graphic Communications Groups, Accra, 2005

[59]Yunus Dumbe,"Transnational Contact and Muslim Orientation in Ghana" (PhD dissertation submitted to the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, Legon, 2009)

[60]K. Adu-Boahen, "Pawns of Contesting Imperialists: Nkuransa in the Anglo-Asante Rivalry in Northwestern Ghana, 1874-1900", *Journal of Philosophy and Culture* 3/2 (2006), 59; T. Mustapha, 'A Historiographical Study of Four Works of al-Hajj 'Umar ibn Abi Bakr of Kete-Krachi (Ca 1850-1934)" (Unpublished M.A. thesis, McGill University, Montreal, 1970), 44&46

[61]N. Gbegble, "Spectrographic Analysis of Ewe Vowels", *Papers in Applied Linguistics* (University of Winneba) 1 (2006),94-5;

[62]Appiah, ibid, 15

[63] R.A. Akpanglo-Nartey, "Gender Effect on Vowel Quality: A Case Study of Ghanaian English", *Canadian Journal on Scientific and Industrial Research*, 3/3 (2011), 142

[64]National Commission on Culture, "The Cultural Policy of Ghana" (2004), 7.retrieved from: http://www.artsinafrica.com/uploads/2011/04/ghana.pdf, 29/06/2014.

transact trade in Kola and gold.[65] There followed later a wave of migrations also seemingly underpinned by trade, but this time, backed by armed altercations which led to the creation of cultural groups like Gonja and their neighbours.[66] By the close of the 19th century, Islam was present in all the regions of today's Ghana.

Conceptual Limitations

1.   Culture

Before explaining the term, "identity", we must first understand the amorphous term, "culture". However, as Levi Strauss observes, scientific explanations do not always reduce the complex to simple. Indeed, sometimes, it rather substitutes intelligible processes with less intelligible ones.[67] This implies that in defining a term, it is possible to create more complexities than what already exists. Thus, we will give modest explanations of the term "culture" to avoid further complication. Matthew Arnold defines culture as "the best that has been known and said in the world" and "the history of the human spirit."[68] However, our "culture" is the "integrated pattern of human behaviour" often encapsulated as "a way of life of man."[69] This indicates that man is at the centre of culture. This then justifies another definition of culture as "the man-made part of the human environment."[70] Thus, Saville-Troike's definition of man as "a cultural animal" is noteworthy.[71]This is because every human being is a product of his own culture in some way. This is because individual behaviours and values, among others, are defined along

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[65] Clarke, ibid, 105; Levtzion, ibid, 51 ff; R.A. Silverman & D. Owusu-Ansah, "The Presence of Islam Among the Akan of Ghana: A Bibliographical Essay", *History in Africa*,16 (1989), 332

[66]Hiskett, 120&122; N. J. K. Brukum, "Traditional Constitutions and Succession Disputes in the Northern Region, Ghana", *WOPAG: Working Papers on Ghana: Historical and Contemporary Studies* 4 (2004), 2; E.F. Tamakloe, *A Brief History of the Dagbamba People* (Accra: Government Printing Office, 1931); J.A. Braimah and J. Goody, *Salaga: The Struggle for Power* (London: Longmans, 1967); J.A. Braimah, *The Founding of the Gonja Empire* (Legon: Institute of African Studies, 1972); J.A. Braimah, H.H. Tomlinson, and O. Amankwatia, "History and Traditions of the Gonja", *African Occasional Paper* 6 (1997); D.H. Jones, "Jakpa and the Foundation of Gonja", *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, 11 (1962), 1-28; K.B. Dickson, *A Historical Geography of Ghana* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1969), 31

[67] C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 1

[68]U.F. Abd-Allah, *Islam and the Cultural Imperative* (Chicago: Nawawi Foundation, 2004), 3

[69]*Colliers Encyclopedia*, 7 (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 560. Cited by: A.A.B. Philips, *The Clash of Civilizations: An Islam View* (Birmingham: Al-Hidaayah, 2007), 9

[70]Philips, ibid, 10

[71] M. Saville-Troike, *A Guide to Culture in the Classroom* (Rosslyn, Virginia: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1978), 3

cultural orientations.[72] Culture is an amalgam of human values, i.e., beliefs, morality, expectations, skills, and knowledge integrated into blueprint customs.[73] For Abd-Allah, culture could be deemed to be "'successful' when it influences an operative identity."[74] What then is 'identity'?

2. *Cultural identity*

After explaining "culture" as a human mechanism for self-identity, it appears that "cultural identity" is already carved out as a process of expressing one's personality through a variety of key determinants including race, nationality, ethnicity or tribal affiliation, social class, etc. However, the term, "identity," itself is problematic. According to Hall, "identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think."[75] Hall observes that "identity" should be conceived as a continuous process of "production" which never ends and occurs from within not from without, instead of being considered as a completed process.[76] Cultural identity could, therefore, be conceived in two ways.[77] One, it could be considered as single mutually shared values defining "'one's true self' hiding inside the many other'" synthetically imposed "selves" which a group with common history and ancestry associates itself with.[78] As an elastic term, cultural identity manifests the shared past experiences and values which provide a stable and continuous framework for understanding others' values underneath changing cultural history.[79] On the other hand, cultural identity could also be conceived of in terms of what enables people to establish what they really are or have become.[80] Conceptualising "cultural identity" is, therefore, to define the shared uniqueness of "being" and "becoming" which are *sine qua non* to understanding the past, present, and future realities of culture. This dimension of identity jostles for space for self-actualisation independent of any well-defined external cultural yardstick although, as Stuart rightly argues, this identity process is also "… subject to the continuous

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[72] Saville-Troike, ibid, 3

[73] Abd-Allah, ibid, 3

[74] Abd-Allah, ibid.

[75] S. Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora". In J. Rutherford, ed., *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 222.

[76] Hall, ibid, 222

[77] Hall, ibid, 223

[78] Hall, ibid, 223

[79] Hall, ibid, 223

[80] Hall, ibid, 225

'play' of history, culture and power" and is "transformational" rather than fixed and eternal.[81] Aside from Arab or Islamic values, the Ghanaian Muslim cultural worldview, as a people operating in a multi-cultural space, is shaped by two forces, Western culture and traditional values. The former affects mostly the educated and/or urbanised minorities while the latter, sometimes impacting on both, affects mostly the uneducated and mainly rural folks.

3.   Name

A name is an important means of identification. However, it is more than mere identification. Writing about names among the Tallensi of northern Ghana, Meyer Fortes defined a name as "… a document epitomsing personal experiences, historical happenings, attitudes to life, and cultural ideas and values."[82] This implies that names speak volumes about peoples' personalities and cultural associations. This is why the Akan people have a proverb that *Bo wo dzin na mekyere wo bea a ifir!* Literally, "tell me your name and I will show you where you come from." They are a means of cultural belonging and communal experience. The meaning of the name a person bears has many implications. From the above proverb, a name enables people to identify others' cultural belonging. In some cultures, names, especially, surnames, establish a bond of solidarity between bearers of the same name. Others regard bearers of the same family names as descendants of the same ancestor and, hence, entertain certain sympathy for them.[83] The implication of this bond or affinity is that a person could gain favours from influential tribesmen or name-sakes. It could also enable one to find a dwelling place in a locality.[84] Thus, a name is an essential tool not only for cultural identity but the essence of life, happiness. Sociologically, one's name could affect one's behaviour or determine one's success. For example, Figlio intimates that boys given female names are 8% more likely to be low-income earners than those with masculine names.[85]

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[81] Hall, ibid, 225

[82] Fortes, ibid, 349

[83] R. Jones, *Chinese names: The use and meanings of Chinese surnames and personal names in Singapore and Malaysia* (Malaysia: Pelanduk Pub., 1989), 9

[84] Jones, ibid, 9

[85] D.N. Figlio, "Boys Named Sue: Disruptive Children and their Peers", *Education, Finance and Policy*,2/4 (2007), 384

Arabic Names as Islamic Cultural Identity and Cultural Diversity

In this section, we depend on textual resources of both the Qur'an and Hadith to make our analysis on what constitute Muslim names in Islam. Our initial analyses of scriptural texts demonstrate that it is difficult to say that there is something called Islamic names. This is because most of the names associated with Muslims pre-date the advent of Islam. Muhammad, the originator of Islam, had his name as such before he started the propagation of Islam. Similarly, his father's name is Abdullah (meaning, the Servant of Allah), and he was also born and bred in pre-lslamic Arabia. While there were no unique names associated with the people prior to the advent of Islam, certain names associated with wicked people in that period and the Qur'an were not adopted by the subsequent generations of Muslims to their children's identity. This, thus, underscores the fact that good names have become synonymous with positive character.

This notwithstanding, Muslims globally have adopted Arabic names as effective tools to preserving their religious identity. Most Muslims are often identified through Arabic names although there are some non-Muslims who bear some of these Arabic names. Our analyses do not show much difference between the names of Arab Christians and those of their Muslim counterparts. Thus, what we may call Islamic names are more of racial Arab identity. As illustrated, Muslim names are synonymous with Arabic names and Muslims are known worldwide for their use of Arabic names. This is akin to African Christians adoption of Euro-Greco names as Christian identity.

Therefore, names like Yahya (John), Ibrahim (Abraham), Maryam (Mary), and Sulayman (Solomon) could be identified easily even though, etymologically, they are the same names called differently by virtue of language and religion with deep roots in either Arabic (Qur'an) or English (Bible), respectively. This means that naming does more than labelling and concerns a group sharing common features, in this case, cultural or religious identities.

At the heart of all names lies the issue of identity and this is the point that Muslims hold on strongly to promote their religious identity, i.e., labelling their personhood in tune with their conscious religious belonging. Muslims are cautioned about what names to

give to their children in order to enhance their identity.[86] Thus, in Islam, a name (*al-Ism*) is supposed to connote the bearer's personality and is expected to have a positive impact on the individual. Consequently, the Prophet recommended names like Abdullah (Servant of Allah), Abdu-r-Rahman[87](Servant of the Compassionate), and Ibrahim (Abraham-regarded in the Muslim traditions as "the Father of the Prophets"). Such names are intended to make children morally responsible. In one hadith, the Prophet is quoted as saying: "On the *Day* of *Resurrection, you will* be *called* by *your names* and by *your father's names, so* give yourselves *good names*."[88] In another hadith, he said: "give names with good meanings."[89] Despite this antecedent, the early Muslim converts continued bearing their "traditional" names, whether Arab or non-Arab after conversion. The examples are replete among the first generation of the companions of Prophet Muhammad.

Apparently, there were companions who possessed Arabic names before conversion. Therefore, names like Abu Hurayrah ('father of a Kitten') which was once shortened as Abu Hirr by the Prophet[90] and Abu Bakr ('Father of young camel')[91]were all pre-Islamic names he never attempted to change or downgrade although, ethically, they did not promulgate any unique value. He, however, changed names with meanings that depicted bad qualities. For example, the name of Umar's daughter Asiyah('ill-mannered' or 'disobedient') was changed to Jamilah ('beautiful').[92] In a similar vein, the name of Zaynab was changed from Barrah ('righteous'), which the Prophet interpreted to imply having arrogated to herself the cachet of righteousness.[93]

Nonetheless, he never changed a name out of compulsion. For example, he asked a young man to change his name from *Hazn* ('trial' or 'hardship') to *Sah l*('ease of life') but the young-man refused saying that was the name his father gave him (*māanā bi-mughayyirin isman sammānīhi abī*: literally: "I will not change the name my father gave me")[94] and the Prophet did not insist. From

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[86] M.A. Qazi, *What's in a Muslim Name* (Lahore: Kazi Publications, 1982), ii

[87]**Abu Dawŭd,** *Sunnan,* **5, hadith 4949; Al-Tirmidhi,** *Jami',* **5, hadith 2833; & Ibn Majah,** *Sunnan,* **5, hadith 3728; Al-Bukhari,** *Sahih-al-Bukhari,* **8, hadith 6189.**

[88]*Abu DawudJami',* h*adith* 4930.

[89]Imam Muslim, *Sahih Muslim.*

[90]**Al-Bukhari,** *Sahih-al-Bukhari,* **8, chapter 111**

[91]These names are reminiscent of their individual tenderness towards those animals.

[92] Abu Dawud, *Sunnan,* hadith 4301

[93]**Al-Bukhari,** *Sahih-al-Bukhari,* **8, hadith 6192**

[94]**Al-Bukhari,** *Sahih-al-Bukhari,* **8, hadith 6190**

the above, the bottom line is that a child should be given a name with a meaning that conveys either a blessing or pious quality. Thus, essentially, a name does not have to be in Arabic to fulfil this condition and people like Maria al-Qibtiyyah, the Egyptian slave who later got married to Prophet Muhammad, and Salman, the Persian architect of 'the Trench,' never changed their names during conversion.[95]

The Arabic name system consists of five parts: *kunya, ism, nasab, laqab,* and *nisba*.[96] *Kunya* is a honorific title name rarely used formally in addressing a person but often used in much the same sense as educated Ghanaians would use "Aunt" or "Uncle". Usually associated with one's first born, *Kunya* is used to indicate that a man or woman is the father (*Abu*) or mother (*Umm*) of a particular child.[97] Thus, "*Abu* Yusuf" has a first born called "Yusuf"; what the Akan will call "Ntsifu Papa" (Yusuf's father). Women prefix it with *Umm* (mother, e.g., Umm Yusuf). *Ism* is the personal name sometimes extended with a *laqab* (religious or descriptive suffix), *al-Din, al-Rahman*and*al-Rashid* (e.g., Muhi-d-Din and Abd-ur-Rahman or Harun-al-Rashid, among others). *Nasab* is the patronymic, in which case one's name could depict a detailed list of ancestors connected by *ibn, bin, or*bint*. Nisba* indicates a tribal, ethnic, or national belonging.[98] Hence, a person called "Abu"Abd-Allah Muḥammad ibn Isma'il ibn Ibrahim ibn al-Mughirah ibn Bardizbah al-Ju'fi al-Bukhari"[99] has a detailed genealogy in his name. This was important in the tribal society of the ancient Arab for the purpose of identification and socio-political interaction.

From the multi-cultural perspective, however, the above person loses his indigenous cultural identity because "personal names are cultural constants."[100] In African indigenous societies of which Ghana is no exception, personal names serve as an important component of cultural identity[101] and portray a person's cultural belonging more than any other aspect of his personhood. Names

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[95]Of course, due to the influence of foreign languages (*lughaat al-ajnabiyyah*) on the Arabic language, some of these names are understood today from the cultural context of the Arabic language.

[96]B. Notzon & G. Nesom, "The Arabic Naming System", *ScienceEditor*28/1 (2005), 20

[97]Notzon & Nesom,ibid

[98]Notzon & Nesom,ibid

[99]The meaning of the above name could be rendered as follows: "Father of 'Abd-Allah who was Muḥammad, the son of Isma'il who was the son of Ibrahim, the son of al-Mughirah, the son of Bardizbah from the Ju'fa clan of the city of Bukhara."

[100] Keats-Rohan, ibid, 155

[101]S.M. Zawawi, *African Muslim Names: Images and Identities* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1998), xii

are connected not only to social identity and self-identity but may underlie the political background of a family.[102] People's names are not just the people themselves[103] but they depict the "linguistic, ethnic, social and cultural group affiliations of their bearers."[104] Furthermore, names show how members of particular cultural groups regard themselves[105] because people expose their cultural values, traditions, and important cultural events through names.[106] Thus, to change one's name is to change one's personal identity.

Islam perceives identity as a permanent feature of one's personhood granted by Allah and could be ethnicity, as in being a member of a particular tribe; nationality, as in being a citizen of a country; or race, as in originating from a particular continent. In Qur'an 49:13, Allah says:

> Oh mankind! We have created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) most righteous of you....

While the above verse largely demonstrates the significance of cultural diversity and identity in Islam, it is interesting to observe how Arab racial identity has rather defined Muslim names. The Qur'an largely underscores the relevance of cultural diversity, which is for people to acknowledge one another's cultural uniqueness. This makes the Islamic concept of culture a matter of inclusion rather than exclusion. This is because the cultural experience and world-view of a Muslim cannot be divorced from the background in which he or she lives.[107] This fundamental logic applies to naming, which is a defining characteristic of a person's cultural identity. However, the Islamic perspective of cultural diversity with regard to naming is difficult to understand. Indeed, from the beginning, Islam allowed indigenous expressions of cultural identity with its comprehensive corpus of law.

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[102] Keats-Rohan, ibid, 158; Alford, ibid, 29; P.M. Mohome, "Naming in Sesotho: Its Sociocultural and Linguistic Basis", *Names: **A Journal of Onomastics,*** 20/3 (1972), 171

[103] Keats-Rohan, ibid, 154-5; Mutunda, ibid, 12-22; Alford, ibid, 29; Mohome, ibid, 171

[104] Keats-Rohan, ibid, 159

[105]Zawawi, ibid, 1.

[106]Mutunda, ibid, 14-15

[107] S. Yasmeen, *Understanding Muslim Identities: From Perceived Relative Exclusion to Inclusion* (Australia: University of Western Australia, 2008), 21

Consequently, it showed itself to be friendly to indigenous cultures. Faruq Abd-Allah expressed this in the following:

> In China, Islam looked Chinese; in Mali, it looked African. Sustained cultural relevance to distinct peoples, diverse places, and different times underlay Islam's long success as a global civilization.[108]

Islam accustomed itself to indigenous life while vigorously and dynamically engaging and nurturing stable Muslim identities. This has enabled Muslims to fuse deeply into indigenous cultures as well as identify with and make groundbreaking contributions to Islam. This made the assimilation of Islamic culture easier. Nonetheless, some Muslims have also emphasised Arabic names as a requirement for religious identity in Islam.[109] Thus, Arabic names, also known as Islamic names, have been a catalyst for promoting Islamic identity. The Qur'anic understanding, however, seems to differ, considering the fact that the message of Islam was in Arabic as its recipient was an Arab. It says:

> Had We sent this as a Qur'an (in a language) other than Arabic, they would have said: Why are its verses not explained in detail? What! (a Book) not in Arabic and (a Messenger) an Arab?'… (Qur'an 41:44).

The above verse makes it clear that the Arabic language was the backbone of the message of Islam because it was first received by Arabs whose culture and language were Arabic. It also emphasises that:

> And thus have We revealed to you an Arabic Qur'an [oh Muhammad!], that you may warn the mother city [Makkah] and those around it, and that you may give warning of the day of gathering together wherein is no doubt; …(Qur'an 42:7). Surely We have made it an Arabic Qur'an that you may understand (43:3, 12:2). And We make (this

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[108] Abd-Allah, ibid, 1

[109] Da'wah Institute of Nigeria, *What is "Islamic" culture? An Introduction to the Relationship between Islam and Cultural Diversity* (Minna, Niger State, Nigeria: Islamic Education Trust, 2009), See part II

> Scripture) easy in your tongue (O Muhammad) only so that you may bear good tidings with it to the righteous and warn (with it a) people most hostile (Qur'an 19:97).

The first verse (42:7) implies that the message was not meant for only Arabs but, as well, the surrounding nations. It is, thus, clear that Islam actually began life in its Arabic embryo in unity predisposed naturally to diversity. Yet, epistemologically, naming and cultural diversity in Islam are 'a theoretical and practical dilemma'[110] because it leads Muslims to a situation with difficult choices. Muslims worldwide are considered as a single community of faithful servants of God (*ummatanwahidah*). Despite this onehood, the *ummah* is also conceived of as one of the most diverse entities known to humanity in terms of its approach to culture and civilisation.[111] For Hossein Nasr, 'Islam's refusal to reduce this unity-in-diversity to mere uniformity, far from weakening the faith, has been a major cause of its strength through the ages.'[112] The motivation to understand people's cultures in order to set a platform for operationalising the Islamic worldview of cultural diversity is evident in the prophetic *sunnah* that instils respect for other people's cultures.[113]

Islam's tolerance of and respect for indigenous cultures is reflected in many of the prophetic customs (*sunan*), which borrowed from some "acceptable pre-Islamic Arab cultural norms."[114] For example, although Hajj was instituted by Prophet Ibrahim, its relics were preserved for Muslims by the pre-Islamic Arabs, while practices like developing beard, wearing *jalabiya* and turban, among many others, were retained from the pre-Islamic Arab culture. In many of the lands Muslims occupied, no cultural artefact was destroyed and the ancient cultural monuments of today's Islamic Republic of Egypt, including the pyramids and the Great Sphinx (*Abu-l-Haul*), are classic examples. Indeed, the Islamic law encourages Muslims to obey sound cultural norms. These acceptable indigenous cultural norms are known as *urf* (whether verbal [*urfqawlī*] or behavioural [*urffi'lī*]). *Urf* is a cultural norm (custom) which does not contradict a sound Islamic principle. The

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[110]A.A. Said & M. Sharify-Funk, eds.,*Cultural Diversity and Islam*(Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2003), 33
[111]Yusuf & Abdulsalam, ibid, 52
[112]Said & Sharify-Funk, ibid, 33
[113] Abd-Allah, ibid, 4
[114]Abd-Allah, ibid, 4.

importance of customs for Muslims is evident in the *shari'ah*maxim that "Custom is the basis of judgement" (*Al-'ādahmuḥakkamah*)[115] based on Abdullah ibn Mas'ud's view that "what the Muslims deem to be good is good in the eyes of God."[116]Explaining this metaphor, Hashim Kamali indicates that, when a matter is not regulated by a contract, its customary rule applies.[117] Islam's attitude towards indigenous cultural identity was so robust that the Madinan legal luminary, Imam Malik, specialised in the indigenous practices of Madinah conventionally known as *amal* which constituted much of the first known corpus of Islamic law, *al-Muwatta'*.[118]*Amal* refers to a:

> … 'Well-established precedent' (*sunnamadiya*) [i.e. confirmed custom] or 'ancient practice' *(amrkaddim)* … [which] partly reflects the actual custom of the local community, but it also contains a theoretical or ideal element so that it comes to mean normative *sunna,* the usage as it ought to be.[119]

Imam Malik assumed that since the Prophet developed Islam into a full-fledged cultural society in Madinah and the fact that all "un-Islamic" practices in Madinah were abolished by the time of his death, any cultural norm which remained necessarily acquired a prophetic sanction.[120]However, *amal* expresses a cultural value which never really entailed the presence of a definite report to the effect that the prophet, in his own words (*qaul*), action (*fi'l*), or tacit approval (*taqrīr*) confirmed such practices.[121] The approval of *amal* by the *fuqahā'*(Muslim jurists)and its continued survival and promotion in Islamic lore attest to the fact that Islam traditionally acknowledges indigenous culture, diversity, and identity in all their ramifications.

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[115]Mustafa, D.A., et-al., Islamic Economics and the Relevance of *al-Qawā'id al-Fiqhiyyah*. *SAGE Open*, 6/3 (2016), 4

[116]M.H. Kamali, *Qawa'id al-fiqh: The Legal Maxims of Islamic law* (United Kingdom: Association of Muslim Lawyers, 2007), 3.

[117]Kamali, ibid, 3

[118]Y. Dutton, *The Origins of Islamic La w: The Qur 'an, the Muwatta' and Madinan 'Amal* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999).

[119] J. Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (New York: O.U.P., 1982), 30

[120]Dutton, ibid, 180

[121]Schacht, ibid, 33

In spite of the above, once again, there is a dilemma in non-Arab Muslims attempting to maintain an indigenous cultural identity through names. Generally, the issue of non-Arab Muslims attempting to maintain non-Arabic names raises problems. This hinges on the issues of whether to maintain an Arabic name or accept a traditional name in tune with their indigenous cultural identity. Essentially, a non-Arab could ordinarily express an identity through an indigenous name but with an Arabic component to make it "Islamic." This phenomenon, sometimes, has implications for *da'wah* because loss of indigenous identity could lead to "alienation and the loss of important da'wah opportunities between new Muslims and the community they no longer identify with."[122] Many Ghanaian foreigner Muslims usually lived in isolated suburbs called *Zongos*,[123] which, of late, have been heavily stigmatised due to concerns about "Islamic names in crimes."[124] Apparently, Arabic is ranked superior to all languages. Referring to a tradition, Ibn Manzūr, the author of perhaps the most popular dictionary of the Arabic language, makes the Arabic linguistic culture *primus inter pares*: "love the Arabs for three reasons: because I [the Prophet] am Arab; the Qur'an is Arabic; and the tongue of the people of paradise is Arabic."[125] Yet, the Qur'an says:

> And among His signs are the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your tongues [languages] and colours. Verily, in that are indeed signs for those who possess knowledge (Qur'an 30:22).

For Ibn Manzūr, however, the revelation of the Qur'an in Arabic and Allah making it a language of paradise makes the Arabic language superior to all languages,[126] a general view of all Muslims.[127] Research indicates that, in Iran, "most Arab Muslims,

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[122] Da'wah Institute of Nigeria, ibid, see part II.

[123] E. Schildkrout, *People of the Zongo: The Transformation of Ethnic Identities in Ghana* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1978), 67; J. Middleton, '"[Review of the book *People of the Zongo: The transformation of ethnic identities in Ghana*, by E. Schildkrout]", *African Affairs,* 79 (1980), 131

[124] J.B. Yusuf, "Contraception and Sexual and Reproductive Awareness among Ghanaian Muslim Youth: Issues, Challenges, and Prospects for Positive Development", *SAGE Open*, 4/3 (2014), 6

[125]M.M. Ibn Manzŭr, *Lisān al-Arab,* vol.1. (Beirŭt, DārLisān al-Arab, 1994), 7

[126] Ibn Manzŭr, 7; F. Esack, *The Qur'an: A User's Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007), 16

[127] A. Farghaly, "The Arabic Language, Arabic Linguistics and Arabic Computational Linguistics". In A. Farghaly (ed.). *Arabic Computational Linguistics* (Stanford, California: Center for the Study of Language and Information, 2010), 46

of all sects, see their Arab culture as superior to the culture of Iran."[128] The feeling of cultural superiority by Arabs over other cultures is summarised in the following extract:

> The Arab Empire lasted more than 750 years and covered an area from the Atlantic coast to India. The attitudes developed in the wake of such a cultural dominance are mirrored in what Western managers may experience as a sentiment of cultural superiority by the Arabs: they define themselves at the top of the cultural hierarchy and regard other cultures with lenience and suspicion, depending of [**sic**] the culture in focus,…. The Arabs' perception of cultural superiority contrasts strongly with the westerner's technological superiority on which they depend for their economic and political development.[129]

Nonetheless, existing research indicates that the feeling of cultural superiority is a major internal problem facing Muslims of all cultural divides and not Arabs alone. In Africa, Candice Goucher *etal.* intimate that the Mali empire from the time of Sunjata 'was cemented by the idea of Mande cultural superiority' and praise singers and oral historians helped to propagate this ideology.[130]Others indicate how the Hausa pilgrim-makers in the Chad expounded a legacy of cultural superiority over their less orthodox Muslim Chadian neighbours[131] and classified themselves as practitioners of a purer Islam.[132] Furthermore, St Croix reports that the Fulbe, who once ruled the Hausa states in the Sokoto Caliphate, had such a sense of supremacy that some of them would virtually die from it.[133] They believed that they alone "have the necessary ingredient in the blood which enables them to be

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[128] J. Zogby, E. Zogby, S.H. Zogby, J. Zogby, C. Bohnert, M. Calogero, J. Mazloom, & K. Scott, *Looking at Iran: How 20 Arab and Muslim Nations view Iran and its Politics* (Washington, DC: Zogby Research Services,2012),vi

[129] C.A. Solberg, "Culture and Industrial Buyer Behavior: The Arab Experience" (A Paper Presented at the 18th IMP Conference, Dijon, France, 2002), 7-8.

[130] C.L. Goucher, C.A. LeGuin, & L.A. Walton, *In the Balance: Themes in Global History*, vol. 1(Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998), 233

[131] J.A. Works, *Pilgrims in a Strange Land: Hausa Communities in Chad* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976); S. O'Brien, "Pilgrimage, Power, and Identity: The Role of the *Hajj* in the Lives of Nigerian Hausa *Bori* Adepts", *Africa Today*,46/3&4 (1999), 17

[132] Works, ibid, 136

[133] F.W. De St Croix, *The Fulani of northern Nigeria* (Lagos: Government Printer, 1945)

culturally and morally superior."[134] The inclination towards cultural superiority is so strong among Fulbe Muslims that, in spite of their deprived wealth statuses today,[135] their women have persisted in rejecting trading "in order to maintain and enhance the *daraja* (prestige, honour) of their people as a whole."[136]Thus, most of them rather rely on support from their husbands or the latter's families for their own upkeep and their matrimonial homes.[137] In southern Ghana, Islam is mostly, but erroneously, associated with the Hausa to the extent that one is able is identify oneself as a Muslim in the "true sense" if one is able to speak the Hausa language. Nonetheless, one's inability to speak Hausa is expressed by the clause: *karamu nnte Hausa* (literally, "a Muslim who does not speak the Hausa language"). This mentality has sustained the historical categorisation of the Muslims into Asante *Nkramo*, Fanti *Nkramo*, and Hausa *Nkramo* to distinguish those Muslims who are ethnically non-Hausa but are Asante and Fanti, respectively. As a matter of fact, non-northerner or non-Hausa Muslims are often tagged by the Hausa as *tubah* (converts), irrespective of whether one was born a Muslim or converted.

The above trend of cultural differentiations slams the door to cultural diversity, creates an impasse in the attempt to understand the Islamic perspective of cultural diversity, and leads a Muslim to a crossroad in attempting to express a sense of indigenous cultural belonging. In African societies, the perception of Arab cultural superiority led to a hybrid culture in which, while trying to maintain an Arabic identity, Muslims have sought an indigenous definition in a brilliant African perspective. This makes many wonder whether Arabic or "Islamic names" or even "Islamic dress" are not culturally biased and exclusive, and therefore ethnocentric, or even racist, as non-Arab converts to Islam are virtually made to adopt Arabic names and dress.[138]Thus, clearly, cultural diversity is a dilemma not in Islam itself but in the Muslim approach to Arabic and its culture. Today, diverse cultural groups exist in the *Ummah*, yet, there is no trust between them and this creates the problem of mutual acceptance of each other even though active effort to understand and tolerate each other occurs every day which,

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[134]C. VerEeecke, "Muslim Women Traders of Northern Nigeria: Perspectives from the City of Yola", *Ethnology*, 32/3 (1993), 230

[135]Ver Eeecke, ibid

[136]Ver Eeecke, ibid

[137]Ver Eeecke, ibid

[138] Da'wah Institute of Nigeria, ibid, see part II

temporarily, prevents cultural conflicts but often comes with it an attempt to hold sway.[139]

Philosophy of Naming in Ghanaian Societies: An Islamic View

Naming is a cultural practice that is universal.[140] The rituals performed during naming ceremonies tend to vary from one ethnic group to another. In many ethnic groups, the child is not brought to the public view for up to eight days. This traditional ritual can actually be described as a scientific or medicinal way of ensuring that the baby adjusts to the temperature outside the mother's womb. To make sure the baby survives this, the mother has to be with it and she is discouraged from public exposure. Hence, on the day of naming (called different names by different linguistic groups, e.g., *D[z]into*: Akan, *Vihehedego*: Ewes, *Kpodziemo*: Gas, *Suuna* among mostly people who established contact with the Hausa) when the baby literally sees the sun for the first time, the baby's exit from its confined premise is known as "out-dooring." He or she is now regarded as *ɔhɔho* (visitor) who has to be welcomed either formally (through a flamboyant feasting ceremony of well-meaning dignitaries) or, among the lower-class, informally (through a simple ceremony involving few respected members of the extended family setup). The right over what name to give to a child is the couple's, particularly, the father, unless they are too young to make a sound judgment in selecting "a good name." Among the Akan, a baby is first given a basic name known as *Kra-D[z]in* (soul name), which derives from the day of birth.

Table 1: 'Soul names' of the Akan

Day in English/Akan	Corresponding name for boys	Corresponding name for girls
Sunday/*Kwasida*	*Kwesi/Akwasi*	*Esi*
Monday/*Dwowda*	*Kodwo/Kwadwo*	*Adwoa/Adwowa*
Tuesday/*Benada*	*Kobina/Kwabena/Akwabena*	*Abenaa/Abaena*

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[139]D. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a Christian Country has now become the World's most Religiously Diverse Nation* (San Francisco: Harper, 2001), 70.
[140]Matunda, ibid, 16

Wednesday/*Wukuda/Wuk wada*	*Kweku/Kwaku*	Ekua
Thursday/*Yawda/Yawada*	*Yaw*	*Yaa/Yaayaa*
Friday/*Fida*	*Kofi/Afi*	*Efua/Afia*
Saturday/*Memenda*	*Kwame/Kwamina*	*Ama*

Source: Authors' Construct

With the above, an Akan child automatically knows the day of his or her birth. Apart from the above, the sequence of birth or consecutive birth of a particular gender of baby could also be used to name a child. For example, an Akan woman who gives birth to three consecutive boys or girls will name the third as *Mensa* or *Mansa*, respectively. A fourth and fifth consecutive birth of the same gender of babies will be *Anan* and *Maanan* and *Anum*, respectively. Other Akan names like *Nsia* (sixth-born), *Esuon* (seventh-born), *Awɔtwe* (eighth-born), *Nkruma* (ninth-born), and *Badu/Baadu/Baduwa/Baaduwa* (tenth-born) are all based on the sequence of birth. Arabic names like *Awwal*, *Thāni*, *Thālith* (*Salisu*), *Rābi'u/Rābi'ah* (i.e., first, second, third, and fourth born, respectively), which become alternatives, also derive mainly from the sequence of birth although, sometimes, some of them are named after elders and not necessarily due to the sequence of birth. Thus, the cultural identity of great people like Kofi Anan and Kwame Nkrumah[141] are clear. While some of these names could be given to both boys and girls, others have gender differentials. Therefore, just like Islamic names, African baby names are not chosen anyhow but with much consideration.[142]

Curiously, the intensity of the Islamic revival in Ghana has largely contributed to the Muslims' adoption of Arabic names and identity than before. The revival heightens the significance of religion in Muslim life at the expense of the primordial ethnic identity emanating from indigenous names. Deriving its impetus from the transnational contact with the Arab or Muslim world, the revival has been boosted by mass education and modern technologies, which made religious resources accessible and, thus, transformed identities. Commenting on the transformation of Muslim identities in recent times, Eickelman[143] argues that mass education and mass communication are transforming Muslim

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[141]A reliable history has it that the name of Ghana's first president is corrupted from *Ngɔruma* of the Nzima language.

[142]Mutunda, ibid, 15

[143] Dale F. Eickelman, "Inside the Islamic Reformation", *Wilson Quarterly*,22/1 (1998)

identities akin to the Protestant Christian Reformation fuelled by the printing revolution in Europe.[144] He illustrated how the demography of the Omani society was changing from few literate people to unprecedented educated elites. Revivalist movements have succeeded, through propagation and education, to homogenise Muslim identities devoid of any socio-ethnic influence. Both the Tijaniyya and Salafi revivalists from the West African sub-region and the Middle East have propagated or facilitated the adoption of Arabic names in Ghana than indigenous ones by Muslims.

The later move has succeeded primarily because indigenous names are often labelled as polytheistic (*shirk*) and consequently considered as "un-Islamic" to justify the adoption of Arabic names.[145] Sheikh Muhammed Mahey has attributed this to ignorance on the part of some *'Ulama* about aspects of our indigenous practices and names which conform to Islamic values. In his view, the dimension of ignorance is further reflected as some *'Ulama*give Arabic words to new-born babies.[146] Otherwise, sentences like *Naṣru-n-min-al-Lāh* ('Help from Allah' [Qur'an 61:13]), *Ba'du bi-l-Dīn* (part of 'Then what sways you [unbelievers] to deny the judgement' [Qur'an 95:7]), and *Alamnashrah* ('Did We not open…' [part of Qur'an 94:1]), and women's names like *Asra* (part of Qur'an 17:1 which means 'He took' [reminiscent of the prophet's journey to the heavens {*Al-Isra*) would not have been taken as names.[147]

In the past, many non-Arab Muslims have encountered a clash of cultural identity with Arabic names. In Ghana, this occurred in the wake of Christian missionary education. Ibrahim Mustapha illustrated that the colonial policy on education created more challenges for Muslim children who pursued Western formal education at the time. For instance, school pupils were forced to adopt Christian names which, just like Arabic names, were basically either Euro-Christian or English (Interview: Ibrahim Mustapha, 2019, Accra). This view was corroborated by a renowned Muslim scholar at the University of Cape Coast, Sheikh Dr. Mark Sey, arguing that he was coerced by his school master to either change his name from *Muhammad Sey* to *Mark Sey* to reflect

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[144]See also: J.B. Yusuf & A. Boletbekova, "Mass Media and Islamic Religious Propagation (Da'wah) in Kyrgyzstan", *Research Journal of Islamic Studies Abḥāth, 7/28*(2022). 1-22

[145]Interview: Mallam Musa, Cape Coast, 11/08/2018

[146]Interview: Muhammad Mahey, Kumasi, 12/03/2019

[147]Schmmel, ibid, 25

the Christian principles of the school or risk giving up his education at the school.[148] Thereafter, to avoid the frustration of a name change, Mark Sey had to bear the supposed 'European' identity as a Muslim scholar. This, on its own, should not have been a problem; after all, it is a circumstance borne out of sheer inevitability (*Darurah*). However, the issue is him having to live the rest of his life with a name that was imposed on him. Even more, his fellow traditional Muslims might doubt his commitment to Islam based on his name or wonder about the kind of Muslim he was.

Among the Akan groups in Ghana, the philosophy of naming is not opposed totally to the Islamic philosophy of naming because both aim at giving to children names that depict virtuous qualities. However, indigenously, names depict ethnic identity and an Akan may not give a Ga name to his children unless there is a fair justification for this. Personal names are social labels which bestow on children an identity into the ethnic or social group they belong to. Hence, generally, a child with a name is a social entity with an identifiable cultural background[149] and grows knowing who he or she is culturally.[150] Those who know such a name immediately realise the child's ethnic belonging. Sometimes, names play a role in accommodating strangers. For example, an Ewe tribesman may be more disposed to accommodating a man called, *Setsoafia*, than an Akan due to the tribal affinity. This is clarified by the Fanti adage: *Se Fantsenyekɔ Kumasi kɔto Kwaw Afona a naɔakɔtononua* ('when a Fanti goes to Kumase and meets a man with a name, *Kwaw Afona*, he has met his brother'). *Kwaw Afona*(also known as *Yaw Dadze,* symbolic of "brave warrior")is a name used by the Fanti group of the Akan. *Kwaw*is an appellation for a Thursday-born Fanti man called *Yaw*. Hence, on hearing the name, the Fanti stranger in Kumai realises he has met his tribesman (brother) with whom he could temporarily perch.

Thus, indigenous baby names are projected to carry a particular message to the society regarding not just who the child is but, more importantly, the kind of personage he is supposed to

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[148] Sheikh Dr. Mark Sey, Retired Senior Lecturer and Muslim Scholar, Department of Religion and Human Values, University of Cape Coast, Ghana. Personally revealed to one of the authors at his office when he was in active Service, 2004.

[149] I. Shagrir, *Naming Patterns in the Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Oxford: Unit for Prosopographical Research, 2003), 1; Alford, ibid, 29

[150] R.D. Alford, *Naming and Identity: A Cross-Cultural Study of Personal Naming Practices* (New Haven, CT: HRAF Press, 1988),29

depict.[151] Indigenous names establish family identity, manifest a family's social class and offer important clues to the legitimacy of a child's parentage. This is expressed by the *hadith* that "a child born to a house belongs to the owner of the house." Therefore, indigenous baby names given by legitimate individuals prevent the wrong attribution of children's parentage, which is in conformity with the Qur'anic verse:

> Call them by (the names of) their fathers: that is more just in the sight of Allah. But if you do not know their fathers' (name, call them) your brothers in faith, or your *mawlas*. But there is no blame on you if you make a mistake therein: (what counts is) the intention of your hearts: and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful (Qur'an 33:5).

The verse underpins the prohibition of giving one's name to an adopted son. A Muslim child retains the inalienable right to his biological father's name as a surname, irrespective of whether the said father is or is not responsible.

In African societies, non-Arabic or indigenous names are not always just to label children but are also underpinned by the consideration of good character emulation and building which, for all intents and purposes, are the main raison d'être for Arabic names in the "Islamic" context. In line with this cultural philosophy, some Ghanaian parents name their babies after their parents, grand-parents, or remote ancestors. Thus, African indigenous naming patterns have significant sociological functions:

- They establish links between two distinct alternating generations: those gone or about to go and those who just came.
- They perpetuate the names of the exemplary members of the older generation while using their good deeds as a yardstick to build perhaps a more ethical one. This makes the older generation feel valued.
- They also forge closer ties between the respectable elders of society and the new-born. This is because as Mohome notes,

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[151] P.R.C. Weaver, *Familia Caesaris: A Social Study of the Emperor's Freedmen and Slaves* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1972); P. Franklin, "Normans, Saints and Politics: Forename Choice Among Fourteenth-Century Gloucestershire Peasants", *Local Population Studies*, 36 (1986), 18-24; C.A. Cody, "Naming, Kinship and Estate Dispersal: Notes on Slave Family Life on a South Carolina Plantation", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 39 (1982), 193-209; Mutunda, ibid, 14; Alford, ibid, 51; Guma, ibid, 267

"when a grandparent shares the name with a grandchild, the relationship between them becomes even closer."[152]

- On the other hand, according to Guma and Moning, naming a child after elders also serves a religious purpose[153] as well as political and social functions.[154] Religiously, having children named after exemplary elders and departed heroes reminds the living of their duty to pray for the dead and sound health for the elderly members of society.

It must be noted that in indigenous Ghanaian societies, not all ancestors or elders receive the honour of being named after. Elders that are named after often lead virtuous lives. These are presumed not to have taken others' wives, never found to be thieves, drunk or, for that matter, never engaged in any disliked behaviour unworthy of emulation by new generations. In the past, bravery in war and commitment to people's welfare through virtuous sacrifice, humility, and hard work were admirable qualities. Some of these qualities should be borne in mind in appreciating why the Prophet named his sons, Abdullah (after his father) and Ibrahim (after his great-great-grandfather, Prophet Ibrahim). The same should be borne in mind in appreciating why the Fanti are proud of their ancestors, Obun-mankoma, Odapagyan and Oson; as Asantes do to Obiri Yeboah, Osei Tutu I and Opoku Ware I, the Gonja to Sumaila Ndewura Jakpa and Naba' and the Dagomba to *YaNa* Wumbei (Muhammad Zangina), among others. They might not presently give these names to their children per se but they still place value on them morally. This is because these men not only displayed acts of valour but demonstrated virtuous character which their offspring wish to maintain in their respective families and so feel privileged to be associated with them. Similar to the Islamic philosophy of naming, indigenous names are given to preserve the legacy of the founding fathers of Islam (*Salaf al-Salih* or ancestors) and exemplary leaders. Like Arabic names, indigenous names might not escape distortion by outsiders due to wrong intonation and lack of proper knowledge of the local language.

Our analysis demonstrates that the modification of Arabic names among Ghanaian Muslims is underpinned by two

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[152]Mohome, ibid, 171-185

[153] H.D. Monnig, *The Pedi* (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1967), 338.

[154] M. Guma, "The Cultural Meaning of Names among Basotho of Southern Africa: A Historical and Linguistic Analysis", *Nordic Journal of African Studies,* 10/3 (2001), 267

significant experiences (factors): intonation orientation and Western education.

1. Intonation Problems

The distortion of Arabic names due to intonation applies to all ethnic groups that came into contact with Islam since its introduction to Ghana. The dominant tribes include the Akan (southerners), the Gonja, the Wala, the Dagomba, and their neighbours (northern territories). These ethnic groups have corrupted many Arabic names.

Table 2: Some Arabic names and their intonation among various ethnic groups in Ghana

Name (Arabic)	Intonation/distortion	Name (Arabic)	Intonation/distortion
Halimah	Alima	'A'ishah	Ashatu/Shatu
Ishaq	Isaka/Isaku	Habibah	Abiba
'Umar	Moro/Imoro	Khadijah	Hadis[z]a/Adiza/Alinsa
Salih	Salifu	Bilqis	Barkisu/Balkisu
'Uthman	Asuman/Asman/Asma/Esuman/Sumana	Mika'il	Munkaila/Minkaila
Ahmad	Amadu	Hamid	Amidu/Hamidu
Ruqayyah	Rakia/Likia	Isma'il	Sumaila
Zaynab	Jenabu/Zenabu	Husaynah	Fuseina
Abu Bakr	Buker/Abukari/Bukari	Hasan	Alaasan
Hafsah	Awusatu/Afishetu	Husayn	Fuse[i]ni
Armiya'	Ameyaw	Ya'qub	Dakubu
Yusuf	Ntsifu/Ntifu/Esilfi/Ntseful	Mu'min	Mumuni
Jibril	Ziblim	Muhammad	Maman

Source: Authors' construct. **NB**: Some of these names have been so deeply corrupted that they have lost their original Arabic connotations and are now treated as indigenous names: e.g. Asma, Esuman, Ntseful, Esilfi and Ameyaw.[155]

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[155] It is noteworthy that these names are used among the Akans in general or Fantis in particular. How the transformation came about may require another article.

Some parents fondly corrupt the names of their children which become so familiar that, at times, reversal becomes impossible. For instance, among the Nigerian community in Ghana, Muhammad is sometimes corrupted to *Mamad*, Ahmed to *Amad*, Ibrahim to *Ibu*, while other foreign nationals possibly of Asian origin call "Yusuf" as *Isop*. Other names are sometimes fondly shortened by parents or friends alike, e.g., *Fatimah* as *Fati*. Sometimes, shortening compromises meanings if any was intended at all. For example, when *Fatimah* (meaning 'baby nurse'/'weaner') is shortened as *Fāti* (intoned as *Faati*), it sounds like *Fātih* (which means 'the conqueror'). Such mutilations could be grievous because, like all languages, the Arabic language is dynamic, and many might end up reigning curses on their own children instead of perceivably intending blessings with particular names. Thus, one might possibly be served better if one considered indigenous names with a philosophy one understands.

2. *Westernisation and Education*
This category is "adaptation" usually carried out by educated young Muslims who hope to avoid discrimination by the wider society. These young Muslims try to hide their Arabic names, which portray their religious identity, by modifying them for fear of stigmatisation in public spaces.[156] These Muslims, who are mainly students, take European-sounding versions of their names to enable them assimilate with their colleagues of the other divides. Names like Maryam is corrupted to *Miriam* or *Mary*, Ya'qub to *Jacob*, Musa to *Moses*, Rahman (prefixed with *Abdul*) to *Raymond*, Salāma[tu] to *Sarah* or *Sallie*,[157]Ismā'il to *Ishmael*,[158]among others. They suppose that replacing their perceived Muslim identity with European-sounding versions would facilitate their integration into a society that is perceived as less conducive to their religious orientation. Many scholars refer to similar processes of Europeanisation[159] or 'Americanisation' in various capacities in which even Arab Muslims have anglicised their names and

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[156]Interview: Miriam Anonymous, former student of the University of Ghana, 11/12/2019, 14/12/2019.

[157]Interview: Salah Anonymous, Student of the University of Cape Coast, 10/01/2020.

[158]Interview: Muhammad Latif, Student Activist, Ghana Institute of Journalism, 10/01/2020.

[159]Khosravi, ibid, 65&78

avoided the Arabic language.[160] Obviously, when they speak Arabic, they could be identified rather easily.

Conclusion

This article discusses the significance of Arabic and Islamic names and their implications for the Ghanaian indigenous Muslim cultural identity. We tried to find out whether a Muslim could maintain an Islamic identity without an Arabic name. Equally, we tried to understand whether names have a cultural value in Islam, or, in point of fact, Islam acknowledges cultural diversity. From the findings despite the fact that Islam attaches importance to names (particularly, good names), it also regards all races, tribes, and cultures as unique in their own settings and does not prefer one culture over others. Therefore, a Muslim could maintain an indigenous name and identity and still identify himself as Muslim, provided that one's behaviour is consistent with the accepted rules of Qur'an and *Sunnah*.

The study further demonstrates that what is referred to as Islamic names are basically pre-Islamic names of Arabs who became associated with Islam. The unique roles played by these Arabs in the propagation of Islam transformed their names into exemplary models for the subsequent generation of Muslims to use them as names for their children. The study also establishes that Prophet Muhammad admonished Muslims to name their children to reflect positive values to enable them imbibe such values. Ironically, some of the ethnic groups that embraced Islam in Ghana corrupted the Arabic names with wrong intonations. This underscores how the Arabic/Islamic identity reflects inan indigenous cultural background.

Through a comparative analysis of the philosophy of naming in Arabic or Islam and the Ghanaian indigenous society, using the Akan people as a special example, we found that the Akan philosophy of naming is not entirely different from that of Islam. This is because, just like Arabic or "Islamic" names, Akan names are

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[160] E. Goldwasser, "Economic Security and Muslim Identity: A Study of the Immigrant Community in Durham, North Carolina". In Y. Y. Haddad &J.L. Esposito, eds., *Muslims on the Americanization Path?*(New York: O.U.P., 2000); A. Kulczycki & A.P. Lobo, "Patterns, Determinants, and Implications of Intermarriage among Arabs", *Journal of Marriage and Family,* 64/1 (2002), 202-210; E.D. Gould & E.F. Klor, "The Long-Run Effect of 9/11: Terrorism, Backlash, and the Assimilation of Muslim Immigrants in the West", CEPR Discussion Paper 8797 (2012), 6; A. Schimmel, *Islamic Names* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), 73

given in reference to those ancestors who have lived exemplary lives in order to promote good moral values or ethical standards among the young. There are also political and religious underpinnings in which children are named after some elites as a way of showing gratitude to them. For all these reasons, it is incumbent on, especially Muslim scholars, to dig deep into the sources with prospects to clarify whether a Muslim is obliged to identify with Arabic ("Islamic") names or not, and to dress in the manner of certain cultures rather than others.