

## Linguistic Analysis of Gokana Personal Names

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this research was to do an analysis on Gokana Personal names, an area of Onomastics called Anthroponomy. These names were analyzed linguistically. To achieve this, three native speakers of Gokana were interviewed as language consultants and ninety names were collected. A morphological analysis was done on some of these names and the morphological processes identified were affixation and compounding. Simple word names were also identified. From the analysis, the researchers also found out that some names were sentential. It was also discovered that Gokana names are made up of one, two, three and even four syllables according to the data under study. A socio-semantic analysis was also done on the names, were the meanings attached to these names were looked at.*

**Key words:** *Onomastics, Personal Names, Anthroponomy, Name-Givers, Function of Names.*

### Background to the Study

In traditional African societies, personal names are not just arbitrary combination or linking of words that reflect the worldview of people. Worldview is the beliefs and thoughts (conceptions, ideas, and opinions) about the world and human life within the world. Gokana personal names express the thought of the people Gokana people attach great significance to the meaning of their names. Naming is therefore a carefully planned event. Naming is a specific linguistic act linked with values, traditions, hopes, fears and events in people's lives Names reveal the many preferences in their owner (or givers) in terms of real object, actions, features and beliefs (Rosenhouse. 2002). Personal names occur in every language. Names are studied under an area that is referred to as onomastics and onomastics is a branch of linguistics. It studies the etymology of proper names (Crystal, 1999). Like endonym and hypocorism, names of people are studied in an area of onomastic called anthroponomy.

Personal naming practices create an insight into the patterns of socio-cultural organization of communities A name identifies a person, sends a message and expresses hope and preserves cultural and religious tradition (Alford, 1987:51). Names tell us the categories of infants as well as name givers and also points out the significance that surrounds the circumstance of a child's birth.

### Statement of the Problem

Personal names among Africans serve as a community tool and store house for the culture and history of the society. However, many Gokana people are unaware of the meaning and structure of their naming pattern in Gokana. Identifying the motivational force behind personal names deepens one's understanding of the socio-cultural characteristics of Gokana.

When our colonial masters arrived Africa, they brought their cultural values with them. These colonizers tried to make indigenous people of Africa abandon their cultural systems and follow their own cultural systems Al though this was against the wish of the indigenous people Gokana did not

escape this domination, as it affected the naming patterns of people. It affected the way personal names were selected and bestowed.

Personal names in an African society serve as a means of conveying the cultural values and traditions of daily experiences. Before people could read and write, names were used as means of documenting important events, and they were part of the oral tradition, making them an integral part of every cultural system. Personal names are constructed from various word categories such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc. This research project attempts to carry out a linguistic study in Gokana personal names in areas such as; morphology, semantics, syntax, socio-linguistics.

### **Aim and Objectives of the study**

Personal names in a typical African society are very important; they are used to identify individuals, but there are more to personal names than identity. This work seeks to investigate the linguistic properties that are embedded in names that are borne by the people of Gokana. However, the specific objectives of the work are to:

1. Examine the linguistic components of Gokana personal names.
2. Find out the socio-cultural content of Gokana personal names
3. Explore the reasons for the choice of personal names in Gokana.

### **Research Question**

1. What are the linguistic components of Gokana personal names?
2. What are the socio-cultural contents of Gokana personal names?
3. Why do the people choose Gokana personal names?

### **A Brief on Gokana Language and her People**

Gokana is a Local Government Area in Rivers State, South-South Nigeria. Its headquarters is at Kpor. It has an area of 126 square kilometers. Gokana lies on the coastal low land of Niger Delta in South Eastern part of Rivers State. Gokana is about 54 kilometres by road from Port Harcourt and is located between latitude 4° 36' N and longitude 7° 21' E of the equator. It is bound on the North by Tai and Khana communities, on the East by the Andoni people, on the West by the Okrika kingdom and on the South by the Ibani people and the Atlantic Ocean ([www.google.com/spcak4me-nigenia](http://www.google.com/spcak4me-nigenia)).

Gokana is an agricultural society. One major occupation of Gokana people is farming. Yam and cassava farming are important ways of making a living. Gokana's agricultural production has drastically reduced. This is partly due to the loss of farm lands through oil pollution and partly to soil fertility problems arising from acid and alkaline rain caused by gas flaring. Fishing is also another important occupation among the people of Gokana. But large areas of fresh and salt water resources as fishing grounds have been rendered useless as a result of oil spillage.

Gokana is an Ogonoid or Kegboid language family of South-Eastern Nigeria. It is classified under the Cross River cluster, which belongs to the Benue-Congo sub group of the Niger-Congo phylum of languages. Gokana is spoken in a number of Villages which include: Lewe, Barayorwa Dere, Kgbara Dere, Kpor, Bomu, Mogho, Nwe-ol, Barako, Biara, Yeghe and Bera.

### **Conceptual Review**

This involves concepts of onomastics, particularly anthroponomy. Concepts that are related to personal names will be looked at by the researcher

### **Onomastics**

Onomastics is the study of names. It is divided into Anthroponomastics and Toponomastics. Anthroponomy is related to genealogy, sociology and anthropology. Anthroponomy is a discipline that is of great importance to onomasticians because it covers many aspects of life, including the social, cultural, political, economic, historical and religious aspects.

In traditional African societies, there are a number of factors that influence the choice of personal names. African people are observant of what is happening around them, and they want to record through personal names, Africans used personal names as an archive for storing all important facts about their history and daily activities. Personal names became short stories in most traditional societies in Africa.

Proper names can best be analyzed by a combination of both philosophical and anthropological notions. In African cultural context, names are given in order to differentiate, to recognize and to know. Great importance are attached to naming practices. The knowledge about personal names gives insight into African culture thought, environment, religion and language personal names serve as a means of reference to the bearers or used to identify them as distinct persons or capture their individuality as human beings. Nwagbara (2010), explains that the main purpose of naming in all cultures is to provide a symbolic system of individual identification which performs the speech acts of identifying reference. The fact which needs elaboration is that personal names may or may not have semantic import, depending on the language or culture. It is the cultural traditions of African people to give personal names that have meaning and cultural values.

According to Oduyoye (1972:67), the Yoruba's believe that a person's name reflects his behavior, they say, *Orukọ n rọ o-* his name is having a psychological effect on his behavior. Whether one understands or not, names given to every individual works for him or her.

Koopman (1986), Herbert (1990), Thipa (1983), Moyo (1996), Dickens (1985), Javaraman (2005) and Tournier (1975) agree that personal naming customs cannot be separated from culture. In many cultures, personal naming reflects the beauty of the group. Africans prefer a name that they can readily identify with, a personal name that will always remind them of something in their life experience. This resulted in a situation where the task of bestowing personal names was the responsibility of elders in the family because of their rich experience. The African naming process is an African heritage and should be preserved.

Algeo (1992). points out that people are almost invariably named, instead, a human being without a name would be socially and psychologically less than a full man. This is why if an individual is not called by a name but thing, he or she is de-humanized

Ngugi (1972:4) says, culture in its broadest sense is a way of life fashioned by people in their collective endeavour to live and come to terms with their environment. These names reflect the social values among the people. The indigenous name wholly personifies the individual, gives a history about the parents and family of the bearer.

According to Harari and McDavid (1973:223), "people tend to be judged by their label". As Smith (1997:327-329). pointed out, the style of name we choose for ourselves can reveal a great deal about our personalities and about how we see ourselves, because the other's behavior and social acts have impact on a person's image of self in his or her mind.

This view is upheld by Okafor et al (2008:24), Igbo names are not mere tags of identify or appellation but very deep expression of attitudes, sentiments aspirations and commentaries of life experiences.

### **Names-Givers**

Name-givers are people who have the responsibility of naming the child. This is reserved for the elders of the family. It is evident that the introduction of Christianity and European culture in some African societies has weakened the custom of naming a child. Traditionally, the elders or community or traditional doctors or religious leaders were the only name-givers.

People who play important role in name-giving differ from one culture to another. There is no clear distinction between people who may or may not fulfill this role. Herbert (1995:5) in his research on the South African Bantu-speaking people found that family members, especially parents and grandparents, give the bulk of names.

Parents are the most common name-givers, followed by paternal grandparents and then maternal grandparents, especially the grandmother. He found that this was different from Western culture where usually only the parents play an important part in bestowing personal names on their children Arensen (1988:126), who conducted research among the Murle of South Eastern Sudan, reports that the close relatives of the child are the people primarily responsible for choosing a name, but sometimes the midwife who delivers the baby also makes suggestions. According to the tradition of these societies, the fathers will announce the child's name of the naming ceremony.

Bean (1980) found that prefixes attached to certain personal names indicated people who had played a role in the choice of that particular name. She found that the bestowal of a child's name is often the duty of the parents, but it is as likely to be the duty of senior kinsman or of a ritual specialist and the participation of members of the larger community is usually required.

Hassan (1986:81) remarks that in Jordan, the bestowal of a baby's name is the parent's duty. Most traditional societies prefer the elders to choose names for their children; parents are not given this responsibility, unlike parents in Western cultures. In Western cultures the issue of the nuclear family is emphasized, where as in traditional African societies the extended family is the focus by giving this role of personal name-giving to the grandparents or anyone elderly in the family or society, their presence and their wisdom is acknowledged. As far as African culture is concerned, it is regarded as a sign of disrespect on the part of young people if they do not allow the elders to carry out the personal naming. However, even though elderly people are mainly responsible for personal naming, other people are also allowed to fulfill this function. Some cultures prefer people from the father's lineage to be responsible for name-giving.

It seems that the younger generation does not follow traditional practices as far name-givers are concerned. Today, most parents have taken on the role of naming their children. Moyo (1996:17) found that in Malawi, with the passing of time, however, there seems to have been a shift from grandparents playing a role in name-giving to father or the couple themselves playing a dominant role. He says this may be attributed to the rather loose of ties in urban centres.

Ndimande (1998:91), in an article entitle "A semantic Analysis of Zulu surnames", supports Herbert. According to Zulu cultural practice fathers were the name-givers, but the practice has changed since any relative can name the child in the family. Herbert (1996:188) observes that

The basis workings of the Nguni system are well known: The name-giver is typically a senior member of the husband's family who bestows a name reflecting conditions surrounding the time of birth, physical features of the infant, social conditions within the family, or any subjective state of the name-giver. It is only a slight exaggeration to say a word, phrase or sentence may serve as the basis for an individual's birth name.

### Time of name-giving

The naming of children is part of the culture, because there is a diversity of cultures, there are also many rules a society or a particular ethnic group follows as far as the time for naming a child is concerned. It is therefore not surprising to find that different societies have different naming periods, or to see that some societies have no rigid time labels to follow when naming children.

According to Afford (1988:2), in some societies, individuals receive their given names at birth and use these names throughout their lives, as in western societies. In other societies, however, individuals traditionally change their names at important points in their lives.

Anim (1993:1), reports that Ewe, Akan, Ga and other tribes in Ghana name their children seven days after birth. During this period, the child is taken as a visiting spirit, who is only a guest in the host family. The spirit takes seven days to decide whether he likes this world or not, and whether he would like to stay with the parents to whom he has come as a guest. These ethnic groups consider the child to have become a human being after seven days and he is accordingly brought out of the room to meet other family and friends, and given a name.

Mbiti (1969) describes the period of naming in some African societies as an event that has a fixed period. He says that the Wolof people name their children one week after birth, and this event is followed by a ceremony where friends and relatives are informed. According to Mbiti (1969:119), the Shona name their children immediately after birth, and among the Luo, the child's name is sought when the child is crying. During this period, names of various ancestors (the living dead) are mentioned, and the child stops crying when a particular name is called out, then the child receives that name.

In some societies, birth names are sometimes changed at a later stage. Mbiti (1969:118) found that there is no end to the giving of names in some African societies and that a person could have acquired a sizeable collection of names by the time he becomes an old man even if receiving many names in an African tradition, in some cultures some of these names fall away through disuse.

Stewart (1988:152) who did research on Naxos, report:

Infants are not baptized immediately after birth; parents may wait two or three years or even longer before allowing a godfather to bestow a Christian name upon them in the elaborate church ceremony.

Before a child in Naxos is baptized, it is not called by any name, parents do not give their children temporal names, as in the case of some societies who take time to name their children. During the period between birth and baptism children are called moro (baby), a neuter noun, or else bebe in the case of boys and beba in the case of girls. These names are said to represent the new born child before it is incorporated into humanity.

There are other societies that wait a long time before they name their children. These people have different reasons for delaying names. Some of these reasons concern supernatural beliefs. Tooker (1984:8) discovered that many people in central Brazil felt that the burden of a name and all the social relationships that it carries with it is too strong for a small child; small children are weak and could become ill and die if weighed down by name.

## Meaning

Meaning is defined as what a word means, signifies, expresses and its inner and psychological importance. It is the idea of a word or an action. It is studied under an aspect of linguistics called semantics.

According to Ndimele (1997:1), semantics is an area of linguistics which studies the meaning of words and sentences in a language.

Suziman (1994:253), believes that African people chose personal names that pointed to a range of people and circumstances that were relevant at the time of the child's birth. The word meaning in this study refers to circumstances around the birth of a child.

Names like other words may have conceptual, descriptive or lexical meanings, but these meanings become relevant when the connotative or pragmatic meaning is attached to the name. Africans do not choose names at random without attaching to them something important in their lives. A personal name must carry some meaning or be commemorative or be a family name, referring perhaps to a relative who died sometime ago. It seems unlikely that an African would have a personal name that is meaningless; this would not be regarded as a real name depending on the factors motivating the naming process, a name may have a descriptive or connotative meaning.

According to Odugoye (1972:61), a name is a mark and being nameless is to be without an identity". Thus, the name is a mark or brand of identification. The main purpose of naming in all culture is to provide a symbolic system of individual identification which performs the speech of identifying references. Apart from personal identity, a name is an identity marker which ties the individual to his community and by extension to his ancestors. In other words, names are potent tools that mark ones' ethnic root and a person's name is a window into their language and culture.

## **Functions of Names**

The following are identified functions of names:

### **Naming and Identity**

Brennen (2000:144), defines identity as "a relatively stable self-picture, which consists of the opinions, attitudes, habits and beliefs that last relatively unchanged over a period of time".

A person's name is a valuable clue to his or her nationality or mother tongue which is part of one's identity. The bestowal of a name is a symbolic contract between the society and the individual. From one side of the contract by bestowing the name, the society confirms the individual's existence as well as acknowledging its responsibilities towards the name bearer.

A name differentiates one child from another, thus, the society will be able to treat and deal with such a child as someone with needs and feelings different from others. Through a name, an individual becomes part of the history of the society and because of name; his or her deed will exist separately from other deeds.

### **Naming and Necessity**

Naming an individual is a necessary towards unifying the family or group. Without identity, a person as well as the group would have no substance and without names, they would essentially be without identity. It is therefore necessary for every individual to have a name. The name is used to introduce the new born into the world.

### **Cognitive content of a name**

Jousse (2004) suggest that people who use the oral style have more practiced memories. People use their cognitive power to remember what a person might have done in the past and still refer to that incident in the naming of their children. They rely solely on their memory to name children about incidents which happened before they were born.

### **Empirical Review**

The study of personal names has attracted a number of scholars over the years. These are many views regarding the way in which personal names are bestowed, as far as African traditional culture is concerned, the selection of personal names is influenced by many factors.

Yanga (1978 241), in his article entitled "Language Planning and Onomastics in Zaire," found that Zaire personal names do not merely distinguish people from each other, they also operate as linguistic indicators of socialization, in that they are usually representatives of various social relationships within a family Yanga (1978) determined that African personal names play an indexical role reflecting the socio-cultural changes or events in the community. He reported that the Zairean onomastic system reflects the history, culture and socio-political events which have marked the national scene.

Tayaraman (2005 176) provides the following explanation of Hindu tradition of personal naming practices: a name not only reveals a person's self-identity also his or her cultural identity Further, it is believed top signal one's spiritual worth not only in this world, but also in the next In everyday life. Hindus give great significance to a personal name.

Ullmann (1962 73) asserts that "a proper name merely serves to identify a person or object by singling it out from among similar items."

Guma (2001) found that among the Basotho of Southern Africa the naming process is a socio-cultural interpretation of historical events He concentrated on the cultural meaning of personal names, tekonyms and the use of names initial schools He further argues that Basotho personal names are not just words but socio-cultural interpretation of historical events embodying individual life experiences, social norms and values, status, roles and authority, as well as personality and individual attributes.

Wills (1994) concurs with Guma and others on the importance of personal names in society. He believes that personal names are not simply labels for an individual. They situate the named socially, locating them in terms of one or more social constructs through which their rights and obligations are defined, through which they can make claims and claims maybe made upon them. He adds that personal names offer a valuable window on the process through which constructs of social identity were and made.

Most African societies give their children ancestral names. It is interesting to note the circumstance that lead to choice of such personal names. Herbert (1995), in his article "Socio-linguistics of personal names" reports that ancestors' names are given to children when they are ill, after the diviner has consulted about the cause of the illness. He will also identify the ancestor that is causing the illness.

Oyeleye (1985:137) opines that in "African society, a man's individuality is often summed up in the proper or personal names he bears".

Essien (1983:124) however, contends that naming among the Ibibio and Yoruba people could be likened to each other because they are similar in very many respects especially in their reference to cultural significance, psychological influence and religious.

Ayuwo (2007), in his article entitled "Obolo Theophonic and Ideational Anthroponyms" said that Obolo anthroponym gives meaning that makes it possible to place it under a semantic category.

Bean (1980:309), in his research on the bestowal of children's names, found that it is often the duty of parents, but may also be the duty of a senior kinsman or a ritual specialist, and the participation of members of a large community is also required. Bean (1980) view that the role of the ritual forms part of a child's acceptance into his family group.

### **A Brief on Relevant Theories**

This involves theories that are associated with the study of personal names. There are several theories associated with names but for purposes of this research two relevant theories are touched.

#### **Referential Theory of Meaning**

This theory was propounded by CK Ogden and I.A Richards. According to them, the meaning of an expression is the actual entity or object in the real world to which the expression refers. The actual object is referred to as the referent. This theory claims that words relate to the extra linguistic world by means of reference. On this view, a proper name is identical with its bearer. If a proper name were to mean anything, it would mean nothing but its semantic referent. Names are meaningful in so far as they stand for objects in the world.

#### **The Descriptive Theory**

The descriptive theory propounded by Gareth Evans (1973) sees names as denoting an item only if they satisfy all or most of the descriptions or characteristics one associates with the item that the name is supposed to represent. The speaker also has to believe and intend to use the given name with the necessary denotation including the necessary set of characteristics.

"N.N." denotes X upon a particular occasion of its use by a speaker S just in case S is uniquely that which satisfies all or most of the descriptions O such that S would assent to "N.N. is O" ("or that N.N is O"). Crudely: the cluster of information as associated with the name determines its denotation upon a particular occasion by fit. If the speaker has no individuating information he will denote.

#### **Research Methodology**

The researchers adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprises 336,300 people. This figure was got from the population census conducted in 2006 with a projection for 18 years. The data for the study is made up of 90 male and female names that were collected by the researchers and they represent the naming system of Gokana people of Ogoni in Rivers state.

The instrument adopted in this work is interview schedule. Fluent speakers of Gokana were interviewed as language consultants. The information they gave coupled with one of the researcher's

intuition as a native speaker of the language. These constituted the information in this work. The data obtained were analyzed using the descriptive method of interlinear morpheme-to-morpheme glossing and where relevant reference is made to other socio-cultural underpinnings. Secondary data were obtained from published literatures such as journals, newspapers, magazines, books and internet materials.

## Data Presentation and Analysis

The birth of a child in a family is usually welcomed with joy. A child is regarded as a bundle of joy. Married couples without children are not respected, they are often mocked and insulted. The basic purpose of naming in every culture is for identification.

This section is concerned with the culture and naming procedures of Gokana people, as well as the linguistic properties embedded in these names. This is because every cultural group has its own way of doing things traditionally. What works for one culture does not sometimes work for another.

## Morphological Analysis of Gokana Personal Names

Morphology is the study of the structure of words. It is a branch of linguistics that deals with the forms and formation of words. Zungu (1999:76) defines morphology as the internal structure of a word that can be identified as being either a self-standing lexical item, conveying the basic meaning as found in the lexicon, or a cluster of elements comprising, beside the lexical item or stem, one or more affixes that are added before, after or within the stem to convey additional grammatical meanings.

Morphology is that part of linguistics that specializes in the study of word categories found in all languages of the world. It deals with how different word categories are composed. This analysis will be looked at under the following headings

## Personal names by prefixation

Prefixation is a type of affixation. It is the process of attaching bound morphemes before the root. From the data collected, prefixes are dominant; there are no cases of suffixation, circumfixation and interfixation.

## Personal names that use the prefix "N-" and "Vi-

From the data collected, some Gokana personal names make use of the alveolar

nasal (n-) and (vi). The prefixes are used to denote small. Some parts of Gokana such as Mogho, Bera, and Biara make use of 'n-', while some others like Lewe, Bodo, Kpor and Bomu make use of 'vi'

### Examples of names that use n- prefix

### Example 1:

- a) N-kpee "small-lion"  
Small lion
- b) N-fq "small-planter"  
Small-planter

Examples of names that make use of the “vi” prefix

### Example 2:

a)	Vi-zor	“small god”
	Pref+N	
	Small-god	
b)	Vi-san	“small pity”

Pref. + N  
Small -pity

c) Vi-gii “small tears”  
Small-tears

d) Vi-kpea “small compliant”  
Small-compliant

### Simple words and names

A simple word is a free morpheme which consists of only one root without any bound element attached to it. There are some Gokana names that have independent existence without any bound elements attached to them. Examples are:

Example 3:

a) Kpee “lion”  
Lion

b) Baraol “farm”  
Farm

c) Nua “second daughter”  
Second-daughter

### Compound word names

A compound word is that which comprises two or more morphemes which are capable of independent existence. It consists of two or more free morphemes. This phenomenon also exists in Gokana names. In the formation of certain Gokana names, words are got from different word classes such as noun, verb or adjective to form compounds.

### Noun plus noun combination of names

Some names are derived from the combination of two nouns, example;

Example 4:

a.) Kpo+ bari “God’s strength”  
N + N  
Strength+God

b. Kpe+ va “sweet wife”  
N + N  
Sweet + wife

c Te-dum “tree of life”  
N + N  
Tree + life

d. Gio-meme “king’s wealth”  
N + N  
King + wealth

### Adjective plus noun combination of names

Some names in Gokana are got from the combination of an adjective and a noun. Examples:

### Example 5

- a) Pop-koo "big friend"
  - Adj + N
  - Big + friend
- b). Poro-te "bad father"
  - Adj +N
  - Bad + father
- c). Ee-kpa "white book"
  - Adj + N
  - White +book
- d). Bira-gbara "black man"
  - Adj + N
  - Black + man
- e). Le – eele "good road"
  - Adj +N
  - Good + road
- f). Kpuru-gbara "short man"
  - Adj + N
  - Short+ man
- g. Le-tom "good work"
  - Adj. + N
  - Good +work

### Verb plus noun combination of names

The combination of some verbs together with nouns in Gokana gives rise to this kind of formation. Some examples are:

### Example 6:

- a) Tom-bari "God's work"
  - V + N
  - Work +God
- b.) Naa-na "do something"
  - V + N
  - Do +something
- c). Kpor-kol "cultivation"
  - V + N
  - Cut +bush
- d) Leela + bari "praise God"
  - V + N
  - Praise +God

## Sentential names

A sentence is the largest meaningful unit of expression that is capable of independent existence. Some Gokana names are sentential in nature. These names are basically formed with the SVO structure.

### Example 7:

- a) Bari-du-le "God is good"  
S V O  
God+ is +good
- b) Bari-di-dum "God is alive"  
S V O  
God+is +alive
- c). Kpeghe-go-yinma "money hides intelligence"  
S V O  
Money +hide+ intelligence
- d) Mee-du-bari? "Who is like God"  
S V O  
Who +like +God
- e). Bari-dom-a-mene "God brings king"  
S V O  
God + bring +king

Some of the sentential names are declarative, affirmative and interrogative in nature.

## Syllables in Gokana personal names

Syllables can be defined as any of the units in which a word or words are divided. A word can be made of up one, two or more syllables. Every syllable must have a new clause which is usually a vowel. In the absence of a vowel, it can be a syllabic nasal or a liquid. Gokana names are no exceptions as they can carefully divide into these categories.

### Example 8:

## Gokana names with one syllable

a.	Fii	“man”
	Man	
b.	Bie	“drug”
	drug	

The above names cannot further be divided to form other syllables. They are complete in themselves and cannot be further broken down.

## **Gokana names with two syllables**

They are names that are made up of only two syllables. From the data collected, it is observed that there are names that can successfully divide into two units.

### Example 9:

a) Kpe-va “sweet wife”  
Sweet +wife

- b) Te-dum "tree of life"  
Tree +life
- c) Di-ne "live for"  
Live +for
- d) Le-tom "good work"  
Good+ work
- e) Le-nu "good thing"  
Good +thing

### **Gokana names with three syllables**

The following names in Gokana are made up of three syllables.

Example 10:

- a) Mo-na-le "see good"  
See-good
- b) Si-ra-ka "first daughter"  
First daughter
- c) Ka-di-lo "there is honour"  
Honour is +there
- d) Le-di-si "good is ahead"  
Good +is + ahead
- e) Le-zi-gha "good promise"  
Good +promise

### **Gokana names with four syllables**

Examples of such names are;

Example 11:

- a) Le-ma-ba-ri "God's love"  
love +God
- b) De-re-yie-lo "hope"  
place + heart+ on
- c) Ba-ri-zi-ghe "God shows"  
God +shows

### **Socio-Semantic Analysis of Gokana Personal Names**

Socio-semantic analysis of Gokana personal names refers to the relationship between meaning and society. It is the meaning Gokana people attach to their personal names.

#### **Names that relate to circumstances of birth**

These are names that are bestowed according to the circumstances surrounding the birth of a child. They include:

### Example 12:

a) Bara-ol farm  
Farm

Such name is given when a pregnant woman who is almost due for child birth still goes to farm, despite the warnings from midwives, If on one of her usual visits to the farm she gives birth, the child is named Bara-ol.

b) Borikırı Fish port  
Fish port

A child that is given birth to in a fish port is so named.

There are some names that reflect the sufferings that some parents went through regards their quest for children. During this trial period, they are mocked, insulted and ridiculed. These names are;

c)	Bari-ne	God's gift
	God + gift	
d)	Mee-bari	Who is like God?
e)	Bari-di	God exists
	God + gift	
f)	Bari-zo-m-du	God supports me
	God + follow + me t come	
g)	Bari-do-ma	God brings
	God + bring	
h)	Bari-laa-naa	God did well
	God + well + do	

Also, the birth of some children bring about positive turn around in the fortune of their parents, hence they are given names like:

- i) A-dom-a-le Fortune  
He + bring + good
- j) Nu-va-lo It's being made easy  
It + easy + with

It is said that death is inevitable. Some families experience aura of death around them, either around their children or the parents themselves. When babies are born into such families and survive, they are given names such as:

k) Dum-a-dı Let there be life  
Life + should + be

l) U-ta survivor  
Death + finish

## **Names that represent the days of the week**

There are five elements that are used to describe the days of the weeck in Gokana. A child is named according to the particular that he or she is born. Examples are:

Deemaa → first day

Deebom → second day

Deezua → third day

Deekio → fourth day

Deekor → fifth day

When referring to human beings, a prefix "m-" is attached to show that it is referring to a human entity. That is;

Example 13

M-deebom → someone born on the second day

Pref + second day of the week

M-deezua → someone born on the third day

Pref +third day of the week

Parents can name their children from the second day downwards. The first day is regarded as an evil day according to tradition. A dead person is not usually buried on that day, except in the evening.

### **Christian names**

The advent of Christianity has changed the conception of some name givers in Gokana. The bestowal of child name has become more Christian than ancestral. Christian names are given to children born into Christian homes to reflect the goodness of God. They include:

Example 14:

a)	Bari-kpena	God protects
	God + protect	
b)	Taanadeeba	Blessing
	Blessing	

Children indeed are blessings from God. Parents choose to give their children such names because they believe that children are sources of blessing to them.

c)	Bari-dilo	God is with us
	God + with + us	
d)	Bura-bari	God's will
	Will + God	

This name can be interpreted in two different way: it could be that a family that is expecting something from God finally receives it or that they want the will of God to be done.

e)	Dornu	Gift
	Gift	

A child is gift from God. Name givers bestow this name because they are convinced that a child can only come from God

### **Names that depict wealth**

Some families in Gokana name their children according to their financial strength. Their status is reflected in the names they give to their children.

Example 15

a)	Mene-naa-ta	Wealth continues
	Riches t neg + end	
b)	Gio-mene	king's wealth

	Wealth + king	wealth
c)	Mene-kpeghe	
	King + money	
d)	Nudi	affluence
	Affluence	

### Religious belief names

Names are still bestowed according to the cultural and traditional belief in the god's of the land. It is said that a child who is sick regains his or her health and is free from death when bestowed such names.

Example 16:

- a) Baadom
- b) Mbani
- c) Ntete

The above names are used to refer to the god of Gokana known as Bari Gokana.

- d) Gboro → Wife of bari Gokana
- e) Gberekaga → God of small pox
- f) Vizor small god  
Small + god

### Names that denote poverty, lack and need

Certain families allow their poor backgrounds reflect in the kind of names they give their children.

- a) Ban-de beg to eat  
Beg + eat
- b) Koro-ba Empty hand  
Empty hand
- c) Nu-a-ghe extreme poverty  
Nothing + neg available
- d) Tavala difficulty

### Names in the praise of God

These are names that show honor and respect for God. In as much as Gokana people bestow ancestral names, some also believe in the power of God. They honor and reverence God.

Example 18:

- a) Bari-zaa Thank you God  
God + thank
- b) Bari-dule God is good
- c) Bari-du-mene God is king
- d) Bari-bor  
God + great
- e) Kpo-bari God's power  
Power + God

f)	Nen-ni-bari	man is not God
	Man + neg. + God	
g)	Leela-bari	
	Praise God	praise God
h)	Ne-ka-bari	
	Give + honor + God	Give honour to God

### Summary

Names are not mere tags, neither are they meaningless. They have socio-cultural meanings and functions: they also show case the history of a family or community. The naming system of Gokana is diverse. People are named based on the events that happened to their parents or the circumstances surrounding their birth. These events could either be negative or positive. It is believed by the Gokana people that the kind of names bestowed on children affect their character. Good names mould their character while the bad ones mar them.

When a negative event is considered when naming a child, such a name may refer to an unhappy experience. Language is used to express oneself, and this achieved through the use of words. This means that personal names are forms from words. Since words are meaningful, it then also means that personal names are the carriers of meanings. The research shows the various structures and constituents of Gokana personal names. These names are got from different word classes. Some of the names are simple word names while others are compound. There are also sentential names in Gokana.

Gokana personal naming system reveals the belief system, ideology, culture, religion and thoughts of the people. This project work has shown that a name is a mark and it carries or bears one's identity and so to be without a name, is to be without an identity.

Personal names in Gokana are very important parts of language. The meanings of these names depend on the context and culture of the people. Even though these names are used primarily to identify people, their meanings cannot be overlooked.

In this project report, the various categories of names and their socio-cultural implications have been looked at. Ancestral names are bestowed on children for certain reasons. It is believed a sick child who is named after a particular ancestor recovers instantly from the sickness. These names are also given to remember the ancestor. The fact that people still believe in the power of ancestors does not change the fact that some others believe in God and the wonderful things he has done for them. Children are also given a name that reflects their faith in God, such as Christian names and names in the praise of God.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this research can help one understand the socio-cultural practices among the people of Gokana. In this research, various aspects of personal names have been investigated. It has also been made clear that there are different reasons why people bestow names and also there different categories of names. The study of the naming system of a particular people is very important and so a great deal of importance should be attached to it. This is because it carries the culture of the people along with it. Therefore, the naming practice of Gokana should not be ignored.

### Recommendations

During the process of this research, it was discovered by the researchers that there is little or no work done on the study of Gokana Onomastics, particular in anthroponomy. The researcher therefore recommended that:

1. Gokana scholars in various fields such as sociology, history, religion, anthropology, linguistics, philosophy etc, should endeavour to do further studies in this area (Onomastics).

2. The researcher, having shown in this study, how unique and meaningful Gokana names are, and also the richness of these names recommends that parent and name givers should always consider these names when bestowing names on their children.

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