

Article

# The Commemorability Principle in Akan Personal Name Construction

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**Abstract:** The movement from regular lexicon to onomasticon, especially anthroponomasticon, is often mediated by cultural principles which may determine which concepts could normally be selected for the formation of personal names. Restrictive traditions have guiding principles making some concepts acceptable or not, and some names *central* or *peripheral*. In this paper, I discuss the principle of *commemorability* as gatekeeping the selection of concepts for the formation of personal names in Akan; and, having established the restrictiveness of the Akan anthroponomastic system, I identify the two considerations of *honourability* and *preservability* as making up the commemorability principle. The study is inductive, establishing the theory that explains the principles for the selection of appropriate concepts for the construction of personal names, and it relies on ethnographic resources including observation, interviews, and focus group discussions supported by name content analysis to generate the theory. The paper establishes that *commemorability* is founded on a general philosophy that upholds *the societal, effort and perseverance, and social cognitive value* in the selection of concepts for constructing personal names. Guided by these considerations, concepts are placed within a value ranking system to determine their ‘commemorability’, with items that rank as ‘honourable’ normally selected and processed as personal names. In the construction itself, there is a preference for the cognitive over the physical and the general beyond the specific, and there is an overriding preference for the use of general commemorability concepts which represent *excellence, prominence, fullness, abundance, inexhaustibility, strength, endurance, and resilience*, among others, which are used both as base-concepts for family names or as ‘amplifier’ concepts in the construction of extension names.

**Keywords:** Akan naming; anthroponym; family name; appellation; circumstantial name; day-name



**Citation:** Sekyi-Baidoo, Yaw. 2024. The Commemorability Principle in Akan Personal Name Construction. *Genealogy* 8: 48. <https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy8020048>

Received: 22 December 2023  
Revised: 22 April 2024  
Accepted: 24 April 2024  
Published: 28 April 2024



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## 1. Introduction

This paper looks at the family names of the Akan of Southern Ghana from the point of view of the considerations that guide the selection of concepts for the construction of family names. The paper pays attention to what the family names represent in the Akan cognitive construct, and how language helps to explain the choice of concepts. The study, therefore, focuses on what could be seen as the *deeper etymology*, which looks beyond the linguistic structures to the cognitive cultural considerations that determine the selection of concepts for the formation of Akan personal names in the first place. By so doing, it helps to identify name concepts, to establish their meaning, and to explain their linguistic make-up. In effect, then, the study pursues the subject of the genealogy of Akan traditional family names by investigating the very fundamental cognitive and cultural conceptualisation which then gives rise to the concepts used in the construction of the names. From this cognitive source would the concepts, the body of names emanating from each of them, and their manifestations across time and space, be deeply appreciated. For instance, having used the commemorability principle to identify the **boa** (verb) or **mmoa** (noun) name concept as representing the value of *help* or *helpfulness*, it then becomes possible to connect such names, such as *Boaten / Amoa, Boadu / Amoadu, Boaten / Amoaten, Buaben / Amoabeng, Boakwa / Amoakwa*, as based on the *boa* concept, with other concepts

as amplifier affixes<sup>1</sup> (and other names, such as *Akwaboa*, *Samoa*, *Gyamo*, *Damo*, *Anamo*, as representing names emanating with the **boa** concept as amplifier affixes. Thus, other studies, looking at the development of the form of the names and their use across time and space, from linguistic, historical and other perspectives, depend, directly or indirectly, on the understanding of the conceptual identity of the names as well as their morphological make-up, morphophonological processes, and use of these names across time and space.

Traditionally, the Akan have a basic two-name syntax made up of the forename which is usually the day name, which indicates one's day of birth and sex, and the surname. The surname category is made up of a selection from name typologies including the nickname, circumstantial name, proverbial name, appellation, or the family name. As explained later below, the nickname, proverbial name, appellation, and circumstantial name are chosen from the non-mandatory aspects of Akan personal naming, and they are therefore used as surnames in ordinary or casual contexts, whilst the family name is seen as the archetypal surname, sometimes confined in use to formal or special contexts. In modern naming, names from the traditional surname categories mentioned above, as well as their Europeanised forms, feature as surnames, sometimes resulting in compounded formal surnames. The study focuses on the traditional characteristic surname, *the family name*, which is bestowed by one's father, representing the best ideas, concepts and values about life and humanity, and passed on from generation to generation.

As intimated above, this paper focuses on the relationship between the names, on the one hand, and the general lexicon and the cognitive culture from which the names are constructed, on the other. It discusses the philosophical values that guide the selection of concepts from the regular language for the construction of personal names, referred to as the *commemorability* principle. The Akan personal names system is made up of day names, family names, circumstantial names, appellations, nicknames, tease names, titles, and others which reflect different aspects of the Akan cosmology, social organization and experience. For instance, whereas the *day name* reflects the connection between one's soul and the Supreme Being with the concepts emanating from the conceptualization of war experiences, *circumstantial names* mirror the family's engagement with one's birth or childhood; and *nicknames* capture the society's experience of one's being, attitudes and activities. The *family name* reflects the society's higher values and how they are connected to individuals, and for its concentration on values, the family name becomes the main focus of the commemorability principle, helping to explain the basis for the selection of the concepts that represent the values considered acceptable for the construction of family names. In spite of this concentration, the commemorability principle could also be used to investigate the selection of choices for the creation of other names, in terms of the typologies of concepts and their levels of commemorability, i.e., how high or low in commemorability concepts selected for the creation of the family and other categories of names would be. For instance, whilst the Akan family name would focus on high commemorability values, circumstantial names reflecting a notable parent's loss of infant children would select concepts of sorrow, indignation, and contempt, which are deemed low in commemorability. It is envisaged that future studies will focus on the application of the principle to the study of family names from specific ideations, and to the study of other categories of personal names.

The onomasticon generally emanates from, and depends on, the regular lexicon and everyday language as a whole, with its syntactic, morphological, phonological, and graphological resources and principles. Name types could be seen as genres in linguistic cultures, and, being genres, there would be principles guiding the relationship between the regular linguistic culture and name-products. Each of the different categorisations of names—personal names with their different typologies, settlement names, names of buildings, names of physical geographical features, and even names of times and seasons—may be inclined to the regular lexicon and language in some identifiable or distinct ways. Since the central aspect of human experience is ideation or the world of concepts, one would understand that an important aspect of the relationship between the lexicon and anthro-

ponomasticon (and indeed the other categorisations of names) would be the directions and choices in ideational content, raising the question:

*What aspects of our experience can be selected for use as personal names?*

Since they form a part of the bigger cognitive and linguistic resource, both the creation and the use of names could be seen as reflecting instantiation; and here, we can see two forms of instantiation—linguistic and discursal instantiation. *Linguistic instantiation* refers to the creation of a linguistic artifact from the system and the underlying culture; and *discursal instantiation* to the use of these already-constructed forms in specific situational or speech contexts. The use of names in specific speech situations would be governed by linguistic and communicative systems (in discursal instantiation), but the creation of the names (in linguistic instantiation) would be by cognitive/cultural systems—which may be called a kind of cognitive grammar—emanating from the understanding of the cognitive systems, the value system which guides choices, and strategies for constructing the names.

The relationship between regular language and its concepts and the onomasticon and its concepts is seen differently in linguistic cultures; and with respect to the flow from the lexicon to the onomasticon, we might talk about *restriction* or *guidedness*—with some cultures having conceptually-guided onomastic processes, and others operating freer or less guided ones. Cultures determine how restricted or free the movement from the lexicon to the anthroponomasticon would be; and even in contexts deemed restricted, different cultures would point to different things to be guided *to* or guided *away from*. Thus, whereas vocations and landmarks feature prominently in German names such as *Stein* (rock), *Dahl* (valley), *Weber* (weaver), *Müller* (miller), *Huber* (farmer) (see Bahlow 2002), these concepts may be absent in Akan and Ewe personal names (Egblewogbe 1977).

In restricted anthroponomastic cultures, there is often a recognised relationship between the senses of names and the identity of the persons they refer to. This may not be seen in terms of a direct conceptual relationship, but a cognitive one, based largely on values: that the nature of estimation of the cognitive sense of the concept of a name reflects the value that is placed on the person. Surely, then, there would be values and rules governing which items of the conceptual world could be selected for which types of names—personal name, settlement name, etc. In non-restricted traditions, on the contrary, there is little or no such conceptual or cognitive connection between name and reference. All one needs is a clear linguistic sign, and it could refer to any designated reference—human, animal, object, or plant.

### 1.1. Personal Names, Meaning and Culture

There have sometimes been attempts to classify Western societies as having so-called meaningless names, in contrast with African and Asian communities, where names are said to be full of meaning:

Names are of such importance to the Ibibio that they are part and parcel of their language, not just mere labels like John, Kurt, Susan, Robertson, etc. which happen to be tagged onto some individuals for identity, but also a reflection of the grammatical structure of the language, in addition to their individual lexical meaning. (Essien 2000, p. 103)

A look at dictionaries of names across European communities, and indeed different communities, points, however, to the fact that the issue may not be with whether names are meaningful or not, or whether the linguistic form identified as a name has a connection to a conceptual sense or meaning. The issue may rather be with whether there is an attachment to or concern for the semantic import of names or the general issue of the meaningfulness of names in the process of allotting names or referring to persons using names. Obviously, it is the second consideration—of the inattention to semantic import—that makes Essien (ibid.) see names in Western societies as mere labels. This would, perhaps, stem from the fact that in many societies, names would have gone through semantic atrophy, at the end of which processes, the meaning of names could be lost to users. Where the lexical or

linguistic meanings of names are known, they may no longer be of importance in naming and referring, since attention would only be on the indexical or referential functions of the name (Sekyi-Baidoo 2019). However, interestingly, whilst touting the meaningfulness of African names, it is also on record that attempts to explain the meaning of names have not been very successful in all communities, making the names also simply referential in contemporary use.

Looking at the stages of *onomastication* or *delexicalization* (Sekyi-Baidoo 2014, 2019), it would be necessary in our studies, then, to make a distinction between studies that concentrate on the *construction* of names, on the one hand, and studies about the *use* of names, on the other. Studies on the construction of names focus on the relationship between the names and the language and culture from which the names are constructed in the first place. Such studies focus on the conceptual, lexical, grammatical, and phonological choices by which names are constructed, with a primary focus on which aspects of experience are or could be selected for the construction of names of persons (anthroponyms) and names of places (toponyms). Studies concentrating on the use of the names, coming from discursal and pragmatic perspectives, would concentrate on the principles and practices in the allocation and use of names in labelling and human communication, as reflected in Machaba (2004) below:

Traditionally, every child was given a name usually a few weeks, sometimes months after she was born. The given name served various purposes apart from distinguishing the child from others. This name was very important as it was her personality, it was the child herself. She and her name were one and could not be easily separated from each other. It was with this name that she was known to the community and the ancestors of the family. It has been variously stated that it was also this name that witches would use together with some medicine if they wanted to cast a spell on her. This name became part of her until her death. (p. 59)

Surely, though, the discursal-pragmatic perspectives on the study of names could not always ignore the principles for the creation of the names and the meanings thereof; and it is believed that even in contexts where the actual lexical senses of the names may have been forgotten or lost, the system guiding the allotment and use of names may originally have been influenced by the concepts and the etymological or underlying meanings of the names. Our attention in this paper is on the conceptualisation of names leading to their construction, which reflects a complex relationship between language, culture, and name, as captured by Mensah et al. (2021):

Personal names are symbolic resources that can reflect ideological and social systems of some societies. Historical and contemporary perspectives on personal naming research have shown that they are embedded with deep cultural significances. . . There is, therefore, an inexorable, if not tripartite relationship between language, name and society with human beings at the center of the chain. (p. 248)

The succinct capturing of the relationship between personal names and culture below is true of the African contexts as with, perhaps, all situations of the construction of personal names:

African personal names are creative cultural symbols that represent experiences, conflicts or situations with deep historical resonances. . . These names are a body of knowledge that reflect a wide gamut of African culture: language, history, philosophy, spirituality and worldview. African names mirror the patterns of the society's cultural and social organization and are pointers to individuals' identities and collective belonging. (Mensah et al. 2021, p. 249)

The relationship between names/naming, language, and culture could also be seen from a systemic-functional point of view. The systemic functional architecture of language is represented in hierarchies and relationships involving the context or culture, semantics, and lexicogrammar, and at the centre of the theory is the pattern of choices available at

various levels of language: choices in aspects of the culture to be represented (content), choices in the meanings or senses which would be represented in linguistic constructions (here, the names), choices in the concepts and the grammatical strategies employed (lexicogrammatical), and even choices in the phonology and graphology, which constitute the *expression*. Names are a *lexicogrammatical* output, and they are the product of the choices of aspects of the culture and aspects of language and senses, or concepts. In a sense, the onomasticon could be seen as a genre, with cultural or contextual principles for its creation. The cultural or contextual guide for the selection of experience and the choice of concepts for the formation of personal and settlement names in Akan is what we shall refer to here as the *commemorability principle*.

Whilst acknowledging that names have naturally emanated from the conceptualisation of a people or a culture, it is also difficult to imagine that all concepts within a culture could be used as personal names. Naming is a kind of experiential storage system (Halliday 1978), and a name is a symbol of our experience, a storage device, over and above its regular use as an indexical device. All language cultures do have this storage system and the storage and indexical devices called *names*; and in all cultures, names of persons, and proper names in general, are *secondary* lexicon, based on the lexicon of general language, and created with the facility of *conceptual selection or filtering*, which is the focus of this paper.

### 1.2. Problem

Surely a lot of studies have been made on the Akan conceptualisation of the *person*, the Akan social organisation and the issues of morality and ontology (Danquah 1928; Gyekye 1995, 2011; Pobee 1979; Wiredu 1992, 1995, 1998). Whilst the thinking behind several practices, traditions and concepts have been explained by these studies, the philosophical underpinning of the Akan practice of naming does not seem to have been given any known attention, despite the fact that the place of the name in Akan society has been explained in some of these studies. Again, works on Akan names have been phonological and grammatical, on the one hand, and **sociolinguistic**, on the other. The grammatical has concentrated on the lexical and especially morphological structures and strategies for the construction of, especially, the *day name* (Christaller 1933; Boadi 1984, n.d.; Kropp Dakubu 1981; Obeng 1997, 2001; Ofori 2019), *linearity and other circumstantial names*, and the *female forms of names* (Adomako 2017). So far, the most pervasive of the studies have been in the sociolinguistic dimension, and have looked at the typologies of names and their response to patterns of cosmological or cultural representation (Boachie 2000; Agyekum 2006), focusing mainly on day names and circumstantial names, and some on name occurrence or choices in sociolinguistic or discursal contexts (Afful 1998, 2006).

Whilst so much is known about the sociolinguistics of the Akan name, indeed names of other ethnicities in Ghana and West Africa, there appears to be little regarding the semantic underpinning of the names and the concepts from which the names are derived in the first place—with the exception of circumstantial and theophoric names—let alone the philosophical perspectives from which the broad ideations or the individual concepts are selected in the construction of personal names. The assumption here is that if cultural, religious, and social practices are grounded on some philosophical or value construct, then one would expect that the names by which things, places and persons are identified would also be founded on some values and principles—which would go beyond the discursal principles regarding who could be or should be called by one name or another.

In Sekyi-Baidoo (2019), I attempted to discuss Akan personal names with attention to this semantic underpinning, and there emerged a connection between the Akan philosophical and value system and the choice of concepts processed as personal names. The concept of commemorability was, thus, introduced in Sekyi-Baidoo (2019), not introduced as a general philosophical underpinning for Akan personal names, but only as a way to identify which senses of the **boa** form—or which of the names using the **boa** structure—would be identified or not as belonging to the ideational categorisation of **boa** (help) names. In the study, the form **boa/moa** could, from its phonological construction, be interpreted as

animal, help, or bundled parcel. Whilst the principle of HELPABILITY helped to determine whether a form could be interpreted as belonging to the ideation of *help*, that of COMMEMORABILITY helped to determine whether the sense so derived qualified for preservation and use as the name of a person. In the study, the principles of honourability and preservability were identified as the component considerations through which an experience or concept could be selected and processed as a personal name: that a concept should cognitively be recognised as having high social esteem, and that this esteemed concept would also be deserving of being processed as an anthroponym. In another study, Sekyi-Baidoo (2021), the same principle of commemorability was discussed as featuring centrally in the formation of settlement names.

Whilst some attempt has been made in my previous studies to identify the commemorability principle, these do not represent a comprehensive representation of the principle. Its place in the Akan philosophy and value system has not been discussed, neither have the various aspects of what is referred to as memorable, and how all these present a comprehensive framework for studying the ideational content of names, been developed. Without these, it would be difficult, from the rather limited scope of the discussions in Sekyi-Baidoo (2019), to appreciate the actual place of the principle concept within the Akan philosophical and onomastic space. I wish to state, here, that whilst commemorability is relevant to personal names and settlement names, and to other categories of names, this paper focuses on its application in respect of personal names.

### 1.3. Guiding Questions

The study is guided by the following questions:

- i. What is commemorability and how does it reflect in the two main component principles of honourability and preservability?
- ii. What are the general philosophical values of the Akan culture that underlie the commemorability principle?
- iii. How does the commemorability principle play out in the choice of concepts for the construction of family names in Akan?

### 1.4. Methodology

The study is qualitative and basically inductive in nature, with a view to utilizing data obtained through the ethnographic resources of observation, interviews, focus group discussions, ethnographic tests, narrative accounts, document study, and the study of the structure and content of names, for the construction of a theory that would account for the cultural factors that inform the selection of concepts for the construction of personal names in the Akan culture. The discussion of the commemorability theory is a part of a bigger Akan Personal Names Project that aims at producing a dictionary of Akan personal names and a monograph on the concepts exploited for the construction of the names, which is currently in its fourth year. The Akan Personal Names Project, as a whole, is guided by the institutional research framework of the University of Education, Winneba, for ethical considerations for qualitative study, with guidelines for submissions, approvals, and checks for informed, voluntary consent, anonymity and confidentiality as well as sincerity and rigour in the analysis and presentation of results.

Interviews were a major resource for the study, and these included both formal and informal interviews. For the informal interviews, I took every opportunity to enquire from people what their reactions would be about a name whose lexical sense could defy commemorability principles. At other times, I presented people with a number of names, some of which would contain hypothetical names with commemorability challenges, and asked for their response. Over 110 people, both Akan and people from other ethnicities who had lived among Akans, were contacted, which included cultural experts as well as regular users of the language. The informal interviews also involved casual discussions with groups. Again, on several occasions, I introduced some of these interviews and discussions in my graduate classes. In some ways, these could also be seen as informal focus group

discussions, owing to the discussions that often developed during the informal interviews. Formal and focus group discussions, on the other hand, involved cultural consultants, who had, beyond their intuitive knowledge as native speakers, considerable knowledge and experience in the linguistics and culture of Akan. Further, in order to validate the spellings, transcriptions, and interpretations of the name tokens, concepts, and proverbs or sayings employed in the paper, I engaged the attention of experienced scholars in Akan linguistics and philosophy individually as well as in focus group discussions.

The focus of this investigation is not to present an account of people's reactions to specific names nor their ideas about the senses of names, but to use the information gathered from these responses to aid the study of the principles guiding the choice of concepts for the construction of personal names (and settlement names), which is presented here as the *commemorability principle or theory*.

### 1.5. The Akan and Their Names

The term Akan is used to refer to a congregation of languages and dialects living in the southern parts of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. In recognition of the extent of the language and its system of names, the paper, following [Manoukian \(1964\)](#), [Dolphyne \(2006\)](#), [Abakah \(2016\)](#), and [Sekyi-Baidoo \(2019\)](#) distinguishes between linguistic and ethnographic Akan. Linguistic Akan is divided into the Modern and the Historical Akan. Modern Akan covers the languages or dialects in Ghana, generally classified under Twi and Fante, comprising such ethnolinguistic identities as Fante, Asante, Akuapem, Bono, Wassa, Akyem, Assin, Agona, and Breman. These dialects have a high degree of mutual intelligibility and are often considered inter-substitutable in many contexts. Historical Akan, on the other hand, is made up of languages believed to have been a part of the Proto-Akan or the earlier version of Akan, which through language change and huge influences from other languages parted from the Akan stock. These are generally languages of the Bia stock, including Sefwi, Ahanta, Nzema, Aowin, and Baule of Ghana and Southern Côte d'Ivoire.

Our use of *Akan* also covers the ethnographic Akan, which in addition to the modern and historical Akan groups covers the bilingual Guan settlements of the Eastern, Central, and Volta regions of Ghana. For all these, the Akan culture, including its names, is quite prevalent. In the Guan settlements of Effutu, Awutu, Larteh, Kyerepon, and Aowin, the naming system—the names, name structure and name categorisation as well as the cultural practices relating to naming—do follow that of Modern Akan.

#### 1.5.1. Akan Personal Names and Naming

The Akan sees personal naming basically as an expression of experience, beliefs and values, the establishment of human identity, and a response to human life and dignity; and names are constructed (and allotted) to reflect all these in different ways. [Boachie \(2000\)](#) captures this connection between names and cultural experience thus:

...they have semantic content which reflect real world knowledge. Such names encode socio cultural information and reflect the peoples experience about the world. They are given to individuals as a way of talking about what one experiences, values, thinks and knows in the world. (p. 38)

A similar idea of the interaction between culture and personal names is shared by other communities. [Sekyi-Baidoo \(2019\)](#) introduces the idea of the choice of concepts in the construction of names, and connects it to the issue of identity and value:

The Akan constantly relates to and acknowledges all aspects of the universe in one experience or the other, including his relationship with others with whom they share humanity, which is but a part of the universe. In the construction of names, he selects from these wide experiences in a way as to be able to reflect the experience that he finds necessary to keep or share. (p. 36)

Commemorability would be seen, in the discussions, as a major consideration that guides the selection from these wide experiences in the construction of personal names.

### 1.5.2. Typology of Akan Personal Names

The Akan operates a mandatory two-part naming system and an optional addition of two other categories of names. First among the mandatory names is the *day name*, which a person acquires by being born on a specific day of the week and of a particular gender. Every Akan has a day name, which is now a very popular name in ethnographic Akan and beyond. Further, an Akan received a name bestowed on them by their father from among the names of his family or his revered acquaintances, which is called *abusuadin* or *family name*, or better still *agyadin* (paternal name). The optional names are categorised into the *circumstantial names* and *the nicknames*. Circumstantial names relate to the places of birth, period of time, festivals or sacred days, manner of birth, etc. (Agyekum 2006), within which a person is born or lives one's early childhood. Accolades, descriptions, nicknames which one acquires by one's physical features, abilities, activities and experiences, and associated persons, places, and happenings, etc., are *nicknames* or *cognomens*.

## 2. The Akan Concept of Commemorability

Whilst sociolinguistic and discursual principles might determine the allocation and use of the existing body of names to a person (or place), the construction of the names is itself based on a conceptual framework, which is a kind of filter between the conceptual or cognitive world of the language, on the one hand, and the names, the anthroponomasticon or the toponomasticon, on the other. The filtration principle defines what content of personal names would be acceptable or not, or which aspects of the experience of Akan society could possibly be selected and constructed into names to be used for persons (and settlements)—and this, simply put, is the Akan onomastic principle of *commemorability*. Even as a child, I observed the funny responses we, as pupils and students, gave to some names—which was later going to be a crucial source of intuition for my study. I was later to recognise that those names caused our reaction because of some real or suspected challenge they made regarding the acceptability of their senses as personal names.

The Akan believes that not all concepts or aspects of experience, belief or thought could properly be processed into a personal name, and that, simply put, some concepts will fit as names whilst others would not fit. The commemorability principle assesses or determines the acceptability of a concept as a personal name (or settlement name), and it explains why a concept would be accepted as a personal name, and upon what considerations it could be accepted. This principle is itself based, first, on the Akan conceptualisation that there is a cognitive link between the semantic or lexical content of a name and what it refers to (here, a person); and, second, that Akan conceptualises experiences into a kind of value structure, by which some things are placed in different categories of value, relating to relevance, necessity, esteem, etc. The basis of the principle is that since the human being is a cherished centre of the conceptualisation of life, they should be referred to by names with higher aspects of the value structure, to reflect their place. We shall return to the discussions of the Akan value structure soon.

The theoretical principle of *commemorability* came out of my study of names for the *Akan Personal Names* publication, and most importantly, from the ongoing *Dictionary of Akan Personal Names* project. It came out of, first, my discovery of the marked aspects of certain categorisations of experience in the little corpus of names I dealt with, which was confirmed through my observations of reactions to certain names and their response to questions. The term is derived from the word *commemorate*, which is from the Latin MEMOR + COM (together): to remember together, or mark or celebrate. The Akan principle of commemorability is made up of two considerations:

- honourability;
- preservability.

**Honourability**—from honour—is an abstract concept entailing a perceived quality of worthiness and respectability. Something seen to be bringing or deserving of honour is said to be honourable; and it is explained as “worthy of respect or reverence, respectable” or “signifying or rendering distinction or respect”. **Preservability** simply means fitting to

remember, and it is based on the concept of **preserve** which is defined as to keep in safety and protect from harm, decay, loss, or destruction. The distinction between the two aspects is based on the consideration that not all things deemed to bring honour are necessarily worth preserving. A cultural consultant gave the following illustrative scenario:

Fa no sɛ wonni sika a wodebɛyɛ wo papa ayie, anaa sɛ wonni ntoma a woderekɔ wadamfo Papa ayie, anaaso bio, sɛ ɛkɔm de wo paa ara yie a wonni aduani biara a woredie. Sɛ obi ma wo sika de yɛ wo Papa ayie no, anaa ɔma wo ntoma kɔ ayie no, anna ɔma wo aduane pata wo kɔm a, sɛ wani bɛgye, ɛbɛyɛ wo fɛ, na wobɛhoahoa nipa korɔ sɛ wayɛ ade sombo bi, ahɛ wo anuonyam, apepa wanimguaseɛ. Ade papa paa. Yoo, na wani so bɛgye sɛ yɛbɛka wei nyina wɔ nnipa mu, ato hɔ ama womma ne wo nananom abɛte sɛ na wowɔ ahokyere saa mu? Nipakorɔ no koraa sɛ nani rennye sɛ woreka no badwu mu sɛ ɔmaa wo biribi dii. Wobɛka no wɔ dwamu sɛ ɔyɛ wo boafa a ɔsombo, afɛ no *Boafo* anaa *Ayɛboafa*, na mmom woremfrɛ no *ɔmaabosea*, *ɔfɛmntoma* anaa *ɔmaaduanɛ!*

*(Imagine you don't have funds to organise your father's funeral, or that you don't have the cloth to wear to attend the funeral of the father of a very good friend of yours, or perhaps, that you're very hungry but have no food to eat. If someone gives you a loan which you use to organise your father's funeral, or gives you cloth for the funeral, or gives you food to quench your hunger. Surely, you would be happy, you would appreciate it and you would honour the person for something valuable done for you, for helping to honour you and averting your humiliation. Great thing. Sure! But will you be happy that all this is said in public or kept so your children and grandchildren would grow to hear how needy you were? Even the person who assisted you, wouldn't be happy that you announce in public that he fed you. Would you declare in public that he is your helper, calling him Helper or Rare Support, or that would you call him Loangiver, Clothlender or Foodgiver?)*

This statement was discussed at several focus groups and in dyadic interviews, and it was unanimously agreed that, as the consultant stated, names representing *Boafo* (Helper or Support) will be accepted in the Akan context; but *Loangiver*, *Clothlender* or *Foodgiver*, though being the basis for the general concept of *Helper* or *Support*, would not receive recognition and honour as a name, or even an appellation. Thus, whilst an experience or concept may have honour—here, bailing others out of their crucial challenges—it may not be acceptable to be used as a personal name in its direct representation.

As said earlier, the distinction between *honour* and *preservation* is premised on the fact that not all things deemed of value need to be preserved and spoken of in the future. And sometimes, some things are deemed to be acceptable or *honourable* in their individual or raw experience, but *preservable* only in their ultimate value to life or community—and the meeting point of these considerations, and others, is what gives the concept of *commemorability*. It is important to appreciate, first, that *preservability* and *honourability* are not necessarily exclusive, and that they speak to one another, meaning that the ultimate preservability of a concept or experience could affect the honour associated with it. Second, the considerations of honourability and preservability derive from relevant general philosophical values of the Akan, as will be explained further.

The working of these two concepts is quite complex or intricate, and as established above, individual concepts do pass through a complex philosophical consideration for the determination of their commemorability value. We take, for illustration, the dual concepts of gun and warfare. They are ordinarily seen by the Akan as life-negating, destructive, and sources of pain. It is in the light of this that the feelings of the society of an impending war are reflected as **dwo** (*twa adwo* 'to sob') and **bena** (*bɔ bena* 'to wail'), which are the root concepts for the Monday and Tuesday names or day and day-names. The Akan proverb

*Etuo mu ye sum.*

'It is dark inside the barrel of the gun.'

reflects the uncertainty, fear and pain associated with the gun. Similarly, the proverb

*Yedu amanfoso a, na ye akae yaanom*

(When we reach the deserted town, then we remember our lost folk.)

points to the ravages of war in the destruction of settlements and the loss of kin or persons, and is deemed dishonourable. However, from the deeper or wider perspective, warfare or militarism is considered very central to the existence and prosperity of Akan society, since it was the means by which the society—ethnicity, kingdom, clan, people and their land— was protected, and by the same process did the society or ethnicity expand and get enriched. Thus, as it came out from the interviews and focus group discussions, *warfare* was given *low honourability* from the point of view of the human person, but very *high* from the point of view of a society's existence, size, peace, and well-being, considering its place in the history of the Akan and its various sub-ethnic groupings. Respondents were unanimous on the fact that the experience of war should be *preserved* both for its victories and losses because of the lessons that could be learnt and their place in the history of the society. The *gun* was also responded to from similar perspectives—*low honourability* or dishonour for the fear it evokes, and for the death it brings, but *high honourability* for its place in defending the society and for the victories. For the recognition of the honour and preservability relating to the deeper considerations of warfare, Rattray (1956) notes that the majority of the main chiefs of an Akan chieftaincy squad are based on warfare, and according to Sekyi-Baidoo (2019), militarism constitutes the largest thematic consideration for Akan personal names, identifying such sub-thematic areas as notion of war, fighter concept, army/strategy, victory and redemption, and weaponry, all of which point to marked commemorability of the concepts associated with militarism.

Another concept worth discussing in respect of the direct or deeper value assessment is *da*, which is seen to be of *low honourability* and *low preservability*, from a neutral, ordinary, everyday consideration; but *high honourability* and *preservability* from a deeper consideration. From the everyday perspective, *da* simply means day, i.e., the full division of 24 h, covering both daytime and nighttime, and this is reflected in the names of day: *Dwoda* 'Monday', *Benada* 'Tuesday', *Wukuada* 'Wednesday', etc., and also in calculations of time as in *dakoro* 'one day', *nnansa* 'third day', 'three days', *nnawɔtwe* 'eighth day', 'eight days' or 'a week', and *adanuanan* '40th day' or 'forty days'<sup>2</sup>. As seen in the discussions below (Section 2.2) this sense of *day* would be considered as neutral, in the structure of experience. As a neutral concept, *da* is, thus, not associated with any identifiable sense of honour or recognition. It would, ultimately, be classified as having low commemorability and incapable of being processed as a personal name.

On the other hand, *da* is also conceptualised as representing opportunity and brightness, and the concept *dasani*, lit. 'days-deplete-person' or 'mortal', is used to refer both to the exhaustion of one's days of life (mortality) and the exhaustion of one's life opportunities (decay). It is even argued that the fact that other living phenomena, especially the animals, who also have limited days are not referred to as *dasani*, 'mortal', points to the fact that the consideration may not simply be about existence, but abilities and opportunities, which are the value of life or days. Thus, since animals do not live their lives according to opportunities and prospects, they are normally not referred to as 'dasani'. The *opportunity* sense is evident in the connection between *da* 'day' and *ade/adze* in the conceptualisation of day and night in Akan, in terms of sustenance or endurance for *adekyee* (day), and exhaustion for *adesaa* (night). *De* itself is explained by Christaller (1933) as follows:

*... thing, substance, espec. an inanimate object; any object of the senses or of thought. . . .  
Property, possession; part, portion; goods, wares, merchandise. . . riches, fortune, wealth. . .  
Unknown agent, power, cause. . . striking act of strength; skill or cunning, feat, deed exploit.*

*Daytime* is conceptualised as a period of time when *ade* 'matter, possession, wealth, power, etc.' is rife or attainable (from *kye*<sup>3</sup>—enduring or longevity), and *night* as a period of time when *ade* is unattainable or difficult to come by (from *sā*—'to be exhausted'). From this connection, *da* gets its deeper sense—away from the *neutral* sense of a natural division in time—to the more *honourable* sense of opportunity which is closely associated with the

essence or value in human life; and from this sense come the names *Dakwa*<sup>4</sup> 'life of bravery or strength', *Daten* 'life of virtuousness', *Dapo* 'life of greatness', *Dako* 'life of resilience', and *Adasa/Dassa*<sup>5</sup> 'transience of life'. The above illustrates the complexity of commemorability considerations, both in its application in the naming process and in our analysis.

### 2.1. Akan Values of Life

As intimated above, the determination of the commemorability value of a concept is dependent on a general value system that is embedded in Akan philosophy. The following considerations, among others, underlie the Akan value structure and the dual occurrence of *honourability* and *preservability*.

#### 2.1.1. Society Is the Crust of Life

The Akan value system places ultimate value on the *societal* or the *communal*, rather than the personal or the interpersonal. Interpersonal things are valued only in terms of their furtherance of *societal* values, which is reflected in the social basis of ethics, the concept of humanism, and the notion of the common good. According to Gyekye (2011):

The views of the traditional thinkers indicate that what is good is constituted by the deeds, habits, and behaviour patterns considered by society as worthwhile because of their consequences for human welfare. The goods would include such things as generosity, honesty, faithfulness, truthfulness, compassion, hospitality, happiness, that which brings peace, justice, respect, and so on. . . good or moral value is determined in terms of its consequences for humankind and human society. All this can be interpreted to mean that African morality originates from considerations of human welfare and interests. . . Actions that promote human welfare or interest are good, while those that detract from human welfare are bad. It is, thus, pretty clear that African ethics is humanistic ethics, a moral system that is preoccupied with human welfare.

In this consideration, the Akan places weight on the things that are of benefit to the larger society. Actions, events and things that go beyond oneself to benefit another, denoting sacrifice, are accorded a high value. With these principles, human activities are taken through a certain social filtration, and the things deemed to have high social value are deemed to have a high level of commemorability too. In the context of the above, the following would represent the society's structure of social essence from the point of view of the human being, from *low* to *high*:

*Person or individual*  
*Dyadic relationships*  
*Nuclear family*  
*Extended family/Clan*  
*Village/Town*  
*Division*  
*Ethnicity*  
*Humanity.*

In the ordinary, everyday interpretation of the structure, the individual would be considered to have a low commemorability value, and the concept *nipa* 'human being' or *dasani* 'mortal' would, therefore, normally not be used as a family name. Also, dyadic or interpersonal relationships, such as friendship and marriage, are viewed from the point of view of personal interest and joy, and would therefore not qualify for commemoration as a personal name. The concepts of clans (*Asene*, *Asakyiri*), concepts of settlements, and most especially, concepts of ethnicity (*Asante*, *Akyem*, *Dankyira*, *Adanse*) may be processed as personal names, if the sense adopted for naming reflects the image, the major values, and the identity of the ethnicity. The sense of humanity, expressed in **ni** or **oni** is easily processed as a name (*Oni*, *Nisa*, *Nieku*, *Niku*, *Niako*, *Nifo*, and *Nipa*<sup>6</sup>), though **nipa** (person, individual) is not usually processed as a name.

Notwithstanding the structure above, concepts of the *individual* and the events around them could be processed as personal names when given a *humanity* interpretation; and as we shall see later, the aspects of humanity relating to the spirit, soul, and mental essence and those relating to the organisation and protection of society and social cohesion are deemed of high societal and commemorative value.

### 2.1.2. Life Is Essentially Human, Aided by the Spiritual

Of the place of religion in the life of the African, Mbiti (1969) writes that the African people are deeply and extensively religious, with religion permeating every aspect of their lives, making it difficult for one to isolate the religious from the non-religious. However, whilst acknowledging the place of the spiritual in our life and existence, the Akan believes that the spiritual is important only for its connection to the physical and mental experiences of a human being. The focus of life is humanity and its existence, in its physicality—personal and societal manifestations—and the spiritual comes in as far as it concerns the existence of humans. Gyekye (2011) emphasises the physicality of life, drawing attention to the supportive role of the spiritual in a life which is basically physical:

...even though the African people do not consider God and other supernatural beings as the sources of their moral values and principles, nevertheless, they are ever aware of the powers of the supernatural beings and are ever ready to exploit their munificence for the promotion of human welfare, prosperity, and happiness.

The Akan reveres and worships the supernatural, but it commemorates mystical or spiritual entities and concepts only when they are definable in human terms, i.e., how they manifest in human form. For instance, the river deity, in itself, is considered essentially spiritual and out of commemoration; but it attains commemoration from the point of view of its manifestation in theophorous children<sup>7</sup>, who are believed to be gifts from the deity. In essence, then, the commemoration is not of the deity itself, but of the fact that it has a place in human form. In this regard, concepts such as **sunsum/honhom** 'spirit', **sasa/saman** 'spirit of the dead person or animal', are, despite their connection to physical or human existence, considered essentially spiritual—and only feared or worshipped, but not commemorated in family naming.

Again, *Nyankopɔn* or *Onyame*, the Supreme Being, is itself considered purely spiritual, and is therefore normally not commemorated. It is interesting to note that whilst the names and accolades of God that depict its power and supremacy, such as *Nyankopɔn* 'Only great deity', *Amowia* 'Giver of sunshine', *Totrobonsu* 'Giver of rain/source of water', are not commemorated, the name *Nyame* 'That which gives satisfaction' is commemorated as a name<sup>8</sup> since its sense is based on the human being—who obtains the goodness and experiences the satisfaction. In a similar consideration, the Akan believes that the soul of the human being, **akra**<sup>9</sup>, carries the essence of God; but whilst the Supreme Being itself is considered spiritual and sacred—and *uncommemorable*, its human manifestation in the form of the **kra** 'the human soul', is commemorated in names such *Okra*, *Krapa*, *Akrasi*, *Krapi* (*Creppie*).

Adding to the **kra** concept is **amo**, another term for the human soul, which is reflected in such names as *Amo*, *Amofa*, *Amonu*. However, whilst **kra** refers to the manifestation of God in humanity, **amo** is a direct reference to the human soul, with no consideration of its connection to the Supreme Being, which makes **amo** more human in essence, perhaps, than **kra**. The human-spiritual distinction and its implications for commemoration is reflected in the idea of the *sacred* as discussed below in the structure of experience.

### 2.1.3. Life Is War—A Continuous Struggle and Fight

The Akan proverbs

- *ɔbra ye ko* 'Life is war'
- *Abrabɔ ye animia* 'Life/living is an endurance'

capture the Akan idea of the essence of life, that it is a continuous struggle with self, other persons and nature; and a successful life is a life that is able to manage or win the confrontations of life. The concept **bra** or **ɔbra** ‘existence’/‘life’ is itself derived from the verb **bra**, meaning ‘to obstruct, to injunct, to inhibit’. From this perspective, life is seen as an endless fight against impediments or situations that separate a person from their goals and visions, which would cover every aspect of life. To the Akan, even such basic activities of life are seen as wars that one must fight and win—or lose. Getting food and eating is a battle against hunger, and it is expressed as **ko kɔm** ‘fight hunger’; and overcoming hunger or famine is captured as **kum kɔm** lit. ‘kill hunger’. Similarly, attending to sickness is a war—**ko yareɛ** ‘fight illness’, etc.

From this philosophy that defines life in terms of struggles against impediments or obstructions, attitudes that are crucial for checking, withstanding, defying, and overcoming any kind of obstacles—biological, psychic, spiritual, health, and warfare—are held with a high value; and these include concepts pointing to physical, mental and psychic strength, courage, resilience, endurance, alertness, revolt, and other militaristic attitudes, as below, which are of a high value:

- *mmɔden*—‘a strong exertion, effort, zeal, earnestness, ardour’ (Christaller p. 306)
- *animia*—‘exertion, endeavour. . .perseverance’ (Christaller p. 329)
- *nkoden*—‘hard fighting’
- *penkyere*—‘perseverance’
- *akokoduru*—lit. ‘heavy chest’ i.e., ‘bravery’

all so that one could attain victory. The Akan, thus, considers the reverse of the qualities above as *dishonourable*, or even as *taboos*. The Akan saying:

**Yenim ko; yennim dwane.**

‘We know how to fight; we don’t know how to retreat’

sums up the value in confronting life, overcoming odds, and pushing for victory, and various concepts reflecting the capacity, conviction and attitude for fighting are processed as personal names.

Again, with the focus on life as a continual war, emotional concepts of *pain* and *suffering* are rated with high value, because they are deemed to reflect the reality of life, over the concepts of *joy* and *peace*; and for the construction of personal names, name-concepts of joy and peace such as *Ago* (from **ago**) lit. ‘to soften up’), *Afriyie*, lit. ‘One who has come at a good time’ and *Bediitɔ*, lit. ‘One who emerges to eat the mashed yam delicacy’, i.e., ‘the pampered one’ are only considered from the perspectives of the pain, suffering, hardship, effort, and perseverance which provide background and meaning for the relief expressed in the names. With this focus on *adversity* and *endurance*, thus, the following themes or concepts depicting human weakness<sup>10</sup> are generally deemed inappropriate for family naming:

- concepts which point to loss of struggle or inability, unwillingness or avoidance to fight or endure: *nkoguo* ‘loss’/‘defeat’, *su* ‘crying’/‘weeping’, *awerɛhoɔ* ‘sorrow’<sup>11</sup>, *kɔdaanna* ‘worries’, *amanehunu* ‘adversity’, *akwadwore* ‘sloth’, *ehu* ‘fear’/‘cowardice’;
- concepts reflecting ease or absence of adversity<sup>12</sup>—*anigyɛ* ‘happiness’/‘joy’, *akomatoy-amu* ‘contentment’, *ahotɔ* ‘comfort’, *asomdwee* ‘peace’, and *nkunim* ‘victory’.

#### 2.1.4. Humans Are Limited and Dependent

The most resourceful is still limited in the face of life’s needs and threats, and one therefore always needs support from others. This recognition of human *limitedness* is expressed in the proverb:

*Nipa nnye abedua na ne nsa atwa neho ahyia.*

‘Humans are not palm trees that they should be self-complete’,

and in Gyekye 1996,

... the individual human person lacks self-sufficiency is clear from the fact that our capacities and talents, as human beings, are plainly limited and not adequate for the realisation of individual potential and the fulfilment of basic needs. (p. 37)

The natural response to human insufficiency or limitation is *interdependency*, which is also deep in Akan philosophical thought and values, and expressed by Wiredu 1998:

Self-reliance is of course understood and recommended by the Akans, but its possibility is predicated upon this ineliminable residue of human dependency. Human beings, therefore, at all times ... need the help of their kind. (p. 293)

The idea of the insufficiency of humans and the need for support from others is closely associated with the earlier philosophical value which sees real life from the point of view of the society. In assisting others, the Akan believes that one does not only epitomise society's own values about the real essence of life, but also works on behalf of society to help fulfil its responsibilities to humanity. The following sets of sayings reflect the Akan dual philosophies of *human limitation and insufficiency* and the *need for support or interdependence*:

For human limitation:

*Nipa ye mmɔbo.*

'The human being is to be pitied';

*Nipa nkye na wadi amia*

'It does not take much for a human being to fall into trouble'.

For the need for support:

*Ade tɔ w ani a so a, wo yɔnko na oyi ma wo.*

'When something gets into your eye, it is your friend who removes it for you';

*Nipa hia mmoa*

'Humans need to be helped';

*Nipa na ɔma nipa ye nipa*

'It is a human being who affirms another's humanity'.

To this end, concepts that reflect the offer of assistance to others are often processed as **boa** 'help' names (Sekyi-Baidoo 2019) and under other themes.

### 2.1.5. The Reality of Life Is in Its Meaning or Value

Life occurs bodily, with things we can see and touch and what we hear, but it is given meaning by the *adwene* 'mind', which determines the *nkyerasee* 'value' or 'meaning' of experience. The Akan statement *Onni adwene* 'someone has no brain/mind' expresses a distinction between the biological concept of brain, which everyone possesses as human being, and the quasi-spiritual one of the *adwene* which one gains as a part of one's *personhood* (Gyekye 1987, 1995; Wiredu 1992, 1995; Mbaegbu 2010). One is deemed to be *aboa* 'animal', 'beast' if one acts thoughtlessly:

...adwene means mind including thoughts, which can be actual or potential. If the Akan say that someone has no adwene, it means he has no capacity for having good thoughts and thus no potential of becoming a good thinker. This does not mean that he cannot have any actual thoughts. (Müller 2008, p. 174)

*Adwene* includes the appreciation of the natural principles and realities of life and the ethical values of society. Central to the concept of *adwene* is the capacity, not only to plan and execute things, but also to process and extract meaning from material things and non-material experience, and in this connection, the *adwene* manifests as *asekyere*, i.e., meaning. *Asekyere* could, in sum, be explained as social and cognitive value; and the philosophy here is that material and non-material things and happenings are ultimately interpreted in terms of their value in our idea of the world and life, and that the actual essence of anything in our experience is not the ontological manifestation but its meaning or value. Thus, two things different in materiality could have the same cognitive and social

value, and one thing could have different values or meanings in different contexts. Akan family names generally do not focus on materiality but on the cognitive and social value. In that regard, the Akan exploits cognitive values or deeper meanings of concepts rather than the physical experiences, and bodily representations are, thus, selected based on their cognitive values rather than their mere materiality. I illustrate this below with some *tree* and *animal* concepts.

Tree concepts typically used as personal names are *odum* ‘*Milicia regia*’, *onyina* ‘*Ceiba pentadra*’, *essia* ‘*Petersianthus macrocarpus*’. The names of the trees and the personal names derived from them are not based on the simple physical characteristics of the trees but on the cognitive concepts associated with them. **Odum** is associated with robustness and durability, **onyina** with immensity, and **essia** with firmness<sup>13</sup>. Personal names produced from these cognitive concepts include *Odum*, *Gyadum*, *Dumsa* (from **odum**); *Esia*, *Asiama*, *Asiadu*, *Asiakwa* (from **essia/assia**); and *Onyina/Nyinah*, *Nyinakwa*, *Nyinsa* from **nyina**. It is interesting to note that though a *Baku* tree is identified as the biggest tree in Ghana and West Africa, the **baku** tree itself has not been conceptualised as representing the cognitive concept of immensity among the Akan and is therefore not exploited for the purposes of personal naming in the way the other species have been used as explained above. Similarly, whilst the *gyata* ‘lion’ is known to have a more massive physique, strength and power than the leopard, the latter’s great flexibility, eagerness, rapidness, running dynamics, and great climbing abilities are favoured in cognitive conceptualisation to the lion. The Akan associates *gyata* with raw ferocity and power and destruction, and the leopard with strength, cunning, intelligence, and reliability. Consequently, **Twie** (another name for the leopard) is used as a family name concept, producing such names as *Twie*, *Twiesa*, and *Twieku*. Evidently, then, it is the social implication and cognitive conceptualisations, which the Akan considers as the real meaning or sense, which guide the selection of concepts for personal naming in Akan.

#### 2.1.6. Physical Features Could Be Superficial but Important to Value

Whilst the Akan culture places keen emphasis on cognitive and social value beyond the outward, physical or direct manifestation, as discussed above, it also holds that notwithstanding the immensity or importance of the value associated with a concept or an experience, its physical characteristics or associated environmental conditions could also affect its ultimate value and commemorability index. The saying

*Domo afifiri bini mu.*

‘Best mushrooms have grown in excreta’

underlies the effect of physical and environmental features on the value of a phenomenon. Mushrooms are deemed by the Akan as one of the best sources of nutrients, and the *domo*, a high variety, has a majestic symbolism; but all this value is negated by the facts of its context. Physical aspects taken as affecting the value of a phenomenon include its make-up characteristics, its products, and its primary material class. For instance, the *dog* (*kraman*) is seen as a very important animal among the Akans. Beyond its role as an effective, longstanding friend of humans, it is also connected to the origin of some clans and sub-ethnicities. In recognition of the place of the dog across ethnicities, it is used as the state symbol of several ethnicities or settlements; and it is a totem of the Aduana clans<sup>14</sup>. However, notwithstanding this recognition, the physical profile of the dog—the fact that it is domestic, with its day-to-day weaknesses in its eating, waste, and sexual habits—is not favourable to its ultimate cognitive value.

Again, the fact that of two sharp cutting hand instruments—the *akofena/afena* ‘sword’ and *sekan/nkrante* ‘cutlass’ or ‘machete’—one of them, *Akofena/Afena*, is deemed to have a high commemorability value, but *sekan* or *nkrante* is deemed not high enough in value, and is not used as a name, points to the place of physical characteristics and associations in commemorability considerations. Both instruments are used at the battlefield, and according to some respondents, the cutlass may even be needed more often on the battlefield, not only as an instrument of attack on the enemy—which is what the *akofena* is for—but also for

helping the movement, camping, feeding, and the general sustenance of the army. However, from the point of view of the physical or environmental, the *akofena* is associated with the context of war, which is considered high in social value, whereas the *sekan* or *nkrante* is more often associated with everyday and household activities—weeding, harvesting, peeling and cutting food items for cooking, cutting meat, cutting tree branches for wood for building human settlements (houses or huts), and a plethora of daily activities—and for all these, the *sekan* or *nkrante* is associated with contexts that do not support a high social or cognitive value.

## 2.2. Akan Structure of Experience

In light of the values discussed above, the Akan categorises aspects of experience—objects, animals, humans, activities, descriptions, thoughts—into a value system, and the placement of a concept within this value space is crucial for its consideration or not as a family name concept. Attention needs to be drawn to the fact that this value structure, as discussed below, could be seen as a culmination of various cognitive and cultural considerations, including those discussed above. The following idea of a value structure was gathered from the study:

- i. Sacred
- ii. Honourable
- iii. Neutral
- iv. Tolerable
- v. Abusive
- vi. Taboo.

### 2.2.1. The Sacred

At the top of the value structure, the Supreme Being, deities, spirits, *nsamanfo* ‘spirits of the dead’, etc., are deemed *sacred*. Whilst the sacred is revered by the Akan, it is also deemed to be removed from our human experience and therefore excluded from human activities, including the construction of names. It is necessary, here, to recognise the differential use of *sunsum* or *honhom*, on the one hand, and *kra*, on the other. Whilst both are spiritual concepts, *honhom* refers to the spiritual elements directly, in their total spiritual form or realm—and is considered *sacred*, whilst *okra* refers to the spirit as embodied in the human being, who is physical. In that sense, *okra*, though spiritual, is human—and not sacred.

### 2.2.2. The Honourable

Whilst the concept of sacredness is spiritual in its clearest manifestation, the idea of the honourable is seen in the abandonment or rejection of basic human tendencies and objects that reflect as:

- Selfishness, self-centredness;
- Transience of life;
- Concentration of the flesh or the physical with its challenges;
- Concentration of the sweet, the easy, the near, the clear, the rosy;
- Effeminateness<sup>15</sup>;
- Simple everyday activities, events, materials, and associated persons;
- Ordinarity, dependence on natural qualities or resources.

Opposite these attributes above, which point to the dishonourable, are the following, which are generally considered to be of high social value and honour:

- Focus on the community or the other;
- Focus on overcoming the weakness of the flesh;
- Focus on the display of effort, strength, and resistance, especially for the common good;
- Focus on the great, the superlative, which comes by effort and sacrifice, with sympathy for the little anyway;

- Focus on non-ordinary activities or experiences.

### 2.2.3. The Neutral

Honourability may be seen as the absence of base tendencies or the presence of things of merit. Flowing from that, *neutrality* can be seen simply as the absence of both base and merit tendencies, that something is not up for merit or honour nor for blame or dishonour. This covers a lot of concepts, artifacts or activities, and includes regular everyday phenomena such as the *human being, times, seasons and ordinary spaces*. They can simply be seen as the general, everyday things that neither call for praise nor blame.

### 2.2.4. The Tolerable

The *tolerable* is defined in terms of the existence of tendencies deemed base but not in such terms as to cause one to reject or shun them. Beyond the fact that tolerable concepts do not have alarming levels of baseness, tolerability also depends on the following considerations:

- ✓ That the said occurrence is natural or beyond human control;
- ✓ That it comes out of accident or is unavoidable;
- ✓ That it calls for human sympathy rather than anger or humour.

### 2.2.5. The Abusive

Things that are labelled abusive insult sensibilities. Abusive concepts include explicit invectives and references which express disgust and disrespect for the self or another. Abusive concepts and experiences often refer to persons and groups, and they disrupt the cohesion and solidarity in a community.

### 2.2.6. The Taboo

Taboos embody regulations set to guide the moral, mystical, and religious sensibilities, and the sustenance of a people. Things for which societies set taboos are therefore seen to be very core to the society as a whole, and in many societies, taboos could receive severe kinds of punishments. Things that offend the moral and religious values of the Akan in the deepest ways are deemed taboo. For instance, whilst defeating one's foes in a war is deemed honourable, intentionally killing these soldiers by cutting through their throat or their stomach offends natural sensibilities, and is tabooed.

There are two ways in which these parameters may apply in Akan values, which would also influence personal name construction. First, some experiences, artifacts or concepts might be generally associated with one or more of the parameter items; and second, within a specific line of experience some aspects or activities may be placed in one parameter item or another. For the first, war, kinship, chieftaincy, helping, etc., may generally be placed under *honourable*, whilst animals, plants, food, household items might be placed under *neutral*; and illness, death, pain, loss, defeat, hunger may be placed under *tolerable*. Yet within the general conceptualisation of **war**, some aspects may be considered honourable, neutral, tolerable, abusive, or taboo, which is the second parameter. Below, I attempt a value profile of **war**, focusing on the three categorisations of the *honourable*, *neutral*, and *tolerable*. It needs to be pointed out that concepts used in family name construction will normally come from the *honourable*.

#### Honourable

**Activities:** going to battle, marking and firing, conquering, defeating, redeeming, protecting

**Items:** gun, sword, shield, whetting stone

**Person:** captain, military ranks and positions, the victor

#### Neutral

**Activities:** running, planning, taking cover, defending oneself, returning home

**Items:** machete, cudgel, stone

**Person:** maleness

Tolerable

**Activities:** killing oneself or others, suffering defeat, escaping, taking cover

**Items:** stick, food

**Person:** the dead, captives

Concepts from the neutral and tolerable category are usually not used as family names, but may be used to construct appellations, tease names, or circumstantial names reflecting lamentation or indignation<sup>16</sup>. Attention to the value categories of expressions in the formation of different kinds of personal names is often very strict. In furtherance of the above discussions, it is necessary, at this juncture, to draw attention to the fact that the name *Banyin*<sup>17</sup> (*Banin*) is different conceptually from the *neutral* concept of maleness or man, which is also **banyin**<sup>18</sup>.

### 3. Commemorability and Personal Naming in Akan

In this section, I discuss the general principles in the application of the commemorability principle to the construction of Akan names. This will focus on the general manifestation of the component principles of honourability and preservability in the choice and application of personal name concepts, still guided by the general Akan values of life and structure of experience. The discussion will cover the following:

- Cognitive Values/General over Physical Manifestation
- Preference of the Mystical to the Physical
- The use of General Commemorability Concepts
- Extensive Use of Concepts of General Commemorability

#### 3.1. Cognitive Values over Physical Manifestations

Deep in Akan values, the actual essence of life is not in the physical things but in the experience, its cognitive impact and what it means to the understanding of human life. The physical things are, thus, as seen above, not the essence of life, but resources to create, attain or conceptualise the actualities of life; and they are, therefore, usually not the aspects of honour and preservation themselves, but are only representations or symbols or pointers to the essence. In the construction of personal names, cognitive values are normally employed; and where physical objects and experiences are employed, it is because they are understood to represent cognitive values. The practice is that between individual objects and experiences and a general cognitive concept, the Akan family name process would pick the items of general conceptualisation, except in cases where the general concepts do not embody the value being harnessed for the name. For instance, whereas specific tree species or animal kinds could cognitively represent certain commemorability values, as seen with the *odum*, *nyina*, and *essia*, as trees; and *twie* 'leopard' and *kɔre* 'eagle', the general expression *dua*<sup>19</sup> 'tree' and *aboa* 'animal'/'beast' are neutral or even abusive concepts, and very low in value, and are not commemorable as names.

Where the concepts are used as though they refer to specific instances, they are still interpreted cognitively, in family naming, as representing the general cognitive value. Thus, *Aboa/Boa* or *Amoa* is not interpreted as 'an act of help' or 'a help' but as 'a symbol of helpfulness'. However, sometimes an interesting distinction is made between two name manifestations, which may point to the use of the specific or general cognitive concept, as in the case of *ɔpeafo* and *Apea*. The agentivised form, *ɔpeafo*, and the conceptual form, *Apea*, and its amplified name-concepts *Apeakwa*, *Peasah*, *Apeatu*, *Apeaban*, are both formed from the Akan concept **pea**, meaning strong, solid. However, whereas *Apea* is used as a family name, *ɔpeafo*, using *fo* (person affix), is largely an accolade or an honorific, descriptive of individuals.

Focusing on the general cognitive concept, with names relating to war, for example, the individual names—*Safo*, *Sapon*, *Seesi*, *Nsadu*, *Nsako*—are based on the conceptualisation of the human experience in war—marksmanship, bravery, organisation, and the whole experience of war as a crucial aspect of our life and sustenance, the endurance, the redemption and liberation of others or the community, the seizure of persons and lands to increase ethnic jurisdictions—rather than the individual persons and their actions or objects of war. It is in this that lies the distinction between *sani* (lit. war person –warrior), which is an appellative<sup>20</sup> construction, and the onymic form *Safo*, which could simply be conceptualised as a person associated with the concept of fighting or war, or better still with militarism, or, in the best form, symbolism of the experience of war or militarism. We shall see more illustrations below.

The preference for cognitive concepts is based on the fact that unlike in several other linguistic cultures including Ewe, Dagbani, Gurene, etc., Akan family names are rarely descriptive, narrative, or even proverbial in nature. Thus, names of aphoristic, descriptive or narrative content such as *Nyamekye* ‘God’s gift’, *Afryie* ‘One who is born during good times’, *Nyamennae* ‘God is not asleep’, or *Bɔwonda* ‘Make your own grave’ are traditionally circumstantial names, nicknames or appellations. On the contrary, family names normally represent society’s cherished values, which are encapsulated in concepts; and the attention is on the values or the cognitive concepts, not the forms employed in their representation. Thus, the *odum* concept is processed as a personal name, due to the values of *formidability*, *strength* and *longevity* associated with it, and not because of the tree itself. And as explained, the **dum**, as the name for the tree, was itself derived from the cognitive concept encapsulated in **dum**<sup>21</sup>. Akan family names, as intimated above, do not normally seek to describe their bearers, perhaps not even really the earliest bearers of the names, but even for the primal bearers, the name may have been formed to help identify one cherished value of the society. Thus, when amplifier affixes are used, as will be discussed below—as in **ten** (pure, true) or **ko** (resilient, enduring) for, say, **kwa** (maleness, strength, bravery) to give *Kwaten* and *Kwaako*—it is deeper recognition or endorsement of the cognitive values expressed in the base name, *Kwaa* or *Akwa*.

The preference for cognitive concepts to physical objects is, as explained in the study, an attempt to sustain the purity of the cognitive value. This is because individual objects may on their own reflect different experiences, which might disturb the identity of the value being harnessed for naming. Let us take, for instance, the concept of *humanity*, **ni**, as against the specific manifestations of *abofra* ‘child’, *panin* ‘adult’, *ababaawa* ‘young woman’, *abrante* ‘young man’, *abrewa* ‘old woman’ or *akwadaa* ‘old man’, or even *nipa* ‘human being’. Each of these manifestations of humans could invoke several ideas that may not be helpful to the value of the cognitive concept, making it difficult to be processed as a family name.

It is necessary to observe here that *Nipa* as a name is made distinct from *onipa* as a noun. Again, the physical manifestation of **ban** would be the fence which is domestic and neutral, and would normally not be processed as a family name. Finally, as intimated earlier, whilst the specific, physical manifestations of **boa** (help or helpfulness) might have low levels of commemorability associated with them, as in giving food to the hungry, assisting one to carry their load, giving medicine to heal the sick, the general cognitive concept of help is able to avoid the negatives and maintain the concept of help in its purest manifestation to be processed as a personal name.

To illustrate further the focus on cognitive values rather than individual occurrences, HELP (*mmoa*), and PROTECTION (*ban*) are high cognitive values among the Akan, and several sayings and practices do affirm their importance. **Ban** itself refers both to this social value of security and protection as well as the physical manifestations of walls, fences, accoutrements, and spiritual phenomena such as prayer, amulets and charms. However, **ban** in the various manifestations of personal names—*Aban* (*Abban*), *Bampo*, *Bankram* (*Bancram*), *Abankwa*, *Bansah*—refers not to the agents nor objects, but to the concept of **protection**. Similarly, the amplifying affixes to these concepts—**pó** ‘immense’, **kram**

‘engulfing’, **kwa** ‘strong’, ‘resilient’, **sã** ‘exhaustive’—do not enhance one’s delivery of security, but commemorate an amplified value of security and protection.

The manifestation of this principle in the construction of **nua** names is interesting. First, the term **nua** ‘sibling’/‘cousin’ comes originally from *niwa*—**ni**<sup>22</sup> ‘mother’ and **ba/wa** ‘child’, meaning mother’s child. In the course of time, the term came to represent all siblings, whether on one’s mother’s or father’s side, full or half/step siblings, and even cousins. The **ni** (mother) concept, for its emphasis on corporeality<sup>23</sup> (unlike the spiritual and mystic association of *agya*—father) is not used as a name. Similarly, **nua**, which is based on this relationship of corporeality, is also not used as a name—because it refers to individuals or to specific biological and marital connections, rather than representing the general cognitive concept of solidarity or harmony—which is realised in the amplified forms *Nuama*, *Nuako*, *Nuasa*, *Nuakye*.

Finally, the use of agentive affixes as in *Boafo* lit. ‘helper’, *Safo* lit. ‘warrior’, *Bamfo* lit. ‘protector’, *Kwafo* lit. ‘male person’, and *Danfo* lit. ‘friend’ seems to point to specific experiences. However, in reality, the names are interpreted as follows:

- *Boafo*—symbolism of helpfulness;
- *Bani/Bamfo*—symbolism of protection or security;
- *Kwafo*—symbolism of maleness or strength and bravery;
- *Danfo*—symbolism of dependability.

Attention to the morphological and phonological details could sometimes help to draw attention to the focus on concept in name formation. Let us go back to **ban** ‘protection’. A person who gives protection is morphologically constructed as *banbɔfo*. **Ban** itself is normally a noun, and does not occur as a verb, except with the employment of **bo**, a verbal item, making the person who gives protection *banbɔfo* lit. ‘protection-giving-person’. However, since the name form is connected to the cognitive concept, there is no need for a verbal element, and the *person* affix (**ni/fo**) is attached directly to the concept, giving *Banfo* (*Bamfo*<sup>24</sup>) or *Bani*. Further, **kwa** being a noun—not a verb—and singular, the form of the *person* affix it could pick would be **ni**. Thus, if a specific experience were intended, the form would be *\*Kwani*. Evidently, then, **fo** is attached to the cognitive concept, with the interpretation of symbolism of maleness or bravery. Again, distinction is made between the specific experience of dependability<sup>25</sup>—represented as people in an interdependability relationship *ndanfo* (singular, *danfo/adamfo*)—and the general cognitive value of dependability, which is onymised as *Danfo* (*Danful*) or *Damfo*. The two are also phonologically distinguished—[dãnfò] *danfo*—friend, and [dãnfó], *Danfo*—name.

### 3.2. Preference of the Mystical to the Physical

The Akan sees life as having three levels of operation—the spiritual, the mystic, and the physical—and these represent the three component aspects of the human being: the soul ‘ɔkra’, which is inherited from God, representing the spiritual; the spirit ‘sunsum’, representing the mystic essence, which is inherited from one’s father; and the *mogya/bogya* ‘blood’, the physical essence, inherited through the mother. The Akan principle is that the spiritual (relating to the soul and its connection to God and the spiritual pantheon) is transcendent—removed from the experience of humans, and therefore cannot be commemorated. Again, the physical (*mmogya* or *honam*—body) is considered too mundane or physical to merit honour and commemoration. Between these is the mystical level of the father, which is considered worth commemorating. The general principles relating to the tripartite personality of the *person* are outlined below, to be taken up further:

- The **mother** (*honam* or *mmogya/bogya*) conceptualisation is physical or corporeal, and does not manifest in family naming.
- **Father** (*sunsum*) is mystical, representing the earthly manifestation of the spiritual essence of the human being. *Sunsum* relates to such aspects of life as protection, wisdom, courage, magnetism, etc. Unlike the mother essence (*mogya*), which perishes with the body, the mystical force from the father is held in the father’s family and by his successor, hence the saying,

*Agya bi wu a, agya bi te ase.*

'If the father dies another of a father would be alive'.

- It might appear—since place-in-linearity names are normally counted per the mother's birth—that naming with respect to birth would be considered from the point of view of the physical. To the Akan, in reality, acknowledging births in naming is not about corporeality but spirituality, as seen in the **amo** and **kra** names, and the day names.
- Similarly, considering that one becomes human, bearing *honam/mogyia*, one could simply associate names that commemorate birth with motherhood. However, the actual essence of the celebration, in Akan thought, is that 'another spiritual entity has joined the ranks.' With the idea of 'spirit becoming human' in focus, the attention is on the **agya** 'father', through whose spiritual essence the breath of God becomes manifest in the physical. The idea of the primary role of the father in the life of the person is reflected in the saying,

*Agya na ewo*

'It is the father who procreates'.

Fatherhood/Maleness is celebrated in a number of name-concepts or bases and family names: **kwa** (*Kwaku, Kwafu*), **nyin/nin** (*Enin/Aninakwa*), **barima** (*Berempɔn, Beredu*), **gya** (*Agya, Gyapɔn*).

As mentioned earlier, whilst the spiritual is deeply acknowledged and worshipped, spiritual entities are normally not commemorated, since they are seen to be beyond the scope of human physical existence, and how could one preserve that which already has a preserved life or which never dies? Preservation, as gathered from the interviews and focus group discussions, is for those things that can perish, which excludes the spirits. Akan commemoration is really for human experience and persons, activities, animals, and objects that make this life worthwhile. Personal names are not based on purely spiritual concepts; and of the spiritual concepts—*ɔsaman* 'ghost', *bosom* 'deity', *sunsum* 'spirit', *nananom* 'ancestors', and *okra* 'soul'—only **okra** is used as a personal name. This is due to the fact, as explained above, that the name *okra* is not about the spiritual essence of personhood, but the fact that a spiritual entity has manifested in humanity.

The centrality of the soul in the realisation of one's life, among the Akan, draws attention to the place of the soul and its derived name concepts and names:

The *okra* is that which constitute the innermost self, the essence, of the individual person. *Okra* is individual's life, for which reason it is usually referred to as *okrateasefo*, that is, the living soul, a seeming tautology that yet is significant. The expression is intended to emphasize that *okra* is identical with life. The *okra* is the transmitter of the individual's destiny (fate: *nkrabea*). It is explained as a spark of the Supreme Being. (Gyekye 1987, p. 85)

The Akan believes that one inherits the soul from God and that one takes leave from God on a day to begin life on earth, which then becomes the day of birth—*Monday, Tuesday... Sunday*. People born on the same day are, thus, believed to belong to the same soul group. Christaller (1933), Kropp Dakubu (1981), Obeng (2001), and Ofori (2019) believe that there was organised worship for the seven day-deities in the past. There are, however, several instances in which fathers have changed the day names of their children in order to create a stronger spiritual bond between the children and himself or others. When a child naturally shares the same day spirit with one's father, the circumstantial name, *Kra*, is used to signify this spiritual bond. The name, *Kra*, from the discussions, refers not really to the spiritual essence of the soul, but to its manifestation in the physical life.

Perhaps of a keener mystical value is the *sunsum*, which is linked to the father. Interestingly, *sunsum* is itself deemed too spiritual for commemoration as a personal name, but it becomes the basis for several name concepts and practices in Akan. The fundamental place of the *sunsum* and its connection to God and the father, which would underlie its place in personal naming, is explained by Afriyie (2000) thus:

We could say that the *sunsum* was derived directly from God in the first man. It is the part of the divine in a man which he passes down to his offspring. If human beings are conceived as consisting of both spiritual and physical elements, then it must be possible for them to pass on to their offspring something of their spiritual element... The *sunsum* is a spiritual element. It is divine and yet it comes indirectly from God to a person through the father. (Afriyie 2000, pp. 18–19)

Fatherhood is itself very crucial in naming in Akan, beyond the fact the father is the embodiment of the *sunsum*, as explained above. First, in general terms, the Akan concept for fatherhood **agya** is the basis for the **gya** names such as *Agya*, (fem. *Gyaba/Gyawwa*), *Gyabun*, *Agyakwa*, *Agyadu*, *Agyafi*, *Gyafua*, *Gyasi* (*Gaisie*), and this is based on the understanding that fatherhood is the epitome or symbolism of the idea of guidance and protection in life's journey, which is expressed in the concept **gya** (to lead, to guide, to protect), which is the basis for the **agya** concept. Sekyi-Baidoo (2019) explains how the father, through his *sunsum*, becomes a symbolism of guidance for a child:

Sunsum is associated with aspects which are related to such non-physically sourced qualities as confidence, courage, natural honour and charisma, emotional and spiritual strength or resistance, eloquence and favour, pride, general life choices, invincibility etc. which are usually not entirely explicable in physical terms. (p. 49)

So important is the guiding role of the father that without his consent, one could not take up any formal role in one's mother's lineage—even in a system that is traditionally matrilineal. Again, the so-called family name, which is normally a person's most important and revered name, referred to sometimes as *adakamudin*<sup>26</sup>, is given by one's father. Properly considered, that category of name is *agyadin* (paternal name or father-given name), not just because it is chosen by one's father, but that, it is originally taken from the father's *ntoro*<sup>27</sup> (patrilineage) or from persons whose lives a father associates with or cherishes. Further, it is the father who, putting together the categories of names available to a child, determines the string of names a child would be known as, and their order; sometimes, at naming, he determines which name would be used as a child's everyday name.

As intimated above, the father could even change the day name of a child, such that a child born on Friday may be called *Kwaku* (Wednesday-born male) instead of *Kofi* (Friday-born male), if a father believes that the change of day name would help connect a child to the guardian spirit of the superordinate-namesake<sup>28</sup>. All this is in recognition of the salient role of the *sunsum*, a father's guardian spirit; and it is believed one's own *sunsum* is stimulated by that of a father to access available mystical gifts, including the capacity to access the mystical resources available in the names given to a child<sup>29</sup>. Looking at the capacity imbued by the *sunsum* as seen in Sekyi-Baidoo (2019) it is evident that the aspects of life deemed to have honourability (and which appear as personal name concepts) are invariably all connected to the *sunsum*. A very significant one among the qualities provided is one's confidence, courage, spiritual strength or resistance, and invincibility, which are embodied in the concept of **were** (lit. skin or inner skin), the base concept for such names as *Awere*, *Weredu/Wiredu*, *Wereko*, and *Werenkyi* (*Yirenkyi*).

A look at the commemorable concepts associated with the *person* confirms the preference for the mystical over the physical: whilst the mystical aspects of the person, made up of the aspects relating to the *soul* 'okra' and the *spirit* 'sunsum' have a few names emanating from them, the physical aspects are sparingly used<sup>30</sup>. Associated with the mystical are the following name concepts with their base and extension names:

- **kra** (the soul as coming from the Supreme Being)—*Okra*, *Krapi*, *Akrasi*;
- **mo** (the soul as being manifest in physical life)—*Amo*, *Amofa*, *Amowi*;
- **were** (the genus—emanating from **sunsum**)—*Awere*, *Wereko*, *Weredu*.

However, so far, the only concepts associated with the human body are **ti** 'head' as in *Oti*, *Tieku*, and *Tibu*, and the **ani** (the eye) as in *Ani*, *Aniedu*, *Anifo*. Even here, it is sometimes argued that **ni**, as in the names listed above, may not be associated with the eye. An analysis

of the commemorability profile of other concepts could reveal different lines of choices, but one could predict that concepts selected for personal naming would, as discussed above, have cognitive interpretations that would invariably be identified with qualities associated with the *sunsum* as in Sekyi-Baidoo (ibid).

### 3.3. Cognitive Values and General Commemorability

Whilst the philosophy of commemorability in personal names is reflected in experiential concepts, the Akan also uses general commemorability concepts, first, by themselves as names reflecting different aspects of what the Akan finds *honourable* and *preservable*; and, second, as *amplifier affixes* which heighten the value in the concepts, thereby intensifying the strength of the values in base-name<sup>31</sup> concepts. General commemorability concepts revolve around the values of *prominence/pre-eminence, excellence, fullness/extensiveness, exhaustiveness/inexhaustibility, translucence and truth, extremity, strength, resilience, and social cohesion*, as presented below, and indeed others. Being cognitive concepts, they are embodied, and are, thus, derived from regular life experiences.

Below, I discuss briefly the relationship between the cognitive concepts and human experience, focusing on a few concepts connected to relationship with the earth or what I may call *concepts of physical space*.

- **PIM**—to be massive, yet firm into the ground, and with an upright posture. It is distinguished from **pi** in the sense that whilst **pi** also shares the sense of *uprightness* and *upright posture*, **pim** carries an additional cognitive idea of *massiveness* and *weightiness*. It represents immensity, importance, formidability, and strength.
- **TA**—to become flat, level with and firm to the ground, which points to strength and firmness—not between a vertical object and a horizontal one, as in **pim**, but *horizontal* against *horizontal*. It gives the idea of a natural solidness or weightiness, which present something as too firm on the ground to drift or be blown away. It represents firmness and unity.
- **TIA**—not extensive on the earth, horizontally or vertically—short. **Tia** represents the non-physical conceptualisation of the *terse* or *concise*, or that which makes something concise, or which shortens a search, as in *aberewatia*—*aberewa* (old woman) + *tia* (the best kind). *Aberewatia* points to the very old woman, who in her deepest oldness as a woman, represents the deepest repository of folklore and history one could have access to. **Tia** points to the best and most available.
- **WARE**—**Ware** captures the idea of a remarkable stretch, vertically or horizontally. It carries the sense of the *extensive* and *remarkable* with respect to an object, person, or character trait.
- **TENE**—could be seen in two related yet distinct senses, both emanating from the idea of *outspreading*, which could be physical, referring to the remarkable stretch from source to reach. The stretch could also be seen metaphorically in terms of the reach of influence, which may itself be based on truthfulness or purity of character. These two senses of **ten/tene**, however, extend differently, and this is where their distinctiveness becomes evident. **Tene** as *tall* extends as **tenten**, but **tene** as truth or purity does not extend morphologically. At best, this extensiveness would be expressed in adverbs such as **paa** ‘remarkably’ or **pii** ‘very much’.

In terms of their relationship to the earth, as we have discussed above, **pim** and **ta**, on the one hand, reflect ability and strength in exerting, joining, and firming up to the earth, whilst **tia**, **ware**, and **ten** conceptualise the vertical and horizontal coverage on the surface of the earth, and it is from this that their cognitive values are derived.

The physical-oriented conceptualisations, as in **tia** (short), **ware** (long) and **tene** (physically extensive), are distinguishable from their more descriptive synonyms—*tenten* and *kɔnkɔnko*, which are descriptive appellations showing tallness. *Tenten* and *Kɔnkɔnko* are both appellations of *Opoku*, evidently pointing to a past user who was very tall and famous. Below, cognitive concepts are grouped under the various themes (prominence, excellence, etc.) with examples of names. Some of the name tokens reflect their use as base concepts or

base names, and others show their use as amplifier affixes. The part of the name reflecting the concept has been bolded for attention.

#### Excellence

- **Ten** (true, kind, perfect)—*Jten, Tenadu, Kwaten, Boaten*
- **Tia** (pithy)—*Tia, Tiakwa, Kwatia, Amoatia*
- **Kan** (leadership, illuminating)—*Okan, Nkansa, Kanko, Okanta*

#### Prominence

- **Po** (big/massive)—*Pobi, Gyampo, Kwapo, Poku*
- **Pɔn** (great, pre-eminence)—*Jpɔn, Gyapɔn, Sapɔn, Ponkwa*
- **Bi** (of substance, merit)—*Bi, Gyebi, Asabi, Fobi, Pobi*
- **Yi** (special, set aside)—*Ayi, Sayi (Osei), Dayi/Dei (Adai), Agyei*
- **Gyir** (distinct, marked)—*Agyir, Kwegyir, Sagyir, Fegyir*
- **Kyi** (Separate, far from others)—*Okyir, Sakyi, Kyireku, Dakyi*

#### Extremity

- **Tu** (uttermost)—*Otu (Otoo), Tufɔɔ, Kwatu, Patu*
- **Wu** (extreme)—*Owu, Wussa, Dawu, Gyawu (Gyau), Apawu (Apau)*

#### Translucence/Clarity/Brightness

- **Anno** (light, truth)—*Anno, Anɔkye, Anobiri, Akwanno, Gyanno*
- **Nyan** (awakening, brightness)—*Nyan, Nyansa, Kwanyan, Bonyan*
- **Te** (clear, pure)—*Atefo, Atefa, Boate, Nyante*

#### Fullness/Extensiveness

- **Mu** (absolute)—*Amu/Mu, Amamu*
- **Ma** (full)—*Ammah<sup>32</sup>, Mafo, Asiama, Boama*
- **Du** (complete, round)—*Adu, Edufo, Aduko, Sadu (Nsadu), Boadu (Amoadu)*
- **Fua** (whole)—*Fua, Kwefua, Safua, Dafua, Fuakye*
- **Ware** (extensive)—*Oware (Wadeε), Aduware, Ateware, Ofosuware*

#### Exhaustiveness/Inexhaustibility

- **Pem** (comprehensive)—*Kwapem, Dapem, Gyapem*
- **Ampem** (inexhaustible, indefatigable)—*Ampem, Boampem*
- **Sã** (exhaustive)—*Asã, Adasã, Kwasã, Amoasã, Abassã, Afosã*
- **ansã** (inexhaustible)—*Ansã, Gyansã, Kwansã, Boansã*

#### Strength, Resilience, Endurance

- **Ko** (enduring)—*Ako, Akotia, Koten, Amoako, Gyako*
- **Pea** (strong, pithy)—*Apea, Apeadu, Gyapea, Peanim (Pianim)*
- **Pim** (stable, rooted)—*Pim, Gyapim, Pimpim*
- **Ta** (fixed)—*Taa, Tabi, Tanɔ, Bota*
- **Ben** (tough)—*Jben, Bensa, Saben, Kwaben*
- **Dua** (tactical, tenacious)—*Dua, Eduafo, Aduakye, Kodua*
- **Kye** (persistent, durable)—*Kye, Boakye, Fakye, Sakyē, Kwakye*
- **Kyē** (of longevity, permanence)—*Akyēwa, Akyēna, Akyēampɔn*

#### Social Joy and Cohesion

- **Frɛ** (gregarious)—*Afrɛ, Fredua, Frɛ kye, Amoafɛ*
- **Dé** (extroverted)—*Ode, Dede, Kwadede*
- **Fra** (Mixable)—*Pim, Gyapim, Pimpim*

The cognitive concepts are derived from nouns, verbs, and especially adjectives, and they represent the ideas of the Akan culture about the best or most memorable aspects of life. For instance, the concept **boa** refers to the experience of assisting others, which is a core aspect of Akan values. From this experience is derived the cognitive concept

of **boa** *helpfulness*, which reflects society's value that entities and persons are expected to be helpful to society. Again, **dua** (to manoeuvre) derives from the experience of making a way through a tough path or situation, and from this is derived the cognitive concept **dua**, representing tenacity and adeptness. Over time, almost all the main concepts are processed as cognitive concepts, and are used both as base and affix in the construction of family names in Akan. Below, the general commemorability concepts—**pea** 'solid', **boa** 'help', **gya** 'fatherhood', **kwa** 'maleness', and **fo** 'counsel'/'wisdom'—are presented as *base concepts*, with other commemorability concepts, such as **ampem** 'inexhaustible', **no** 'radiant'/'truthful', **ben** 'tough', **bi** 'of merit', and **du** 'complete', functioning as *amplifier concepts*, for the construction of extension names. (See Table 1)

**Table 1.** Akan personal names using general commemorability concepts.

Amplifying Concept	Concept Name	Name Concepts and Extension Forms				
		APEA (Strong, Solid)	ABOA AMOA (Help)	AGYA (Guidance, Protection)	KWA (Bravery)	FO (Counsel, Wisdom)
<b>Ampem</b> (inexhaustive)	<i>Ampem</i>	-	<i>Boampem</i>	<i>Gyampem</i>	-	-
<b>Anno</b> (radiant)	<i>Anno</i>	<i>Appeanno</i>	<i>Boanno</i>	<i>Gyanno</i> <i>Gyanno</i>	<i>Akwanno</i>	<i>Anokye</i>
<b>Ben</b> (tough)	<i>Ben</i>	-	<i>Amoaben</i>	<i>Gyaben</i> <i>Agyaben</i>	<i>Kwaben</i>	<i>Foben</i>
<b>Bi</b> (of merit)	<i>Bi (Bih)</i>	<i>Appeabi</i>	<i>Amoabi</i>	<i>Gyabi</i>	<i>Gyabi</i>	<i>Fobi</i>
<b>Du</b> (complete)	<i>Adu</i>	<i>Apeadu</i>	<i>Boadu</i> <i>Amoadu</i>	<i>Gyadu</i> <i>Agyadu</i>	<i>Kwadu</i>	<i>Afodu</i>
<b>Dua</b> (tenacious)	<i>Dua/Odua</i>		<i>Boadua</i>		<i>Kodua</i>	<i>Afodua</i>
<b>Ko</b> (enduring)	<i>Ako, Kko</i>	<i>Apeako</i>	<i>Amoatia</i> <i>Boatia</i>	<i>Gyako</i> <i>Agyako</i>	<i>Kwako</i> <i>Akwako</i>	-
<b>Kwa</b>	<i>Akwa/Kwaa</i>	<i>Apeakwa</i>	<i>Amoakwa</i>	<i>Agyakwa</i>	<i>Kwakwa</i>	<i>Afokwa</i>
<b>Kye</b> (durable)	<i>Kye</i>	<i>Apeakye</i>	<i>Boakye</i> <i>Amoakye</i>	<i>Gyakye</i>	<i>Kwakye</i>	<i>Afokye</i>
<b>Nyan</b> (awakening)	<i>Nyan/Enyan</i>	<i>Apeanyan</i>	<i>Boanyan</i>	-	<i>Kwanyan</i>	-
<b>Pon</b> (preeminent)	<i>Pon/Oppong</i>	<i>Apeapon</i>	<i>Amoapon</i>	<i>Gyapon</i> <i>Agyapon</i>	<i>Kwapon</i>	
<b>Pea</b>	<i>Apea</i>	-	<i>Boapea</i>	<i>Gyapea</i>	<i>Kwapea</i>	-
<b>Pem</b> -(comprehensive)	<i>Opem</i>	-	<i>Boapem</i> <i>Amoapem</i>	<i>Gyapem</i>	<i>Kwapem</i>	<i>Afopem</i>
<b>Po</b> (immense)	<i>Po (Poh)</i>	<i>Apeapo</i>	<i>Amoapo</i>	<i>Gyapo</i>	<i>Kwapo</i>	-
<b>Sā</b> (exhaustive)	<i>Asa</i>	<i>Peasa</i>	<i>Boasa</i> <i>Amoasa</i>	<i>Gyasa</i>	<i>Kwassa</i>	<i>Afosa</i>
<b>Ten</b> (upright)	<i>Ten (Oteng)</i>	<i>Apeaten</i>	<i>Boaten</i> <i>Amoaten</i>	<i>Gyaten</i>	<i>Kwaten</i>	<i>Afoten</i>
<b>Tia</b> (pithy)	<i>Tia</i>	<i>Apeatia</i>	<i>Boatia</i> <i>Amoatia</i>	<i>Gyatia</i>	<i>Kwatia</i>	<i>Fotia</i> <i>Afotia</i>
<b>Tu</b> (uttermost)	<i>Otu</i>	<i>Apeatu</i>	-	<i>Gyatu</i>	<i>Kwetu</i>	-
<b>Wu</b> (extreme)	<i>Owu</i>	<i>Apeawu</i>	<i>Amoawu</i>	<i>Gyawu</i>	<i>Kwawu</i>	<i>Fowu</i>
<b>Yi</b> (unique)	<i>Oyi/Ayi</i>	-	<i>Amoayi</i>	<i>Agyayi</i> <i>Agyei</i>	<i>Kwayi</i>	-
<b>Pim</b> (Stable)	<i>Pim</i>	-	<i>Boapim</i>	<i>Gyapim</i>	<i>Kwapim</i>	-

As shown above, the Akan family name is, generally, constructed through affixation, with a *base*, which represents the concept being exploited for the construction of the name, and an *affix*, i.e., an amplifier suffix which adds value to the base concept, by introducing another level of commemoration. For example, **boa** 'help' is extended with

**ansa** ‘inexhaustible’, **ten** ‘truthful’/‘pure’, and **no** ‘truthfulness’, yielding amplified ideas about the concept or value of helpfulness as follows:

- *Boansa*—inexhaustible helpfulness/help;
- *Boaten*—pure, unalloyed helpfulness;
- *Boako*—resilient helpfulness.

The base could also occur with a nominal affix, zero affix, or with person/agent affixes, giving the following, as in the case of **boa**:

- *Boa*
- *Aboa/Amoa*
- *Boafo/Amofo*

Cognitive commemorability concepts are used as amplifier affixes, as evident in the table above, creating *extension names* (Sekyi-Baidoo 2019). They could also, on their own, function as base concepts, and be able to admit other amplifier concepts. Situations where the base concept occurs also as the amplifier affix, as in *Kwakwa*, above, and others such as *Karikari*, *Kyekye*, *Prepra*, *Kyikyji*, *Tete*, *Titi*, present an interesting constructional occurrence.

#### 4. Conclusions

So important is the commemorability principle in the construction and use of the Akan family name that when the outcome of a construction coincides with the form of a concept that is considered to be of low commemorability value, the name could drop from the anthroponomasticon, or that something could be done to the phonology in order to distinguish it from the non-commemorable concept and to avert the possible association with what could be seen as dishonourable. This salience of commemorability in the construction of the family name, as explained in the discussion, is based on the place of the family name in the Akan value and conceptualisation and value space—as representing society and its values. As explained in the paper, the commemorability principle serves as a necessary filtration mechanism for identifying and preserving the concepts that represent society and its cherished values.

Commemorability might not be necessary in the representation of one’s relationship with family or social circumstances (circumstantial names) or with the representation of one’s own experience in life (appellations), which are based not on values but *reality*. It is in light of this that *sika* ‘wealth’/‘money’ could not easily be used as a family name but as an appellation. Again, **ben**a ‘wailing’ is acceptable as the base for the Tuesday day name as in *Abena* and *Kwabena*, but the concept of wailing would be deemed *dishonourable* and would not be used in the construction of the family name.

It is necessary to note that there have been movements across the name categorisations, with some circumstantial names and appellations becoming family names and some family names becoming circumstantial or appellations, and modern Akan has adopted new motivations<sup>33</sup> and systems for naming. However, in all these, it is often possible, with the commemorability assessments, to see how commemorability principles would have featured in all these dynamisms in personal naming. It is possible to find that commemorability issues could account for the popularity of names, with the hypothesis that the cognitive acceptability of a name concept could affect its spread or sustainability. In the study of the senses of family names, the commemorability principle has been useful, especially in situations where a name may be traced to two or more lexical or conceptual sources due to its phonology<sup>34</sup>. In such cases, the principle has helped to determine which of the different possible senses would pass the social value test; and more often than not, there are family accounts and contributions from consultants which have supported the determination.

What this paper has tried to do is to present an elaborate account of the principle of commemorability, placing it within the Akan value and philosophical system, explaining its main component theoretical considerations of honourability and preservability, and attempting to describe some tendencies that come with its application. As remarked

at the beginning of the paper, commemorability is not restricted to personal naming; and in settlement names, there is a clear existence of principles that direct the choice or acceptability of concepts for the construction of names of towns, villages, and even ethnonyms in Akan. There is a need to pay specific attention to the values and principles that guide the commemorability system in Akan settlement naming. Again, going back to personal naming, it would be necessary to investigate how specific ideational domains, such as animal concepts, plant concepts, etc. have been guided by commemorability in the formation of the personal names we have.

Finally, whilst this theory has been developed with specific attention to Akan naming, it is possible to imagine that findings from other onomastic cultures may provide useful ideas about what principles may have guided the choice and presentation of concepts for the construction of personal names and different categories of onyms. Surely, studies relating to these considerations could not be absent in the extant literature; but at this juncture, more targeted studies into choices—even in cultures which may be seen as *liberal* in their selection of concepts for naming—may reveal interesting principles and practices which would inform more deeply about the connection between culture and name construction.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Education, Winneba.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement:** No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Akan family names are normally base, made up of only the base concept, or extension names, which are made up of the base concept and an amplifier affix suffixed to the base form. Amplifier affixes extend the concept of the name with other concepts.
- <sup>2</sup> All the expressions are formed around the concept **da** ‘day’. With *Dwoda*, *Benada* and *Wukuada*, the **da** element expresses the general concept of the day as in the English Tuesday or Friday. In *dakoro*, *nnansa*, *nnawɔtwe* and *adaduanan*, it is the base, with the suffixes showing the number of days: **koro** ‘one’, **nsa** ‘three’, **wɔtwe** ‘eight’, and **duanan** ‘fortieth’. The plural of **da** is **nda** or **nnā**, as in *nnansa* and *nnawɔtwe*.
- <sup>3</sup> Christaller explains *adekyee* and *adesa* conceptually in terms of illumination, which is quite descriptive of the physical atmosphere; but a more cognitive consideration identifies their distinction in terms of *kye* (to have more life) and *sa* (to be exhausted), which conceptualises the expressions of day and night in terms of *access* and *availability*.
- <sup>4</sup> **kwa** (brave, strong), **ten** (virtuous or true kind), **po** (big, great, eminent), **ko** (enduring, resilient) and **sa** (exhaustive, comprehensive) are affixes, and they are part of the general cognitive commemorability concepts which are discussed below.
- <sup>5</sup> The existence of *adasa* [ádàsà]—‘mortal’ from **da** (day/existence) + **sa** (exhaust), meaning mortal being and *adasa* [ádàsà ]-‘name’—**da** (life opportunity) + **sa** (exhaustive), meaning exhaustive life opportunity, underlies the distinction between the two conceptualisations around **da**.
- <sup>6</sup> There is originally a phonological distinction between the person concept, **nipa**, [nípá] and the personal name, *Nipa* [nípá], meaning excellence in humanity. The *pa* affix is used in other names such as *Kwapa*, *Adanpa*, and *Sapa*.
- <sup>7</sup> Apart from bearing the name of the deity, theophorous children do not bear any visible physical or behavioural features that identify them as *gift-children* from a specific deity. The identification is considered basically spiritual, and for persons derived from deities—other than the Supreme Being—they are often expected to stay connected to the deity in sacrifices and periodic visitations to the shrine or river, and they sometimes wear ornaments as prescribed by the deity—or suffer some repercussions.
- <sup>8</sup> Others are of the opinion that the personal name, *Nyame*, is originally *Nyam*, with an [i] paragoge, from the concept **nyam** ‘to glow’, ‘to turn about in strength and power’, which points to the fact that even the *Nyame* name of God is not commemorated as a personal name. This original *Nyam* name form is very evident in Fante contexts, and there is evidence of the same being rendered as *Nyame* in recent naming or in formal contexts, pointing to a distinction between *Nyame*—the name of the Supreme Being—and *Nyam*—the personal name, with the two clearly distinguished in regular language.
- <sup>9</sup> In the Akan concept of Man, an individual is seen to be made up of three major elements: the *okra* (soul), which is derived from and associated with God; the *sunsum* (spirit), which is derived through the father; and *mogya* (blood) which is derived from the mother.

- 10 It is necessary to see how the commemorability considerations would apply in the context of the day name. Differently, the day name system, which is narrative in nature, focusing not on the general human experience at the preparatory or onset, prosecution, and closure aspects of war, does not go through the conceptual distillation that the family name undergoes; but even there, one sees some attempt to avoid non-commemorable concepts as base concepts for name construction. Deeply considered, public expression of keen joy could be regarded as non-commemorable.
- 11 A conceptual distinction needs to be made between **awerehoo** (sorrow), which points to an inconsolability, showing protracted visible expression of grief, and **yaw** (pain), which is seen as a mental recognition of loss. The Akan finds **yaw** commemorable, first, showing a sense of appreciation of loss, and, second, a likelihood of self-control and possibly a heroic response. **Yaw** concept names include *Yaw, Yaben, Yatia, Yafo, Yadu, and Yakwa*.
- 12 It is important to recognise that whilst names from these concepts are often used as personal names in recent times—*Ahotɔ, Nkunim, Asomdwee*—they are used, not as family names, but as forenames, perhaps in replacement of such European names as *Joy, Peace, Victor*.
- 13 The names of the trees are derived from the cognitive concepts.
- 14 The Akan peoples are organised into matrilineal clans, one of which is the Aduana. The notable attributes of Aduana people, including intelligence, hard work, friendliness, and bravery, are all believed to be connected to their association with the dog, which is their totem. The Essumeja paramountcy of the Ashanti State, known to be one of the earliest, also has the dog as its symbol.
- 15 It is necessary to point out that this conceptualisation of *effeminateness* as dishonourable is based on the patriarchal orientation of Akan society, which is itself partly hinged on the crucial place of warfare in the life and organisation of Akan society, giving the male an elevated position as far as the protection of the society is concerned, which is evident in the concept for the male, *barima*, from **ba di ma**, lit. ‘child/person intercede for’, i.e., the intercessor.
- 16 The Akan family name, as opposed to other personal names such as teases and cognomens, is distinguished by its primary focus on concepts considered to have strong social or cognitive value. It is thus possible, sometimes, to distinguish between original family names and those adopted from other name categorisations based on the value of their concepts.
- 17 As a family name, *Banyin* (*Banin* or *Benyinin*) is constructed from the base **ba** (person) and the affix **nyin** (of greatness). Other names using the same base with amplifier affixes are *Abedi, Abadu* (Abedu), *Baafi, Basa* (Bassaw).
- 18 The form of the **maleness** concept (signifying bravery and strength) that is used as a personal name is usually *Barima*, which is normally an appellation (to *Yaw*, Thursday male day name) or a title for a chief or leader of an army, as in *Barima Asumadu Sakyi* (Paramount Chief of Kumawu, Ashanti), and *Osabarima Kwesi Atta* (paramount chief of Oguaa, i.e. Cape Coast). In *Osabarima*, the concept of maleness, **barima**, is prefixed with **sa** war, which defines the context of maleness, signifying bravery and strength.
- 19 **Dua** [dù]a (tree) is distinct from **dua** [dù]à—verb—meaning to manoeuvre, which is the base concept for the names *Dua, Duako, Eduafo, Eduakwa*, etc.
- 20 Appellative here is distinct from appellation. *Appellation* is used in this paper as a name or description which comes as an addition (by-name) to another name or a head-name. An *appellative* is, simply, a common noun, where a noun describes what it refers to. It is the opposite of the *onym* or a proper name, which does not seek to describe its referent. For example, in *You are a helper*, helper is an appellative; but in *This is Mr. Jay Helper*, Helper is an onym. The process of making an expression function as name is onymisation or proprialisation, and that of making an expression function to describe its reference or function as a common noun is appellativisation.
- 21 The **dum** concept ‘heavy, stable, secure’ reflects in the following words *fadum* ‘pillar’, *gyafadum* ‘heavy, unquenchable fire’, and *nkaedum* lit. ‘remembrance secure’, i.e. ‘statue’, all of which carry the idea of weightiness and stability. These words and the name of the tree may all have been derived from a general cognitive **dum** concept; or that *fadum, gyafadum* and *nkaedum* were derived from the cognitive idea of weightiness and stability derived from the heavy and enduring odum tree.
- 22 There is no direct connection between **ni** mother and **nipa** person. The idea of *person*, however, manifests as **ni**, as in *Asanteni*, lit. ‘Asante person’ or ‘citizen of Asante’; *okwani*, lit. ‘farming person’ or ‘farmer’; and *sani* lit. ‘war person’ or ‘soldier/warrior’.
- 23 The aspect of the person associated with the mother is the physical essence of mogya (blood), representing the bodily line or inheritance, and this is not processed as a name, except in proverbial names such as *Mmogya biyedɔm* (lit. ‘one of your own blood could become your foe’, i.e., your kin could also be your enemy).
- 24 The change from *Banfo* to *Bamfo* and *Danfo* to *Damfo* as below are due to homorganic assimilation that changes the alveolar nasal [n] to the labial nasal [m] in the context of the labial [f].
- 25 Dependability is expressed as **dan** in Akan, as in *Medan me maame* ‘I rely on/depend on my mother’.
- 26 **Adakamudin** (lit. ‘box-inside-name’ i.e., a name kept safe in a box) stems from the practice that the name given by a father is often not put in everyday use, but kept for very important or formal contexts. One’s day names, circumstantial names, and accolades or nicknames are used to safeguard the honour associated with the father-given family name.
- 27 Aside from the matrilineal clans (abusua), the Akan also has mystic patrilineal lineages called the ntɔn whose names are prefixed with **bosom** (deity) reflecting their spiritual nature, such as *Bosomakomfo, Bosomkyekye, Bosomnketia*. [Amponsah-Kusi \(2008\)](#) identifies a list of names associated with each of the 12 mystical lineages.

- 28 Among Akans, a child does not necessarily inherit the father's name, nor is there a prescribed pattern for what we would call traditional surnames or family names. Rather, a father chooses a person he respects, living or dead, whose name he offers to the newborn. The terms subordinate and superordinate namesake are used in Sekyi-Baidoo (2019, p. 383) to describe the relationship between the one whose name is being bequeathed (superordinate) and the new bearer of the name.
- 29 It is believed that each name, especially the family name, has a set of mystic properties, made up of, first, the experience and concept that gave rise to the name in the first place, and the accumulated strength brought to a name by the works of its earlier users, especially including the superordinate namesake. See Sekyi-Baidoo (2019, pp. 50–51).
- 30 We might cite the case of *Anantuo*, which was a part of the name of the Chief of Mampong, Boahen Anantuo, who led the Asante army in the Asante-Denkyira war. *Anantuo* (lit. 'lower leg') must have been used primarily as an appellation or nickname, not as a family name.
- 31 In Sekyi-Baidoo (2019), the distinction is made between names formed simply using the concepts such as *Boa* (helpfulness) or *Anno* (brightness, illumination), identified as **base names**, and others formed using these base names with amplifier senses, such as *Boakye*, *Boaben* or *Anokye*, *Anoben*, which are seen as **extension names**.
- 32 *Amma* [ámá] also rendered as *Ammah* or *Armah* is distinct from *Ama* [am.á], the female day-name for Saturday.
- 33 For example, concepts around *joy* and *satisfaction*, as reflected in the concepts *anigyee* 'happiness', *ahoto* 'relief'/'pleasure', *asomdwee* 'peace', *nhyira* 'blessings', *aseda* 'thanks'/'thanksgiving', and *ayeyi* 'praise', which traditionally did not usually feature as motivations even for circumstantial naming, have recently featured as name concepts usually in local first names, and in some cases as surnames.
- 34 For example, the name *Bankye* could be connected to three different lexical structures: (i) **ba** 'tuber' + **nkye** 'not lasting'—i.e., cassava; (ii) **ba** 'child' + **nkye** 'not lasting'—i.e., 'a child who will not survive childhood'; or (iii) **ban** 'security' + **kye** 'endure'—i.e., 'enduring security. Commemorability considerations will establish that *cassava* (a food item) and the concept of *child mortality* do not qualify to be used as concepts for family names, but *security* and the additional concept of *endurance* meets commemorability expectations. Thus, the name *Bankye*, with its anglicised form **Banchie**, is derived from the idea of security, and not cassava nor child mortality.

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