# SINZANG

## SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL OF LITERATURE, LANGUAGE, COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

**Peleforo GON COULIBALY University**

**Côte d'Ivoire**

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**SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL OF LITERATURE, LANGUAGE, COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES**

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**Volume 1, Issue 01**

**DECEMBER 2023**

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**ISSN : 2959-9407**

## EDITORIAL

Among the Senufos from the north of Côte d'Ivoire, the sacred grove is called "Sinzang". The first of these would date from the time of the patriarch and leader of Korhogo SORO Zouakagnon (1840-1894). It is the tutelary space of the initiatory institute of the secret society: the Poro. These sacred forests exist in all the villages of the region and are highly protected and managed. The proof is that in their midst, adolescents perform the rite of passage leading them to the age of maturity. The "Sinzang" is also the centre of intergenerational knowledge transmission. Thus, the teaching of ancestral knowledge, ontology and cosmogony- contributing to the future spiritual, moral and social formation of the Senufo elite-is associated with this pantheon.

In line with this pedagogical and academic logic, the SINZANG Journal aims to promote African and Western humanities in Literature, Language, Communication and Education Sciences. To do this, it is part of a process of promoting the reflections and studies conducted by Teachers-Researchers and Researchers for the sustainable development of society.

As distinctive signs of "Sinzang", Jacqueline DELANGE, in *Arts et peuple Sénoufo de l'Afrique noire*, identifies among others the huts, earth cones and statues (masks). The visual identity of this magazine presents two masks, one symbolizing ancestral knowledge and the other Western science. The two facing the entrance of a sacred hut express the encounter of diverse knowledge put at the service of humanity. *In fine*, they export to other horizons, hence the idea of huts in perspective.

SINZANG is a pluridisciplinary and biannual peer-reviewed scientific journal. It is published in English and French but also accepts work written in German and Spanish. Moreover, depending on the requests made at the discretion of its review committee, it may issue special thematic publications and conference proceedings.

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**ÉDITORIAL**

Chez les Sénoufos du nord de la Côte d'Ivoire, le bosquet sacré est communément appelé « Sinzang ». Les premiers du genre dateraient de l'époque du patriarche et chef de Korhogo SORO Zouakagnon (1840-1894). C'est l'espace tutélaire de l'institut initiatique de la société secrète : le Poro. Lieux fortement protégés et aménagés à l'envi, ces forêts sacrées existent dans tous les villages de la région. La preuve en est qu'en leur sein, les adolescents effectuent le rite de passage les amenant à l'âge de la maturité. Le « Sinzang » est aussi le haut lieu de la transmission de la connaissance intergénérationnelle. Ainsi, l'enseignement du savoir ancestral, de l'ontologie et la cosmogonie-contribuant à la formation spirituelle, morale et sociale de l'élite Sénoufo de demain-est associé à ce panthéon.

S'inscrivant dans cette logique pédagogique et académique, la Revue SINZANG ambitionne de faire la promotion des humanités tant africaine qu'occidentale dans le domaine de la Littérature, des Sciences du Langage, de la Communication et de l'Éducation. Pour ce faire, elle s'inscrit dans une démarche de vulgarisation des réflexions et des études menées par les Enseignants-Chercheurs et des Chercheurs pour le développement durable de la société.

Comme signes distinctifs du « Sinzang », Jacqueline DELANGE, dans *Arts et peuple Sénoufo de l'Afrique noire*, identifie entre autres les cases, les cônes en terre et les statues (masques). L'identité visuelle de cette revue présentant deux masques, l'un symbolisant le savoir ancestral et l'autre la science occidentale. Les deux se faisant face à l'entrée d'une case sacrée expriment la rencontre de connaissances diverses mis au service de l'humanité. In fine, elles s'exportent vers d'autres horizons ; d'où l'idée des cases en perspective.

SINZANG est une revue pluridisciplinaire à comité de lecture et scientifique. Elle est bilingue : éditée en anglais et en français. Mais elle accepte également les travaux écrits en allemand et en espagnol. C'est une revue semestrielle,

tenant deux parutions l'an. Au demeurant, elle peut procéder, selon les demandes ou les sollicitations formulées à l'appréciation de son comité de lecture, à des parutions spéciales thématiques et à la diffusion d'actes de colloque.

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# A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF BAOULE ANTHROPONYMS

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## Abstract

The present study attempts to investigate personal names among Baoulé people, from Côte d'Ivoire and considers naming as an essential aspect of the Baoulé society. It considers names as being unarbitrary labels and sociocultural tags which have sociocultural roles and significances. The study aims at investigating the sociolinguistic implications of the names and showing the factors motivating the process of name-giving among Baoulé people. In other words, the study seeks to reveal to what extent the lifestyle of Baoulé community affects their naming system. The study was conducted in Côte d'Ivoire. Twenty-one elderly informants were purposely chosen to take part in the study. This was supplemented by the researchers' introspection given that all of them are natives of the Baoulé language. Data were collected through interviews, focus group discussion and personnal observation. The findings show that the naming system of Baoulé individuals is highly influenced by their lifestyle. The typology of their names includes birthday names, circumstantial names, names according to the order of birth, and hypocoristics.

 **Keywords:** Baoulé, community, name, connotation.

## UNE ETUDE SOCIOLINGUISTIQUE DES ANTHROPONYMES BAOULE

## Résumé

La présente étude tente d'enquêter sur les noms personnels chez les Baoulés, de Côte d'Ivoire et considère la dénomination comme un aspect essentiel de la société Baoulé. Elle considère les noms comme des étiquettes non arbitraires et socioculturelles qui ont des rôles et des significations socioculturelles. L'étude vise à étudier les implications sociolinguistiques des noms et à montrer les facteurs motivant le processus d'attribution de noms chez les Baoulés. En d'autres termes, le but de cette étude est de vérifier jusqu'à quel point les pratiques culturelles de la communauté Baoulé pourraient affecter le processus d'attribution de leurs noms personnels. L'étude a été menée en Côte d'Ivoire. Vingt et un informateurs, âgés ont été délibérément choisis pour participer à l'étude. À cela s'ajoute l'introspection des chercheurs étant donné qu'ils sont tous natifs de la langue Baoulé. Les données ont été collectées au moyen

d'entretiens, de discussions de groupe et d'observations personnelles. Les résultats indiquent que le processus d'attribution de noms personnels chez le peuple Baoulé est largement influencé par leur style de vie.  La typologie de leurs noms comprend des noms liés aux jours, des noms liés aux circonstances de la naissance, des noms selon l'ordre de naissance et des noms de caresse.

 **Mots-clés :** Baoulé, communauté, noms, connotation.

## Introduction

The system of naming individuals plays such a significant function in the society. Naming systems rely on speech communities and change from one culture to another. In this way, individuals name their children based on their language and culture. The way names are given, motivations for the selection of specific names and the rituals occurred in naming, change from society to society (A. Adjah, 2011).  The name is so strongly associated with the bearer that it serves as a symbol of who he or she is. According to L. Van (2007), a proper name specifies a distinctive item at the level of language to make it psychologically prominent within a specific fundamental category. Similar opinions could be found in M. Minkailou (2017), who clarifies a few categories where names might provide useful details about the gender, birthplace, nationality, ethnicity, religion, and birth order of their bearers within the family. This demonstrates how names are often used to refer to their bearers and how they eventually meld along with them. K. Agyekum (2006), for instance, argues that the Baoulé personal name system and practice serve as indicators of a people's ideology, culture, philosophy, and ideas. Personal names serve as a status symbol and clue to the place of the name-bearer in various speech groups (M. Anderson 2007, p.99).

Personal names consequently grow to be closely associated with numerous events in a person's social life, as well as that of his or her family and community. Personal names facilitate human contact as a vehicle for communication, according to K. Ansu-Kyeremeh (2000). Under various conditions, a lot of people may refer to a person by various names. Personal names have a strong connection to the social context of birth, any particular circumstances, ancestry, and geographic location in Baoulé communities. The act of naming adheres to a set of norms and regulations consistent with customary and traditional customs. One of the rules for creating personal names is the home context, which describes the important social and historical backgrounds for names. The objective of this study is to investigate the sociolinguistic implications of Baoulé anthroponyms and show the factors motivating the process of name-giving   among Baoulé people. In other words, the study seeks to reveal to what extent the lifestyle of Baoulé community affects their naming system.

There are four sections to this study. The first part is an overview of Baoulé language, including the origins and history of the Baoulé language, its constituents and repartitions and its influence and national proportion; the second part is the theoretical framework and methodology consisting of the key related theories, and the method of analysis used to conduct this study. Then, the results of the research will be discussed in the third part. Finally, the last part is the conclusion of the whole study.

## 1. Overview of Baoulé Language

### 1.1. Origins and History of the Baoulé Language

The legend relating to the Baoulé is undoubtedly the best known in Côte d'Ivoire. It has even been the subject of abundant literature and cinematography. In 2013 the directors N'ganza Herman and Kan Souffle released the film *Pokou, Princess Ashanti*, which retraced this story. Thus, the Baoulé people would be from neighboring Ghana. Arrived in Côte d'Ivoire, in the 18th century, the Baoulé would have settled in the center and the center-east of the country, that is to say in the current regions of « bélier », « Vallée du bandama » and « lacs ». We can therefore say that the Baoulé language is used by the peoples established in cities such as Yamoussoukro, Daoukro, Dimbokro , Bouaké etc.

### 1.2. Constituents and Repartitions

Baoulé is a language of the Akan group like Agni, Abron, Apollo or Adioukrou. The Baoulé language itself is divided into several subgroups produced from its distribution after the exodus from Ghana. There are about twenty of them including Akoué, Nanafoué(Yamoussoukro), Gôdê, Nzikpli(Didiévi), Fahafoué(Dimbokro), N'gban (Toumodi), Anôh (Prikro), Gôly (Bodokro ), the Oualebo (Sakassou) etc. This study is mainly based on the Baoulé spoken in Sakassou (Oualebo). Expressions like Akwaba (Welcome), Yako (Pardon in the sense of condolence), Sika (money) or Bla (come) are very well known to most Ivorians who almost all use them in specific circumstances. Baoulé has an alphabet called ILA, built on the model of the Latin alphabet.

### 1.3. Influence and National Proportion

Baoulé is numerically the most important language in Côte d'Ivoire because it concerns 5,451,000 speakers, or 23% of the population, ahead of Bété and Senoufo, respectively the 2nd and 3rd most used languages in the country. The Baoulé language has one of the richest linguistic universes in the country because almost everything is named and labeled to borrow the word from the French thinker, Boileau. As far as names are concerned, they are given according to a very rigid order obeying the day of the week (For example, Akissi  is a name given to a girl who was born onMonday), birth or family position, etc. Baoulé is the most

spoken language in Côte d'Ivoire after French, the language inherited from colonization. Because of its importance, it is today one of the most used languages in the project of training a national language that is Akroubat.

## 2. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

### 2.1. Theoretical Framework

The currennt paper is built on the theory, which postulates that there is a close link between a community's language and its lifestyle and cultural practices. This theory is known as  variationist sociolinguistics and is introduced by  William Labov, a prominent scholar in the field of sociolinguistics. According to this theory, language has an underlying structure, and that this structure varies according to extralinguistic variables like age, social class, gender, nationality, community membership, and so on (W. Botha, 2011, p. 2).This study is an aspect of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology. It reflects on (1) the way Baoulé speakers use language in their cultural activities and resources and (2) explains to what extent Baoulé language is seen as a potent tool for viewing and comprehending Baoulé society's worldview and philosophy. Therefore, one can examine and comprehend a society's social processes and everyday activities using language as a tiny lens. Baoulé language acts as a microscope, moving beyond what is expressed to what is actually practiced in the sociocultural world. The following is how W. Foley (1997, p. 3) succinctly describes the role of linguistic anthropology and its practical purpose:

> Anthropological linguistics is that sub-field of linguistics which is concerned with the place of language in its wider social and cultural context, its role in forging and sustaining cultural practices and social structures. It views language through the prism of the core anthropological concept, culture, and as such seeks to uncover the meaning behind the use, misuse or non-use of language, its different forms, registers and styles. It is an interpretive discipline peeling away at language to find cultural understandings.

A. Duranti  (1997: 2) asserts that "linguistic anthropology is the study of language as a cultural resource and speaking as a cultural practice." People's language is strongly linked to their culture and way of thinking. The study of linguistic anthropology views language as a social tool. Beyond the precise linguistic content of what is being discussed, language has the potential to generate actual world experiences. It is a collection of symbolic resources that are incorporated into the social fabric as well as each person's depiction of the real or imaginable worlds (A. Duranti 1997, p.1-3). It is a verbal activity that connects and fits verbal acts to the outside world.

Words are the reflections of a community's world and vice versa. By world we mean the lifestyle of a community and by word we refer to language. Words and world have a close relationship.The word and, to a greater extent, the world are thereby represented by linguisti

c signs (A. Duranti 1997, p.337).The sociocultural interpretations of the names serve as the real world in the current investigation, whilst the Baoulé names (words) serve as the linguistic indicators. The naming system of the Baoulé people is impacted by the dynamism of the world and cultural practices.

The complexity and diversity of the peoples' cultures are expressed and described in the language. The language of the individuals is mirrored in their practices (the focus of this study), marriage, family, and kinship systems, political, economic, vocational, and health systems, as well as in their legal and burial customs and practices. In other words, the social division of the population is also reflected in their language.

The data in this study examines how the Baoulé naming systems represent the Baoulé philosophy and culture from both the emic and etic points of view. The emic perspective is the point of view of a cultural practice held by the group's members based on how they conceptualize, understand, and interpret their worldviews and the objects in it. The etic represents the observer's and ethnographer's point of view. Here, an emic description of the Baoulé name systems is taken. It is clear from utilizing this that the paper contributes to language and culture and how individuals use their language to carry out and take part in specific cultural activities like naming. Language serves as a tool for reproducing social reality.

In certain social contexts, linguistic anthropology applies broad theoretical frameworks. It focuses on how language both permits and produces distinctions between various groups, people, and identities (A. Duranti 1997, p.7). It is possible to view naming as a universal cultural practice. Every socity in the world uses names as identifying markers for its members, but the manner in which names are given, the associated customs and rituals, and the meanings linked to them vary from society to society and from one culture to another.

A.Duranti (1997, p.14-21) proposed three interconnected analytical ideas that aid in understanding the role of language in culture while addressing the theoretical issues of modern linguistic anthropology. Performance, indexicality, and participation are the first three. Indexicality is the one of these three that is most crucial to the discussion of the Baoulé naming system.

According to M. Silverstein (1976, p.27), indexes are symbols that have some sort of existential relationship to the things they signify, whether they be spatial, temporal, social, or personal. In indexicality, language is a tool used to continuously describe, assess, and replicate our socio-cultural world. Words possess a power that goes beyond simple identification and tagging of people, objects, and attributes, if we claim that they are indexically tied to some items and the reality of the world (A.Duranti 1997, p.19). A component of cultural indexicality is the Baoulé naming system. According to this hypothesis, certain facets of the Baoulé people's

sociocultural background are related to linguistic expressions or tags like Baoulé personal names. Indexicality is applicable in Baoulé names since they have sociocultural interpretation. Some Baoulé names refer to personal, temporal, spatial and social deixis.

We will see in this paper that Baoulé names have personal deixis because there is always a person whom a child is named after. The Baoulé refers to such a person as father or aunt, which may either be biological or distant. With regard to temporal deixis, Baoulé names are very unique, because each person has an automatic birthday first name that points to the day of the week that s/he was born. For example, the first name *Kouassi* indexicalises the day Monday. There are also spatial names referring to localities within the Baoulé society where people were born.

## 2.2. Methodology

This section of the study provides a description of the research design, the participants, samples and sampling procedure, and methods of Data Analysis.

### 2.2.1. Research Design

This investigation used a qualitative descriptive approach. According to Kothari (2004:37), "Studies concerned with specific predictions, with narration of facts and characteristics concerning individual, group or situation are all examples of descriptive research ." Therefore this study makes use of descriptive design which is about socio-linguistic matters. Given that some of the researchers were native speakers of the Baoulé language, they used personal observation to eke out the anthroponyms and shed light upon them  in an extemporaneous way.

### 2.2.2. Samples and Sampling Procedure

In this paper, we resorted to forty-one (41) samples. They were all local elderly individuals who are native speakers of the Baoulé language. In addition to providing  the anthroponyms of their area, they also oint out their significations. In this paper, we used a purposive sampling strategy in the selection of the participants. In order to avoid inaccurate data, the  researchers opted for the informants who have sufficient or required properties to help us. The participants were at least thirty-five year old. We think that this age category is not only familiar with the personal naming systems and also experienced in meaning elucidations.

### 2.2.3. *Data Collection and Methods of Analysis*

The collection of the data of this study were based on a lot of sources: interview, focus group discussion and personal observation.

Focus group discussion favoured the stimulation of the interactions with participants and get accurate data from them. Interview was also suitable for the deep collection of data about the choice of personal names. Before the interview starts we made sure that the interwees gave their agreement. In addition to interviews and focus group discussions, some personal observations were also made. We observed the way individuals practice the use of their personal names.

## 3. Findings and Discussions

Giving kids their first names involves a lot of different elements. This section of the study focuses on the variables that define the categories of personal names used in the Baoulé community. It focuses on traditional authentic names and examines how the social surroundings and circumstances of a child's birth serve as cues for the parents as they choose names to be given. These circumstances include the day the child was born, the order of birth of the child, the time and manner of the birth, etc. This is in line with Akinnaso's definition of naming in 1980, which states that it is a vehicle to express what someone (especially the person giving the name) "experiences, values, thinks, and knows in the real world.

### 3.1. Birthday Names

It is important to note that the vast majority of Baoulé anthroponyms correspond to the seven days of the week and observe gender variation. We are going to consider the table below (table 1). This table means that each personnal name corresponds to a day of the week and depends on the gender of the individual. Thus, an individual can only be named *Kouass*i if he is male and born on a Monday, *Amlan*, if she is female and born on a Wednesday, etc. The birthday name is regarded as the soul's name in Baoulé society. They think that a person's soul gives him or her its name. When to allow a child to enter our world is a decision made by the individual's soul. It is thought that this particular day may have an impact on the person's actions, destiny, and future.

**Table 1.**

| DAYS | Male names | Female names |
|---|---|---|
| Sunday | Kouagni | Amoin |
| Monday | kouassi | Akissi |
| Tuesday | Kouadio | Adjoa |

| Wednesday | Konan | Amlan |
| Thursday | Kouakou | Ahou |
| Friday | Yao | Aya |
| Saturday | Koffi | Affoué |

## 3.2. Personal Names according to the Order of Birth

Names that refer to the order of birth in the Speech community of Baoulé are as follows in table 2.

**Table 2.**

| Position | Names |
|---|---|
| Third child of the same sex | N'guessan |
| Fourth child of the same sex | N'dri |
| Ninth child from the same mother | N'goran |
| Tenth child from the same mother | Brou |
| Eleventh child from the same mother | Loukou |
| Twelfth child from the same mother | Toungbin or Abonouan |
| Twin children | N'da |
| A child born just after twins | Amani |

The order of birth is part of the Baoulé naming system. The above table 2 clearly shows that children are named according to the order of birth. The third, the fouuth, the ninth, the tenth, the eleventh and the twelfth born children customarily receive their name accordingly. For instance, the third born child of the same sex (male or female) is called *N'guessan*, while the fourth of the same sex is named *N'dri*. The ninth child, the tenth, the elevrnth and the twelfth one are respectively called *N'goran, Brou, Loukou,* and *Toungbin* or *Abonouan*. As we can see, the results show that there is no name corresponding to the first, second, sixth, seventh and eighth born chidren.

Twins are treated and reared with special conditions in the Baoulé society. Same or different sex twins are called *N'da*. In the context when children come after the twins, they get socio-cultural names. The child that comes right after the twins is called Amani, whatever the sex.

### 3.3. Hypocoristics

Hypocoristics are endearment names used to address a person to whom we feel affection. In the naming system of Baoulé people, there is the endearment name.  This way of naming is linked to the birthday names. For example, let's take the case of  a male child who was born on a Monday. As we saw above, his birthday name is *kouassi* ; the endearment name associated with *kouassi* is *Atôwla*. In the Baoulé society, almost all the endearment names are linked to a birthday name. As it can be noted in the table 3  below, in addition to the male birthday name *Kouassi*, *Kouadio* is associated with *Atouman*, *Konan* with *Abo*, *Kouakou* with *Kôlou*, *Yao* with *adammo, Koffi* with *Akpôlè*, and *Kouagny* with *Bly* . The table 3 below lists all the endearment names collected in this study.

**Table 3.**

| Male names | Hypocoristics |
|---|---|
| Kouagni | Bly |
| Kouassi | Atôwla |
| Kouadio | Atouman |
| Konan | Abo |
| Kouakou | Kôlou |
| Yao | Adammo |
| Koffi | Akpôlè |
| N'guessan | Atchouè |
| N'dri | Gadeau |
| Amlan | Sialou or Mossia |
| Affoué | Ziahimo |
| Ahou | Gbakla |
| Adjoua | Nandoua |
| Akissi | Blédja or Adimo |
| Aya | Késsi |
| Amoin | Gouhé |

### 3.4. Circumstantial Names

**Table 4**

| Situation of birth | Names |
|---|---|
| A child born in a dump | Ouffouet |
| A child born on the road to hospital | Atoumgbré |
| A child born with the head turned to the ground | Ahoutou |
| A primature child | Atiman |

The above table 5 demonstrates that the Baoulé people strongly hold their traditions; and in their belief system, superstitions play an essential function in naming. The circumstances surrounding the birth of the child determine the significance of the naming. In this way, names are given to children to call for patience and humility, express rescue in the event of force majeure, transition in the order of birth, thanksgiving to God, etc.

The circumstantial names concern personal names that pertain to the place of birth of the child. For example, in this tudy we have names such as *Ouffouet* which means that the child was born in a damp ; *Atoumgbé*, which refers to a  child who was born while the mother was on the road to hospital . In addition to the place of birth, the circumtancial names also refer to the manner of birth. These ones include *Atiman*, which means the child was born before reaching nine months (a primature child) and *Ahoutou* referring to a child born with the head turned to to the ground.

### Conclusion

The objective of this paper was to investigate the sociolinguistic implications of Baoulé anthroponyms and show the factors motivating the process of name-giving   among Baoulé individuals. In a nutshell, the study attempted to reveal to what extent the lifestyle of Baoulé community affects their naming system. The collection of the data of this study were based on interview, focus group discussion and personal observation.  The study was inspred by the theory of variationist sociolinguistics, coined by William Labov, a prominent scholar in the field of Sociolinguistics. This theory holds that there is an intimate relation between the language of individuals and their cultures.

The findings proved that  Baoulé people's personal names are effectively influenced by their cultural pratices. They serve as indicators of their beliefs, ideologies, religions, cultures, and  schools  of  thought.  When  people  have  knowledge  of  ethno-pragmatics,  sociocultural

norms, the Baoulé language and culture, they can better understand and analyze the names. Therefore, the Baoulé personal names are a feature of linguistic relativity. Baoulé names, in a philosophical sense, allude to aspects of Baoulé culture and way of life. According to this article, names have an indexical relationship to socio-cultural meanings and functions, as well as to locations, times, people, and events rather than being merely arbitrary and meaningless identifiers.

Baoulé people think that names will reflect and indexicalize people's lives and behaviors, either positively or badly, and hold the belief that names have some intrinsic force and relationship. The name of the person affects society as a whole because of the performance and participation the person makes in society. Baoulé names can indicate group identification and convey some cultural norms and behaviors of the relevant culture. Different situations are indicated by Baoulé typological terms. They may be birthday names, names according to the order of birth, hypocoristics and circumstantial names.

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