Digo Anthroponymes: Meaning and Significance

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Abstract

This paper investigates the meanings and significance of names amongst the Digo of Kenya, who are Bantu and how the names are given to newly born members of the community. The paper focuses on semantics of the names, and to some extent, the morphology. The data was obtained from 10 respondents who were about 70 to 80 years: 5 men and 5 women. The study found out that names in this community have meaning and are of great importance. They identify a person, convey message, preserve the family roots and culture, and are not arbitrary.

Introduction

A name is important to any human being in the world as a means of identification. Many names in Kenya, identify a person in two ways; first that he is different from another person, second the ethnic groups he comes from, for example Anyango (Luo), Nyachae (Kisii), Kariuki (Kikuyu), Mutua (Kamba), Arap Moi (Kalenjin), Omar (Swahili) e.t.c. Names are not arbitrary, says Ziff as cited by Caroll (1985; 163).

Many scholars have investigated the meaning of names in different communities in Africa semantically and also morphologically. Swilla (2000) dealt with *Chindali* names in Tanzania, Essie (2000) also dealt with the same subject in the *Ibibio* community in Nigeria, Katakami (1997) investigated the *Mbeere* names in Kenya, Choge (1997) investigated the meaning of names in the *Nandi* community, Wembah Rashid (1992) investigated names and the system of giving names in the *Makua* community in Tanzania. Muzule (1998) investigated names found around the Great Lakes in East and central Africa and found that they reflect more than identification. Akinnaso (1980) looked at the sociolinguistic basis of *Yoruba* personal names in the perspective of anthropological linguistics.

All these researches have revealed that names amongst the African communities have meaning and are very important. They reflect behaviour, time and even metaphors. This has vividly shown that names have meaning. Hancock and Goodwin have shown that some English names have meanings e.g. Chapman (hawker), Porter (watchman), Stanfield (born in a store field), Bradwell (born near a wide well) e.t.c as cited by Choge (1997:24 – 25). Therefore, Shakespeare's allegation in the play "Romeo and Juliet" that names are arbitrary is not quite true.

The contribution of this paper is that Digo names also have meaning and they are a means of identification in a society. The fact that the meaning of a name may not be known in a community does not mean it is arbitrary as Muzule (1998:46) argues:

"It is postulated here that failure to decipher the meaning could be caused by semantic, morphological change(s) undergone by the name or lexeme(s) concerned. There is no way a person of this era can know the meaning of a lexeme that dropped out of the language a century ago without leaving traces behind, as these languages have no written history going that much back".

Digo names are inclusive in the statement above attributed to Muzale. Digo are neighbours of the Swahili who have a long history of interaction (Chiraghdin and Mnyampala, 1977: xi, 19). Their languages are so similar syntactically, morphologically and semantically. However, Digo language has not been thoroughly researched on and is a language, which has no written history.

The Digo

The Digo are a small tribe within the wider Mijikenda group. They are among the nine tribes of the Coast of Kenya which include Duruma, Ribe, Rabai, Giryama, Chonyi, Jibana, Kambe, and Kauma (Salim, 1973:208). Their root is in Shungwaya, where they left and migrated in the 17 Century and settled in six hilly places called "Kaya". These were behind the valley south of the Kenyan coast. The Digo were the first to leave Shungwaya and the other groups followed later (Spear, 1978:4, 17).

When they left Shungwaya because of the frequent invasion by the Wagalla, they followed the coast going south up to Shimba Hills, south – east of Mombasa, where they built *Kaya* Kwale. Later, some migrated to start the *Kaya Chinondo* still in Kwale District. Presently, the Digo live within the 10 – mile coastal strip of Kenya south of Mombasa. They occupy a vast area right from the Likoni ferry (Mombasa District) up to Vanga (Kwale District) and extend beyond the Kenya/Tanzania border at Lungalunga to Tanga in Tanzania.

The Digo are divided into three major groups; *Atsimba, Achinondo* and *Aungu*. This division is based on their dialects. *Atsimba* live in Tsimba and Golini locations around the Kwale District Headquarters. *Achinondo*, occupy the largest area and are the majority living in Likoni, Ng'ombeni, Waa, Tiwi and Diani locations. *Aungu* live in Msambweni and Kubo Divisions. Based on the census of the Republic of Kenya (1999), Kwale District has a population of 496,133 people. However, in this district there are other groups like the Duruma, Kamba and Taita. The last two, are immigrants from Ukambani area and Taita District. Their numbers are relatively small as indicated in the 1999 census.

The Digo are fishermen because they live along the Indian Ocean from Mombasa up to Vanga. They are also farmers and keep few livestock. They grow coconut palms, cassava, beans, simsim, green grams and sugar cane. Coconut palm is the major cash crop. Their religion is Islam although there are a few Christians, less than 1% of the area's population.

Naming Ceremony and Meaning of Names

Naming during delivery

The Digo had a naming ceremony just like other African communities e.g Yoruba (Akinnaso, 1980) Wakamba, Wakikuyu, Ndebele, Shona (Mbiti, 1969). The naming of children was therefore an important occasion which was often marked with ceremonies in many societies (Mbiti, 1969:118). Presently this ceremony is no longer done by the Digo but naming is still there without the ceremony. It started disappearing in the late 60's and early 70's because of the so called "modernity" and the influence of Islam, which sees such a ceremony as infidelity! Many cultures among the African communities are disintegrating because of religion or/and western culture. Most Digo favour Arabian culture (read Islam) and many are assimilated mentally. Hence, abandoning their culture and becoming slaves of other cultures, as the Swahili adage says, '*Mwacha mila ni mtumwa*' (He who disregards his culture is a slave).

According to the Digo culture, a pregnant mother delivers in or outside the house but mostly behind a house where it is private. Men are strictly not allowed in such a place. It is a taboo. An old woman, who is a midwife, is normally assisted by other women in mid-wifing. As the delivery time nears, a pregnant mother buys herself a razor blade ready for the occasion. Many years back, a sharp knife was used to severe the umbilical cord, but these modern times, a razor blade is used and preferred for health reasons. Up to the present time, some women deliver at home instead of hospital and they buy their own blades.

Once the baby is delivered, with the assistance of the old woman (mid-wife), the umbilical cord is cut, dressed by her and the placenta is buried beneath a bathroom. This bathroom is an enclosure made of coconut palms in an open place but near the living house. The place where the placenta is buried is highly guarded as it is feared that witches may come,

take the placenta and mix it with their witchcraft paraphernalia. When this happens, it is believed, the child will not survive. The mother then bathes at the place of delivery for one week. The burial of the placenta and the umbilical cord signifies the death of the child in life of pregnancy and now she/he is reborn in another state of life (Mbiti, 1969:113). In other words the child has died in the life of loneliness in the mother's womb but has now been reborn in the new life of being part of the larger society.

Immediately after delivery, the midwife gives the newborn baby a name. Apparently, if it is a boy, she names him after her husband and if it is a girl, the midwife names her after herself, thereby being namesake. This name is referred to as "*dzina la mavyalusa*" (delivery name). It remains until the newly born child is given a name of the clan or family by the grandfather. Sometimes these names take root and become permanent in one's life. The basic purpose of this name is to identify the child until the clan or family name is given. Occasionally, "*Mwahache*" is a general given to a baby boy and "*Nihache*" to a baby girl. This practice of giving a general name is also done by the Wamakua of Tanzania (Wembah – Rashid, 1992: 08). But these names disappear once one gets his or her real name. If the child born is a boy, at the top of the door of the parents' house, a small bow and an arrow is tied and if it is a girl, a small heap of firewood is tied. These identify their sexes respectively. Whoever passesby need not ask the sex of the newly born child after seeing these symbols. After three days, the husband of the woman who delivered gives a hen and some maize flour as a fee to the group that assisted in the delivery. This is called "*chitsukutsa mkono*" meaning "washing hands". This is meant to 'clean the hands' of those who participated in the delivery. After seven days, the husband kills a goat for the wife to eat and drink soup to regain her lost blood.

Formal naming

After delivery, the mother stays in the house for four days. During this time, the child is tied '*mvuje*' wrapped in a black strip of cloth on one of its arms to keep away evil spirits. On the 5th day, the child is taken out of the house for the formal naming ceremony. An elderly woman carries the child on the back. She also carries a basket in her hand. If the child is a boy, a hoe and a panga (machete) are put in the basket and if it is a girl a hoe is put in the basket. She then takes a broom and sweeps the area in front of the house. This means, cleansing the child's route of life as well as teaching him cleanliness. Next she takes the hoe and digs briefly as the baby is on the back. This action is meant to teach the baby farming. On this occasion, many children in the village gather there to escort the woman and the baby around the village. The woman goes to every house in the village to introduce the new baby where she/he is welcome and given presents like maize or cassava flour, dried cassava, raw cassava, sugar, tea leaves, millet, sorghum, groundnuts, money e.t.c., as a reward. Incase the house visited belongs to a grand mother (wives of brothers to the grandfather), she teases him, for example, "What kind of a husband is this who doesn't have clothes? Go away, I don't want you". Some take the baby from the back of the woman carrying her/ him even if she/he is crying to be teased:

'Lazy one! A coward! You fear woman! How will you marry?' (if a boy).

or

'You have an ugly face. I don't want you. Go to your wife so and so.'

All this time, aunts to the child (i.e. sisters or female cousins of the father of the baby) defend her jokingly. "Ah! our child (or father) is very handsome! Where will you get a man like this one?" e.t.c.

If it is a baby boy, some grandmothers may take and hold him against the chest and say, "Taste these breasts of your wife if you're a man!" Even if the baby cries, they will not let him go as it is assumed he is being taught how life is. When the child reaches a homestead belonging to an aunt, she/he is given great respect and praise. The aunt takes the baby in her

arms and says, "Ah! My father (name), grow to marry and have many children. My handsome father!" Then, she returns the baby to the old woman carrying him or her and puts her present in the basket.

When all this is over, the old woman returns the baby to her mother in their house with the presents. The flour given as a present is used to make porridge for him and the mother. Incase there is a hen it is reserved for her/him. When she/he grows up all the hens are given to him for ownership. Sometimes the hens may be many and are exchanged for a goat which still belongs to the baby. In the morning of the following day, the baby's grandfather goes to the house of the baby's parents to officially give her/him a name of the family. The grandfather gives the name because it is common knowledge he is the one who knows the roots and the many people in the family, dead and alive. He takes the baby who is now five days old, sits down stretching his legs and plays with it on his thighs. He then holds her/his ear and says, "You, baby, I have given you this name, *Gamoyo* (as chosen) .You have no other name apart from this. Let the name be blessed as your namesake was." From then on, the child is known by this new name given by the grandfather, presumed to be a family name. In some occasions, the grandfather accepts the name given by the midwife during delivery and asserts it. This happens incase the name belongs to the family as some Digo marriages occur within the family or clan. But in many occasions, the grandfather gives a new name he deems suitable.

The System of Giving Names

In some societies, it is a custom to give the names of the grandparents to the children (Mbiti, 1969:118). Digo is a community, which gives names of grandparents to their children. Names are given from the paternal side, and it is rare to get names from the maternal side though the parents of the child can give their child a name from the maternal grandparents if they so wish. But this is very rare. This custom of giving names from the paternal side is still very strong and predominant in the Digo community, and whoever goes against it is poured scorn and looked down upon. This is because names in African society, Digo inclusive, are expected to preserve the family tree and foster the continuity of the patriarchy (Essien, 2000: 125).

Types and Meaning of Names

There are different types of names in the Digo community. Almost all Digo names have meaning except the religious ones (Islam) which are Arabic but may have meaning. This paper looks at the Digo not the Arabic names. Some of the names given may mark the occasion of the child's birth for example, rain, water, journey, famine, locust, road, *etc* (Mbiti, 1969: 118). If the child was born when the mother was on a journey, the child is called "Safari" or "Charo", one born by the road "Njira", born during locusts "Nzije", during famine "Nzala" etc.

In the Digo community, there are mainly two divisions of names, male and female. However, there are those, which are riddles and metaphors which express feelings and can be found in both male and female, for example "*Riziki*" or "*Bahati*" (meaning luck), "*Shukurani*" (thanks). Digo names also have affixes, which signify "gender", male or female. Most of these affixes are pre- and include;

i) Prefixes "N"/ "Ni" is used for females only for example, *Ntembe* (female), *Tembe* (male), *Niamuri* (female), *Amuri* (male).

ii) Prefixes "Mwa" and "Mwe" are used in male names for example, *Mwarimo, Mwagao, Mwajambo, Mwakazi, Mwachiphonje, Mwendato.* Occasionally "Mwa" can be used in female names for example, "*Mwatime*", "*Mwajuma*".

iii) Prefixes "Mwa" and "Na" signify female names for example,

Mwanarusi, Mwanajuma, Mwanamisi, Mwanamkasi, Mwanakombo.
iv) Prefix "Ma" is found in male names, for example, *Majambo, Manzele, Makandi, Mazulo.*
v) Prefix "Me" is used in female names only, for example *Mejumaa, Mesalimu, Mesaidi and Meselemani.* This prefix stands for "Mother of".

Nearly all African names have meaning (Mbiti, 1969:118). For example, Yoruba personal names have richness of their semantic load and social-cultural information (Akinnaso, 1980:286). Let us now explore the meaning in Digo names.

Names of occasions

Some of the Digo names signify occasions. If a child was born on a day when an incident happened, there is a high possibility of the child being named after the incident. There are specific famines which occurred at different times, for example, famine when people ate skins (*chingo*), famine when people never cared for relatives (*Ndugu si mutu*), famine when people only got wheat (*ngano*), *etc*. During such occasions, children that were born were given names after these famines e.g. *Chingo, Ndugu si mutu, Ngano.* Names, which signify difficulty or problems among the Digo, are avoided and there is a possibility of being changed in future in case the child experiences problems. For a live example, the researcher learnt with a girl in primary school called Tabu (problem). As she grew up, she experienced many problems like frequent illness and she lost her mother when still young. Consequently, her name was changed to "Rehema" (Good luck). Yoruba in Nigeria also practice such because; i) A child's name plays some part in its development in a future career, ii) A child may react to a name having negative social implications (Akissano, 1980:283). Let's see a few examples below:

Incident/Occasion	Name
a) During a journey	Charo, Ncharo, Mwacharo, Safari Nsafari, Mwasafari. (mean journey)
b) Rain season	Mwanamvua (means rain)
c) Famine	Nzala, Ninzala, Mwanzala (mean hunger)
d) Difficult time or problem Shida,	Tabu (can be either male or female, meaning problems)
e) Wedding day	Mwanarusi (means weding)
f) During locust	Nzije (male or female), Mwanzije (mean locust)

Non-Occasion Names

These are mainly traditional Digo names. Proper names have functional properties like "baptismal ceremony", "bearer hood", "causal chain", "speaker purpose" etc (Carroll, 1985:164). This functional property mentioned by Carroll is where meaning is. However, it is better to consider what Akinnaso (2000: 279) says: "…the nature and range of information stored in a given personal name may not be known to every member of the community." Therefore, there are some Digo names that the researcher does not know their meaning. Table 1 below shows a few examples of non-occasion names but have meaning.

Name		Meaning
i)	Kulonda (male)	To want something
	Mwakulonda	Son of Kulonda
	Nkulonda	Daughter of Kulonda
ii)	Kulola (male)	To see
	Mwakulola	Son of Kulola
	Nkulola	Daughter of Kulola
iii)	Shughuli/Mashuhuli/majambo	Having much business or being busy all the time
	Mwashughuli (son)	
	Mwajambo (son)	
	Nshughuli (daughter)	
iv)	Mkanyi	A reconciliator or arbitrator where there is a conflict
v)	Dzikowa	A big rope
	Mwadzikowa (son)	
	Ndzikowa (daughter)	
vi)	Dundu	A beetle
	Mwadundu (son)	
	N'dudu (daughter)	
vii)	Kazi	One who loves working
	Mwakazi (son)	
	N'kazi (daughter)	
viii)	Kuwasha	Itching
	Mwakuwasha (son)	
	N'kuwasha (daughter)	
ix)	Kutembeza (male)	Showing off oneself

The following are some of the Digo names whose meanings are unknown to the researcher.

- Dzimba
- Ningauri
- Tuwano, Mwatuwano, N'tuwano
- Dzole, N'dzole
- Mbongi, Mwambongi, Nimbongi
- Majepo
- Mzandi, Mwamzandi
- Madindima

Names from Days of the Week, Month and Holiday

These are names given from days of the week, holiday or month (Swahili or Islamic month for example, Ramadhan, Shaaban) in which a person was born. The Digo have four days in a week namely; "*Pkwaluka*" (1st day of the week), "*Kurimaphiri*" (2nd day of the week), "*Kufusa*" (3rd day of the week) and *Chipalata* (4th day and resting day). Out of these, the researcher found only one day is given as a name and that is "Chipalata". Many of the Digo names given after the days of the week are according to the Swahili days of the week i.e Jumamosi (Saturday), Jumapili (Sunday) Jumatatu (Monday), Jumanne (Tuesday), Jumatano (Wednesday), Al'hamisi (Thursday), Ijumaa (Friday). However, the name of Jumamosi is rare. Out of these names, two are Arabic names, these are; Al'hamisi and Ijumaa, and babies born on

these days can be named Hamisi and Juma or Jumaa respectively. These are male names and female names of the equivalent are Mwanahamisi and Mwanajuma. These female names can also mean "daughter of Hamisi" and "daughter of Juma".

There are also names picked from months. These names, as mentioned above, are from Arabic months taken from the Islamic calendar; they are Ramadhan (fasting month) and Shaaban. These are male names. A female name from the fasting month of Ramadhan is *Saumu*, meaning, "fast". The Digo consider these names as Islamic. Generally, names signifying the day one was born are very few among the Digo. Could be, they are given by parents out of their own wish going against the tradition of the Digo.

Names According to Clans

The Digo have their own clans (Spear, 1978: 56). Spear has given fifty eight clans but there are some which Spear has not tabulated e.g. Chitsere, Ngome, Mbua, Mwagoro, Nguvu, Uchi, Nzovu, Kalapngwa, Virizi, and Kulo. Unfortunately some of these clans he has indicated as being Duruma clans. Mostly, clan names are not used as personal names. They are used to identify which clan one comes from. The following are examples of clan names;

Clan	Name
Ngome	Mwangome, Ningome
Ngala	Mwangala, Ningala
Kuria	Wakuria, N'kuria
Gandi	Mwagandi, N'gandi
Boza	Mwaboza, N'boza
Kulo	Mwakulo, N'kulo
Goa	Mwagoa. N'goa
Lela	Mwalela, N'lela
Nyiro	Mwanyiro, N'nyiro
Nzovu	Mwanzovu, Ninzovu

Note: Mwa – (male), Ni/N – (female)

Once these names are mentioned, the bearer is known from which clan he comes from. This is because a family is known by the clan it belongs to and its names.

Names Used by Both Digo and Swahili

These are names found in both Digo and Swahili communities. Perhaps this is because of many years of close interaction between these communities (Chiraghdin and Mnyampala, 1979).

These names are as follows:

Male: Mwinyi (headman), Mwichande, Mwijaka, Mwinyikai, Kombo, Kai, Mwinyishee/Mwishee, Mzee (respected old man).

Female: Kibibi, Memzee (mother of Mzee), Mwanakombo, Mwanauba, Uba, Mwanarusi, Mwanamkasi, Mwanamize.

Islam/Arab Names

Names originating from religion are called theoforek (Choge 1997: xii). Such names are found in the Digo community and are direct from Arabs. This is because Arabs were the ones who brought Islam at the Coast of Kenya but the names are called Islam names. However, there are some that were assimilated and now appear Digo/Swahili names especially female ones. They are normally attached to a Digo prefix "Me" which symbolizes 'mother of'.

The Arab/Islam names are as follows:

Male: Abubakar – assimilated and transformed to Bakari,
               Omar, Said, Kassim, Hamisi, Salimu, Alii, Abasi,
               Athumani, Abdalla, Rashidi, Hamza, *et cetera*.

Female: Zainab, Hadija, Halima, Hawa, Aziza, Aisha – transformed to Asha or
               Isha, Amina, Rukia, Maimuna, Fatuma, *et cetera*.

Some of these names are those of close followers (Sahaba) and relatives of the Holy prophet Mohammed (S.A.W) e.g. Ali (cousin), Hadija (wife), Amina (mother), Halima (foster mother), Zainab (daughter), Aisha (wife), Hamza (uncle), Abdalla (father), Fatuma (daughter) *etc.* These Arab/Islam names, especially those of men, a prefix "Me" was added to make female ones e.g. Mesalim, Mebakari, Mesaidi. And also "Mwana" was prefixed to form a Digo name such as Mwanabdalla, Mwanamina, Mwanaisha etc. There are also female names formed by adding "Bint" (daughter of) e.g. Bint Hamisi, Bint Hassan, Bint Ali, Bint Saidi, Bint Athuman, Bint Salimu, etc. The orthography and pronunciation of these names are in Digo or Swahili, for example those Arabic names, which have nasal sounds, are pronounced in Digo without the nasal like Abdall'ah to Abdala

Metaphor and Riddle Names

Such types of names are given to the babies by their parents. They give them as metaphor to express their feelings in a hidden way. For example if a mother had many problems in her life or during pregnancy but the problems ended later, she could name the child "Nafuu" meaning "rest after many problems". In case a couple has been losing their new born babies and finally one survives she/he may be given a name expressing feelings e.g. "*Shukurani*" (thanks to God), "*Zawadi*" (present from God), "*Pola*", "*Hamu*" (feelings of wanting something). Such names are also found in the Makua community, Tanzania (Wembah-Rashid, 1992:14).

Let us now explore such names in the Digo community.
- *Mtendavyema* (one who does well) – this is a name given to a child by the parents as a riddle to neighbours or enemies. It could be, the mother did good deeds to her neighbours and in response they did evil toi adage "*Mtenda vyema hulipwa maovu*" meaning "One who does good deeds is paid with evil deeds her. Therefore, once she gets a child she names her/him "Mtendavyema". This is part of a Kiswahil" .
- *Mzingirwa* (one whose wife has an outside affair) - this is a metaphor name too. For example, a man who discovers after a long time that a neighbour has been having an affair with his wife, he can give this name once he begets a child. It means, "one whose wife had

or has an outside affair will not know and those who know are the neighbours but they won't tell him".

- . *Hakimu* (jugde) - this is a name used as a metaphor. It comes about when a family is being mistreated or oppressed by one who is powerful and there is nothing they can do. So, when they get a newborn baby, such a name is given. It means only God is the just Judge and He will judge the case correctly without favour be it in heaven or here on earth.
- *Suna* (a want) - this name expresses feelings. A couple may have stayed for long without getting a child after marriage. Once they get one, this name can be given. Or the couple has been either getting boys or girls only and once a child of the opposite sex is born she/he can be named so. The name signifies the "want or longing" the couple had for such a child.
- *Zawadi* (present/reward) - is also a name expressing feelings. A situation as in (iv) above, can lead the parents to give this name meaning "a reward" from God.

There are many other names like these, for example, *Sibabu* (reason), *Bahati* (luck), *Pore* (sorry or slowly), *Patani* (what will you get?), *Bulebule* (for free), *Vinani* (what is wrong with them?) etc. All these names are given by parents as metaphor or as names that express some feelings. These names do not show any sex, they are either male or female. Therefore it is not a surprise in the Digo community to find a name like '*Bahati*' or '*Zawadi*' being both male and female.

Significance of Names

In the Digo community, names have an important role. First, is for the purpose of identifying one, secondly is to preserve unity and the names of a family. Therefore people know the roots of their families through names. Members of the same names know that they are relatives hence unifying them. This happens even if one comes from Kenya and the other from Tanzania. They reveal blood relation. Equally, they identify one's clan. For example, if one uses a clan name like "Ningome" or "Mwagoa" he will be identified and get relatives among the Digo even in Tanzania yet she/he comes from Kenya. One will be readily accepted, welcome warmly and feel at home. Once such a name is mentioned to any Digo, the person will direct the bearer of the name to the village where her/his clan lives and will automatically be well received as a relative and the village will be like her/his back home. Amongst the Digo, clans have special ties through friendship of ancestors dating way back. This is normally maintained from generation to generation. Consequently names promote harmony and peaceful co-existence amongst clans.

Names too reveal one's sex. By the morphology of the name, one is able to distinguish male from female. Some metaphor names are difficult to distinguish as they can be named both male and female. Historical or occasion names are a great source of remembrance and can even tell the year when one was born e.g. "Chingo" means one who was born during the famine when people were eating dried skins even those then used as beddings! According to our source, the *Chingo* famine occurred in Digo land in the late 1880s. The famine named "*Ngano*" occurred in 1945 when only wheat was found as food and it was provided for free by the colonial government.

Names also preserve history. If one's grandfather or great-grandfather (paternal) came from a certain place or country and migrated to a new area, however long ago, names of the family will be preserved by whoever was left behind. Hence it is easy to know the origin of one's family. Similarly, names preserve the culture of the Digo people. This happens during naming ceremonies. One will know how this is done, who is supposed to give the name and even the meaning of the names. For example, if a child is called N'charo or Charo (journey) it means that, he was born when the mother was on a journey. The names given by midwives

immediately after delivery are for identification for the period waiting for the clan or family name. Therefore names have a very special role among the Digo community.

Conclusion

Names in the Digo community have meaning but sometimes the meaning does not reflect the characteristics of the person. The meaning may reflect the characteristics or behaviour of the first person or the great grandparent who bore the name. This is because children that are born are given names of their grandparents and the child takes the name minus the characteristics of the earlier bearer. This is used for identification and to preserve the family tree. In this case, we can now acknowledge the arbitrariness of names as alleged by William Shakespeare (Carroll, 1985:163). After thorough investigation we have found that many of the meanings of these names are found in the Kiswahili dictionary, *Kamusi Ya Kiswahili Sanifu,* TUKI, (1983). We were also able to get the meanings of some of the names from old men and women in the community who were respondents.

Originally, names in the Digo community were given in a specific system as per family or clan. Presently, they are given disregarding the system; especially the first name of a person is an Arab name and is regarded as an Islamic name. The surname, which is normally that of the grandparents, remains the one which identifies one as a Digo, and where he comes from in the Digoland as some names are found in specific areas in the Digoland. It was observed that affixes in the names identify one's sex. Prefixes are predominant e.g 'Me-', 'N-' (female) and 'Mwa-' (male). There are also morphemes which are attached at the beginning of names to show one's sex e.g 'Mwana-', 'Bint', (female).

It is recommended that steps be taken to maintain Digo names. This is because Arab/ Islam tradition has assimilated most of the Digo and their indigenous names are disappearing. Ultimately, they will totally disappear. At the moment, it is not a wonder to find a Digo having Arab/Islam names; his, father's and grandfather's, and still insists that they are Digo names e.g. Omar Abdalla Athuman! However, many people in the community still maintain Digo names as surnames as exhibited below:

Hamad Juma Boga
Issa Yussuf Mwamzandi
Hamisi Mtsumi.
Mwanarusi Suleiman Maganga
Ali Tsanua
Ali Chipera
Saidi Hamisi Mwaguni

This is encouraging, for they are preserving the Digo names and the culture, as a Kiswahili adage goes, "*Muacha mila ni mtumwa*" (One who disregards his culture is a slave).

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