

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

**INFLUENCES AND IMPLICATIONS OF ANTHROPONYMS: THE CASE OF
SUURYEE AMONG THE DAGARA OF NORTHERN GHANA**

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project work is the result of my own research which I carried out at the Ghana Institute of Journalism, Accra. I have duly cited all references. I further declare that I have not presented this work (either in part or in whole) anywhere for the award of any degree or certificate.

I accept single-handedly and whole-heartedly, responsibility for any possible lapses that may be found in this work.



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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the memory of my late father, Mr. Albano Tuor, and my mother, Mrs. Monica Yaghr. Tuor. You remain an inspiration and a pillar in my life respectively.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the socio-cultural importance of personal names among the Dagara of Ghana. Specifically, it strove to discover the extent to which *Suuryee*, a category of Dagara anthroponyms, influence behaviour and can function as a medium of communication for development. This is an important subject because although some studies have discussed *names* in general in Ghana (see Bemile 1991, 2015; Agyekum 2006), very few studies have focused specifically on the possible influences and implications of names, particularly *Suuryee* on the Dagara of Ghana.

The study is guided by three theories: Jahoda's (1954) Self-fulfilling Prophecy Theory, which establishes an intrinsic link between names and behaviour; the Participatory theory of communication, a two-way process that advocates communication from the socio-cultural perspective of the beneficiary group; and Roodney's (2009) model of development, which argues that development emanates from both the mindset and behavioural patterns. In terms of methodology, the study adopts a qualitative research approach that used an in-depth interview of sampled population of the people of the research area.

The study discovered that there is a range of socio-cultural underpinnings of *Suuryee* and several motivations for these names; that there is a strong influence of *Suuryee* on their bearers; and that *Suuryee* have implications for communication and development. The study also discovered that many *Suuryee* convey a high degree of rancour and resentment even as they connote positive behavioural implications. This props up *Suuryee* as interesting phenomena that could be underpinned by deep socio-cultural concerns, the full scope of which this study did not cover. The study, therefore, suggests that researchers should delve more into *Suuryee* and other categories of Dagara anthroponyms as well as personal names of other ethnic groups in Ghana, to provide further insight into possible benefits or otherwise of such names.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

It will be difficult to imagine a world or a society without a naming system (nomenclature). This is because people and things (items, events, processes, activities, etc.) have to be identified for purposes of communication and socialisation, among others. Speech communities do this by giving them (people and things) names, a term (or tag) used generally for the identification of a thing or a category of things. For life to be meaningful, people must communicate in their daily endeavours, and this is only possible through the use of nomenclature. In other words, names are a necessary component for messages to be sent out and for feedback to be returned and be received. Names are necessary for businesses to operate and for laws to be applied. In short, names are necessary for society to be able to function.

It is on account of the above that names are a cherished and common phenomenon in every community and society. Bean (1980:305) states categorically that “in every society, people and places have proper names” and explains subsequently that all speech communities use proper names to distinguish entities in geographical, temporal and social space (Op. Cit: 309). By “proper name” in the field of onomastics and within the context of nomenclature is meant the name of a specific entity, which could be a thing or a human being. A proper name specifically given to a human being as a unique distinction for identification is referred to as a personal name, technically known as an anthroponym.

This work sets out to look at the possibility of communicating development through the category of Dagara anthroponyms called *Suuryee* (or *Potɛrvyee*). *Suuryee* (*Suuryuor* for singular), which constitute the scope of this study, are indigenous personal names among the Dagara which are motivated by experiences, desires and aspirations in life. They are the freewill type of names given with serious emotional attachments. By definition, they are first names and intrinsically cannot be given by oneself since they are given at birth. This study is also an attempt to draw attention to or re-emphasise the indispensable role of names in human existence. In this wise, it will be important to dig into the overriding motivations for *Suuryee*. The study will also seek to establish if it is really the case (as has been the general belief among the Dagara) that *Suuryee* do influence the behaviour of the name-givers, name-hearers and name-bearers. If this is found to be the case, an attempt will be made to find out the extent to which such influences correlate with the desirability (connotation) of the name. Finally (and most importantly), the study will concern itself with whether or not *Suuryee* have implications for communication and development.

There are a number of scenarios when it comes to name-bearing among the Dagara: a person can bear only *Suuryee* (his personal *Suuryee/Suuryuor* and the family *Suuryuor*). He could also bear these *Suuryee* in addition to any other type of name (such as a Christian name, an automatic name or a hypocoristic name). And it is important to note that every traditional Dagara has, at least, a *Suuryuor* unique to him/her. In other words, I am yet to come across a truly indigenous Dagara who does not have a *Suuryuor*.

Personal names anywhere appear to have significance beyond merely serving as a tag for identification. Harold (1959) stresses that the significance of names is emphasised by elaborate

rituals that almost always have serious religious meaning. For this author, if baptism is a sacrament of initiation into the church, naming ceremonies in preliterate (and indeed, present-day) societies is a rite of initiation into the society, the act of naming being a bestowal of a soul on the one who receives the name.

Personal names give the bearer an identity and a sense of uniqueness. Harold (1959) cites Charles L.H (1951) as intimating that a name is seen as a symbolic contract between the society and the individual; by this contract, the individual becomes a part of the history of the society, accepts implicitly membership of this society and agrees to follow its rules and customs. A personal name is essentially a confirmation of the individual's existence and society's responsibility toward the child. It is a differentiation of the individual with needs and feelings, deserving of specific attention and treatment. The individual finds in a personal name, an identity and a place within the society.

Some personal names are simply prophetic as espoused by Somé (2013). At the age of twelve years, Steve Jobs of Apple computers fame got a job with Hewlett Packard in a serendipitous manner, in that, he had merely gone there to get spare parts for a hobby project. And as it turned out, his electronic company later became a huge employer, fulfilling his name Jobs. In a Ghanaian village (Bapula in the Upper West Region), a certain *Kpeng-baar* ("Power/Ability Finish" i.e Terminator") was said to have characteristically poisoned a lot of people all his life leading to their death. By contrast, there lived this typically traditional man called *Bergyire* (Watch in Awe/Marvelous). He was a real gem of an artiste of all time, still remains the only man who could compose his own xylophone songs, display unbelievable originality in playing the xylophone

while, at the same time, singing the funeral dirge. It remains to be seen if the names were merely prophetic or that the respective bearers were simply acting out their names.

Smith (1967) refers to the fact that both Freud and Shakespeare recognised that the relationship between personal names and identity is so strong that a misrepresentation of a personal name amounts to a misrepresentation of the person, and a deliberate distortion of a person's name is seen as an insult. This is a position which Bean (1980:30) sums up thus:

A personal name, in many societies, is seen to be part of or identical with the soul, self, or personality of its bearer. They epitomise the essence of the (object) bearer and are considered attached to the self. This explains why among many speech communities... calling a person by his personal name (first name) is an expression of intimacy.

Among the Dagara, for example, anthroponyms include “clan names, first names, family names, automatic names, nicknames, ‘unisex’ names, sex-specific names, occupational names, and foreign names” (Bemile 1991:1-2). Clan names are important for a wealth of reasons: aside from giving more specificity in the identification, they create a much larger family, in that, for example, a *Kusiele* or *Sɔmda* in one community somewhere (even in another country) easily finds solace in his counterparts elsewhere. Clans are also used as joking partners thereby fostering a spirit of fraternity. For example, members of the patriclan *Bekvɔnɛ* are joking partners, with members of the *Bimbiile*, *Mɛtvɔlɛ* and *Kpanyaŋnɛ*. The patriclan system helps to cement the taboo or avoidance system, in that, members of the same patriclan (except in the case of the *Bekvɔnɛ* and *Bimbiile* who have subdivided themselves) cannot marry each other. In fact, sex in this case is considered incestuous.

Pɔtɛrvyee are an expression of the philosophy of life or the religious attitude of the parents or family (Bekye, 1991). Bemile (2015:1) sums up the significance of *Suuryee* as being a mechanism

for self-defence and social control, in that, people use them in “...defending, protecting or justifying their own actions, inactions, interests and integrity and those of their families and loved ones and pointing out and checking evil-doing, immorality and injustice with a view to effecting social control.” For MEDA (2015:7), *...la logique anthroponymique [des prénoms dagara] se fonde sur la méditation à l'égard de la mort, la dévotion à Dieu, la défiance de l'ennemi, le culte à la nature humaine et l'appréciation du quotidien dans sa généralité et sa spécificité.* To wit: the philosophical bases of Dagara anthroponyms are rooted in reflections on death, devotion to God, mistrust of the enemy, the worship of human nature and an appreciation of daily occurrences in their collective and individual understanding. *Suuryee* are a reflection of the parents' perspective of life on earth, riches and poverty, their illusions, frustrations and joys, etc. and help in resolving the daily problems and concerns of the name-givers. They are seen as a means of survival for the baby or a quest for his/her well-being and help in addressing the daily problems of other people (Op.Cit:11).

Beyond just giving names for identification and communication, personal names in general and especially in Africa, are said to be informed by reasons and for a range of purposes. Jawad (1986:80) insists that names “...express in the Arab community of Jordan as in many other communities, parents' wishes, expectations, likes or dislikes....Such names may become a model for the bearer to live up to.” He also states that names “reflect the cultural, psychological and social atmosphere of the namer” (*Ibid*) and by extension, the community of the name-giver. Indeed, names are said to be of enormous importance both to the people who receive names and to the societies that give them. Akinnaso (1980:276) is very emphatic that the practice of personal

naming in all cultures is related to identity concerns, except that such concerns differ from one individual and culture to another.

The contention that personal names serve as a model (that is, they are intended as a guide) to the name-bearer appears to feed into a strong belief among many communities (not least the Dagara) that names could have an influence on the beliefs, attitudes and ultimately the behaviour of the bearers. Deluzain (1996c), for example, establishes a strong connection between some personal names and the name-bearers and insists that such names can even have an influence on both the name-giver and name-hearer. Jahoda (1954) propounds his self-fulfilling prophecy theory which states that there is a relationship between names and behaviour. They both find support in Somé (2013:1) who writes: “In the Dagara, tradition you own your name up until the age of five. After the age of five, your name owns you”. This is a position worth examining scientifically beyond anecdotal rationalisation.

Going by the view of Somé (2013) as expressed above, the assumption, then, would be that names can be used for development if we communicate development through them. This is because by this assertion the author seems to suggest that our thinking processes, moods and attitudes, actions and inactions are heavily influenced and directly controlled by our *Suuryee* from the very day we begin a proper and conscious socialisation process which, for her, comes after the age of five.

Bemile (1991:15) elaborates on the uses of Dagara surnames which, by definition, are called *Suuryee*. According to him, these names “...can be used as a means of self-protection and of boosting of one’s image, as a sign of prestige, [and] as a commemoration of the famous deeds of

someone...” He contends further that they could also be honorific for the bearer and that they are often used to praise, criticise, mock or insult (and to check the behaviour of) certain members of the community who may live an exemplary life or violate social norms or some human ethics (Op. Cit:11). We see clearly here, a *Suuryee*-influence link being established and this has implications for communication and development among the Dagara. Consequently, this study will explore the possibility of using *Suuryee* to communicate development.

Indeed, aside these ‘traditional’ purposes ascribed to the giving of personal names, it is worth exploring if (and to what extent) these names and naming systems can be used for development in any sense of the concept. For example, the position taken by Jawad (1986) that personal names are intended as an ideal for the name-bearer (and name-giver and -hearer) to aspire to, clearly agrees with the assertion by Deluzain (1996c) that personal names can influence the behaviour of the bearers. The mindset and behavioural change are critical to development. Therefore, these two variables could either help or hurt development. So, if personal names can bring about a change in people’s behavioural patterns, then it presupposes that we could be enhancing or retarding development, depending on the types of messages that are communicated through them. In other words, once personal names can influence behaviour (which in itself is related to the mindset) and development emanates from both the mindset and behavioural patterns (Roodney, 2009), then it can be argued that personal names could be used by development communicators to communicate development.

Roodney (Op. Cit: 1) describes development as "...a many-sided process", a struggle to liberate man from sheer physical necessity which translates into transformation in structures, attitudes and institutions. As the World Development Report (World Bank 1991) puts it, development is about:

A better quality of life in the world's poor countries [which] calls for higher incomes – but it involves much more. It encompasses better education, higher standards of health and nutrition, less poverty, a cleaner environment, more quality of opportunities, greater individual freedom, and richer cultural life.

Development, therefore, includes the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty. It can be seen at the individual and societal levels, with man both as a thinker and a worker at the heart of it. "At the level of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being" (Roodney, Op. Cit., p.1). Sen (1999) stresses the freedom component of development by equating the two. In other words for him, freedom means development and vice versa. However, Roodney (Op. Cit) insists that the achievement of any of the aspects of development (listed above) can only find expression within the context of the state of the society as a whole. For him, development at the societal level necessarily includes an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships.

But at the heart of sustainable development lies communication. Development communication, otherwise called communication for development, encompasses understanding people, their beliefs and the social and cultural norms that shape their lives. It involves engaging communities and listening to its members as they identify problems, propose solutions and act upon them. It is a two-way process for shaping ideas and knowledge using a range of communication tools and

approaches that empower individuals and communities to take action to improve their lives (www.unicef.org/cbsc).

Based on the strong contention that personal names can influence behaviour (Deluzain, 1996c), it is expected that name-givers in general and the Dagara in particular should give names (*Suuryee* for the Dagara) that will help members of their communities to think and act in ways that can help in their development. For, as Freiberg and Herne (1985:220) put it: “There is no universal path to development. Each society must find its own strategy.”

Undoubtedly, names are an outgrowth of culture and it is curious to note that they can help shape a certain mindset (Harold, 1959). This is because some proponents of development see development as emanating from the mindset. People’s minds are shaped (at least partly) by the messages they receive. Curiously, a lot of literature (Brownstein, 2011; Bryner, 2010 and Siebert, 2015) points to the belief that personal names can have an effect or influence on the mindset and subsequent behaviour of the name-bearer and society at large. This being the case, then society needs to be conscious of the kinds of personal names that are given to people since personal names seem to be an effective channel of communication. It also means that if development messages are passed on through *Suuryee*, they could help form a certain mindset which could be development oriented. This could then help the people think and act in ways that would enhance their lives which essentially is what development is all about.

A number of objectives have been outlined earlier in this discussion and for these stated objectives to be achieved, the study used a qualitative method of inquiry involving face-to-face interviews

with fifteen (15) respondents. The respondents included name-bearers, name-givers (and any other person known to have information on a sample name), and people who superintended over naming. (The details are found in Chapter Three).

However, since names are very much a matter of cultural identity, it will be important to briefly discuss relevant aspects of the culture (such as the value of a child and, thus, the preparations for naming) and also the geography of the people called Dagara. Brief notes on the ethnic term for this ethnic group will also be made.

1.1 The Dagara as a People

According to Bemile (1991), The Dagara are a people having a common history and culture, living together in the North-Western part of Ghana, the South-Western part of Burkina Faso and in a North-Eastern enclave in La Côte D'Ivoire. They belong to a larger group known as Dagaaba, found in the Upper West Region of Ghana and who speak the different dialects of Dagaare.

Kuba and Lentz (2001:1) also provide authoritative geographical information on the location of the Dagara and some useful insights into some of their agricultural and economic activities:

Today, Dagara settlements can be found on both sides of the Black Volta River (Mouhoun), roughly between the 11°20' and 10° parallels. The international boundary between Ghana and Burkina Faso divides a Dagara-speaking population.... The region lies within the Sudanic vegetation belt of the West African savannah, where millet, sorghum, corn and yams are grown as the main staples. Migrant labour has been an important economic factor in the region from early colonial times up to the present day, with many Dagara working the gold mines and plantations of southern Ghana and the Ivory Coast.

The authors further give some useful historical and demographic information by asserting that:

In the last two hundred years, the Black Volta region has been the site of highly successful agricultural expansion by Dagara-speaking groups....Today, Dagara settlements can be found in an area of about 3,500 km² in southern Burkina Faso, where they represent the sixth largest language group. Roughly the same area is occupied by Dagara in Ghana, though they are clearly a minority group nationally (*Ibid*).

In Ghana, the traditional Dagara Language area includes Fielmuo and Gaaper to the north-east, Hamile to the north, Bichiinteng and Loriteng to the north-west, Dabagteng and Borchii to the west, Bakuwogr and Kambaa to the south-west, Vapuo and Tuopar to the south, Gyirgang and Kpare to the south-east, and Gberkuo and Bunkpal to the east. In the heart of these towns and villages are towns like Nandom, Piina and Ko. The people who speak Dagara are themselves called Dagara, otherwise known as “Eyaa”. Within the Dagara Language area are numerous Sissala villages and towns. (Please see map attached on the next page).

Ethnicity has always been emotive; as such, there has been considerable intellectual, political and linguistic controversy regarding the correct ethnic name for the Dagara (Kuba & Lentz, 2001). While British colonial administrators used the terms 'Dagarti' and 'Lobi', French district commissioners preferred the term 'Dagari', which are all still in use among the people. They are also referred to as “Lobr”. However, many, such as Bekye (1991) and Bemile (1991), are dismayed by such terms as LoDagaa and LoWiili (introduced by Jack Goody, the first known anthropologist to have done major ethnographies on the Dagara), on the grounds that not only are these names incorrect, but they are even pejorative. Suffice it, then, to say that 'Dagara' is the only correct unitary term for the ethnic group, the language and the geographical location of the people. Dagara, as a language, belongs to the Mabilia subgroup of the Niger-Congo languages of West Africa (Bodomo, 1989).

The Catholic faith which also introduced formal education played (and, indeed, continues to play) a significant role in the lives of the Dagara. For, as Kuba and Lentz (Op. Cit: 2) rightly observe: “Mass conversion to Catholicism from the 1930s and the subsequent integration of many Dagara into Western educational institutions produced a considerable number of intellectuals ...” They are found in virtually all areas of human endeavour – politics, education, banking and finance, academia, etc. In fact, it is as a result of the efforts of Dagara experts in Linguistics/Anthropology (such as Dr. S.K. Bemile and C.N. Somda) and History (for example the late Prof. B.G.Der) that the right terminology (Dagara) for the ethnic group, language and geographical location, as it also obtains in Burkina Faso, has come to be established. Before the advent of Christianity in Dagara the people typically practised the African Traditional Religion, communing with a Supreme Being through the ancestors (Sããkumne, and especially the Kpumε -- traditional saints) and seeking other favours from non-human spirits (spirits of the wild). This explains why (till date) converts to the new faith take on a Christian name as their first name but keep the family or a traditional name as a *Suuryuor*. Ancestors (especially the Kpumε) are also venerated in this religious practice. Today, there are Dagara communities and households that still cling onto this religion which is deeply ingrained in their culture.

Among the Dagara, just like in many other (African) societies, children hold a special place, especially as they can be seen as an ancestor incarnate. That is why the Dagara have apotropaic (that is reincarnate) names and partly the reason why some names are given for some desired effect. For example, a baby boy born after twins is automatically called Kɔg (a seat for the twins to sit on). This is because twins are perceived to be mysterious and capable of bringing both good fortune

and hardships to the family. A Dagara blogger in *A Trip Down Memory Lane* explains that for the average Dagara, “the human person is a configuration of the land, the animal, the spirit and the plant and we owe our lives to a preservation of the balance between us and these first beings...” (kwekudee-tripdownmemorylane.blogspot.com/.../dagaaba-dagartidagara...) This, for him, explains why the Dagara see spirituality in every creation and situation. So the life of the indigenous and traditional Dagara is seen as a paradigm for an intimate relationship with the natural world that both surrounds us and is within us.

Malidoma Somé, a Dagara traditional healer and a diviner recounts that in his village (Dano in Burkina Faso), everyone gets excited upon hearing that a woman is pregnant. They ask why this person is being sent to them at this time and what gifts this child has which the community needs. In the belief that there is a life-force behind the foetus, a special ritual is held to answer these questions (Somé, 1999). The human being (or a child) then, is not merely a simple biological entity in which a spirit resides, but rather a formation from a collection of entities, mysterious by definition. Sobonfu Somé, a foremost Dagara voice in African spirituality, gives a deeper insight into the Dagara idea of a child by her assertion that:

It is customary for pregnant women to go through a hearing ritual....to listen to the incoming baby; to find out who it is; why it is coming at this time; what its purpose is; what it likes or dislikes; and what the living can do to prepare space for this person. The child's name is then given based on that information (Somé, 2009:1).

Among the Dagara then, a child has a special place for a number of reasons: He/she could be an ancestor incarnate; he/she could be bringing much-needed blessing or some dreaded ill luck to the family; and if for nothing at all, he/she will add to the numerical strength of the family which in itself is a source of joy. That is why it is important to initiate him/her into the community by taking

him/her through an appropriate naming ritual. As can be seen in Somé's (2009:2) exegesis (on a ritual), " the purpose of ritual is to connect us to our own essence, to help us tune into our collective spirit, or to help us mend whatever is broken,...Ritual is to the soul what food is to the body." The naming ceremony is done when the child is seven days old (Bemile, 2015).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The fact that naming is a common or even a necessary practice in all societies is not in doubt. In other words the giving of proper and personal names is a defining characteristic of all speech communities because it is an absolute necessity. Naming is done within a cultural context and is related to identity concerns. Names are very largely philosophical and ideological, in that, they reflect a certain mindset of the people and their understanding and perception of their world. Deluzain (1996b) refers to Harold (1959) as establishing that in 'primitive' society, the customs and taboos of the people gave the people a mindset that required of them to keep their names secret from strangers. Writing on the naming system of the Ewe people (a well-known ethnic group that is indigenous to a number of West African countries), Egblewogbe (1977: i) maintains that the practice is greatly influenced by various life situations and that names are a reflection of the most significant events in the lives of the people. To a large extent, personal names are informed by the prevailing social conditions in the child's family at the time that he/she is born and the types of virtues the parents want the child to aspire to (Akinaso, 1980:275). It appears, then that personal names are given for a variety of reasons, purposes and for a range of other motivations.

Though there is some reasonable amount of literature on personal names in general, not much has been written on Dagara nomenclature. There is even less literature on the category of Dagara

names called *Suuryee* (the focus of this study) which relates to the theory or contention generally among the Dagara that *Suuryee* can or do influence people's behaviour. And so far, there seems not to be any documented information that links *Suuryee* to development. The problem for investigation, therefore, is to explore the general motivations for *Suuryee*, find out whether or not they influence people and establish whether or not they can be used effectively to communicate development. The focus will specifically be on *Suuryee* 'that prick' (Salifu 2008). These are *Suuryee* that arouse curiosity and appear to induce a certain feeling or an action of a sort.

1.3 Research Questions

This study intends to examine the possibility of communicating development through the Dagara anthroponyms called *Suuryee*. As a result, the work will seek answers to the following questions:

- i. What are the general motivations and purposes for *Suuryee*?
- ii. To what extent do *Suuryee* influence the behaviour of the name-givers, name-hearers and name-bearers? And (to the extent that this is established) do such influences correlate with the desirability (connotation) of the name?
- iii. Do *Suuryee* have implications for communication and development?

1.4 Significance of the Study

As stated above, not much has been written on Dagara nomenclature, let alone *Suuryee*, which it is believed, influence people's behaviour. And so far, there seems not to be any documented information that links *Suuryee* to communication and development.

Therefore, it is hoped that this work will contribute to the literature available on personal names – it will add to the existing body of literature on names and especially give a new twist to that literature by directly linking names to development. By looking at the angle of development, this study will also contribute to the all-important and growing field of development communication. This could help address the poverty levels among the Dagara and their neighbours (and the experience possibly replicated elsewhere) by helping them to moderate the messages they communicate through *Suuryee*, and think and act in ways that can enhance their living standards.

1.5 Organisation of the Study

This work is organised into five chapters, each with subsections. Chapter One comprises the Introduction which is an overview of the topic and a brief exposé on the Dagara as an ethnic group. It also contains a Background, a statement of the Problem, the Objectives (general and specific) of the study as well as the research instrument. The Significance of the Study has also been discussed. Obviously, the study has a Scope and this is briefly outlined. The chapter ends on the way the work is organised. Chapter Two dwells on the Literature Review/Theoretical Framework. The Self-fulfilling Prophecy theory, the Participatory Theory of Communication, Roodney's (2009) idea that development emanates from people's mindset and calls for attitudinal and institutional transformations, and the 'Local Strategy' theory (advocated by Freiberg & Herne, 1985) have been used. Chapter Three discusses the Research Methodology (design, sampling technique, etc) and target group (population and sample) used in the study. In Chapter Four, we have a presentation and analysis, and discussion of the data (primary findings). Chapter Five summarises the import of the study, draws conclusions based on the findings and makes some recommendations for future research in the area.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will focus mainly on some studies on the importance and uses of personal names as they relate to the concerns of this study. It will also discuss the theoretical framework, both in terms of communication and development, which underpins this study. The Self-fulfilling Prophecy theory propounded by Jahoda (1954) and later supported by other scholars such as Somé (2009, 2013) and Bemile (2015) constitutes the main Theoretical Framework for this study. The main communication theory to work with is the Participatory theory of communication which advocates that beneficiaries of a communication for development project should be helped to initiate, manage and sustain the project. As regards development theory, the study leans on the stance taken by Roodney (2009) that development emanates from both the mindset and behavioural patterns and calls for a transformation of attitudes and institutions. The study further leans on the 'Local Strategy' idea of development as advocated by Freiberg and Herne (1985) that there is no single or universal path to development and as such, each society must find its own strategy for development.

2.1 Literature Review

This aspect takes a critical look at relevant documented research works on naming systems, types of personal names and the importance of personal names in general. The importance of personal names will be discussed in relation to identity, personality and behaviour where there is the contention and belief that personal names can and do influence behaviour.

2.1.1 Considerations for Personal Names

It is believed that personal names are given to people based on certain considerations (especially in the African context). According to Bemile (1991:5), for example, personal names are given:

- i. as a desire to express one's cultural values;
- ii. to portray one's skepticism of one's fellow human beings/certain institutions;
- iii. to communicate contempt inherent in one's heart;
- iv. to reject or acclaim affluence of which others boast, and
- v. to threaten people who fall out of the acceptable line of behaviour.

Indeed, Bemile (2015) insists that *Suuryee* serve as a social control mechanism as they remind, warn or restrain people. Deluzain (1996a) refers to a Puritan preacher as telling his congregation that a good name is a thread tied around the finger of a person to make them mindful of the errand they came into the world to do for their Master. He draws attention to coincidence between a person's name and the way they behave which gives the impression that names somehow have an influence over the people who bear them. He then cites researches from psychologists to support his conclusion that "coincidences involving names do have rather serious effects on the psychological health of some people" (Op.cit:5).

Such a conclusion arrived at could weigh heavily on development since in our contemporary world all manner of human activity (politics, trade and finance, etc) is geared towards globalisation, which is all about development. For example, naming people and streets after great achievers for the name-bearers and name-hearers to aspire to such great feats, readily comes to mind. Also, if a possible link is established between *Suuryee*, communication and development, this could have far-reaching implications for some development and modernisation theories. For,

it is a fact that some of these theories prescribe a universal model of development, often to the exclusion of other possibilities and without due consideration for the local conditions in the different societies.

2.1.2 Naming Systems

The act of giving names to people is a common practice in all speech communities. Kuukure (1985:13) rightly observes that a naming system among societies is a custom and a right and that these customary practices are an integral part of the people's life. As a result, it will be pointless to "... argue or even try to convince these groups that they should change their rights, customs and manners unless these are in evident contradiction of religion and morality." Jawad (1986:80) supports this assertion in stating that the main purpose of naming is to provide a symbolic system of identification and that it is usually "...historically constructed, socially maintained, and based on shared assumptions of members of a particular community".

Deluzain (1996a), just like Bean (1980), insists that in every society, names and naming systems exist and so personal names are a part of every culture. This is consistent with Harold (1959) even though this author points out that there is both universality and difference in how names are given. Deluzain (Op. Cit) cites Myron Brender (1948) as appropriately intimating that family tradition is an important factor in the names given to children: Sometimes, traditional names express the hope that a rich relative will remember the namesake generously in a will. In the view of Harold (1959), among preliterate peoples, for example, personal names are determined according to very definite and specific rules. He contends that in a culture where there is a keen sense of ancestry, children generally get their names from the totems and family trees of their parents. Totems (which could

be objects, plants or animals) designate a metaphysical or spiritual relationship with a person or group of people such as a family or clan and often serve as a reminder of the group's ancestry. Indeed, they are believed to be guardians of the lives of both the individual and group members and are said to connect the members to Mother Nature or a Supreme Being. In Dagara oral tradition, for example, totems are often animals that are said to have saved an ancestor or his family/clan member from a danger or an undesirable situation and whose species members of that family or clan owe it a duty to protect. This, perhaps, explains why *Suuryee* are also derived from taboos, and through divination (magic and incantations) and a desire to ward off evil spirits (Somé, 2013). Thus, desire and belief are two key motivations for giving personal names among some communities. Personal names are also given to mark important milestones and based on events during the pregnancy of the mother or shortly after birth. Some of such events are the death of an influential member of the family or a death immediately preceding the birth of the baby, or a historical event (MEDA, 2015:11). This is a view supported by Akinnaso (1980:80) in his assertion that in African societies the giving of a personal name depends on the prevailing social conditions in the child's family at the time he/she is born and the type of virtues the parents want him/her to aspire to.

It seems, then, that the motivations (reasons and purposes) for giving names are almost unlimited. As Bemile (2015:2) puts it, "...there is hardly any limit to the name-giver's motives, idiosyncrasy and invention or concoctionability. Consequently, we have a complex array of native names with different origins and categories and the most complex variety of uses, effects and goals."

Somé (2013) portends that every Dagara is given a name that reflects his/her destiny or purpose because the Dagara believe that each person is born with a destiny or purpose. Bemile (2015:6) reiterates this belief in asserting that before the name-giving ceremony of the baby which usually takes place on the seventh day, the head of a traditional Dagara family "...will have already sacrificed a fowl, goat or sheep to the ancestors and asked their opinion as to whether the new member of the family should be welcomed to the family and if it is a permanent member or not..." Indeed, Somé (2009:1) gives an elaborate view in stating that it "...is customary for a pregnant woman to go through a hearing ritual...to listen to the incoming baby, to find out who it is, why it is coming at this time, what is its purpose, what it likes or dislikes; and what the living can do to prepare a place for this person. The child's name is given based on that information". This type of name is typically a *Suuryuor*.

By this assertion, these two authors give the impression that the Dagara naming system (apparently typical of many African societies) is both highly spiritual and philosophical. Their stance seems to find support in Bekye (1991:144) asserting that "the personal names which Dagaaba bear constitute an enormous source for the study of the Dagaaba philosophy of life, and particularly their religious thinking." This view is also consistent with the assertion by Bemile (1991:1-2) that generally, the criteria for giving names are "...old age, wisdom, experience, recourse to the ancestors and to God." Naming, at least among the Dagara then, transcends just a physical activity. It appears to have serious spiritual and metaphysical connotations.

2.1.3 Types of Personal Names

It is important to discuss briefly the types of personal names among the Dagara since the focus of this study is on the Dagara anthroponyms called *Suuryee* and specifically the ones that ‘prick’ (see 1.2). Bemile (1991:1-2) talks about “clan names, first names, family names, automatic names, nick-names, ‘uni-sex’ names, sex-specific names, occupational names and foreign names” among the Dagara. Bekye (1991) simply puts all of these into two broad groups: Stereotyped (also called Custom or Circumstantial) names and freely chosen names (appropriately known as *Suuryee* or *Putieruyee*). He sees stereotyped names as being characteristically imposed by custom in well determined and precise circumstances and subdivides them into five: names connected with Birth (such as twins or same sex babies born in succession), infant mortality (reincarnate names), initiation (notably the *Bagr* – a socio-religious rite), place of birth (in the bush or a different village), and anatomical and colour (hypocoristic) names.

He claims that *Putieruyee*, which are in the majority, are largely theophoric in nature. This claim is contentious because *Kũũ* (Death) features very prominently in *Suuryee* throughout Dagara. Names that taunt the enemy also abound. Theophoric names are names that connote a Supreme Being or God. Among the Dagara, they often contain the affix ‘*ηmun*’ (or ‘*mwin*’ – old spelling) as in *ηmnbelle* (God is watching) or *Ããbang-ηmun* (who knows God?). The bearer is expected to be guided in his/her behaviour since the name apparently keeps reminding him/her that he/she is constantly at the feet of a supreme being who must be obeyed.

Some *Suuryee/Putieruyee* are seen to be taboo names (they should not be given to people) because of the belief that names can have an effect, influence or an impact on the bearer and society (Somé,

2009). This issue of influence is the focus of this study. Examples of such names include *Tuokyɛ* (Only suffering is left), *Wadeküü* (Come for death), *Ääkyier* (Who will be spared?), and *ŋmeyhang* (Curse). It appears that such names are given out of despair, desperation or a resignation to fate. However, the history behind them and their real meanings could suggest otherwise.

In Dagara, clan names which are automatic by definition, fall into two categories: patrilineal (*Yiilu*) and matrilineal (*Bɛlv*), (Kuukure, 1981). It is also important to observe that among the Dagara in Burkina Faso, matrilineal names (*Bɛlv*), are automatic surnames for all members and descendants of a family. This explains why one finds, for example, *Méda*, *Somda*, *Dabiré*, *Hien*, *Somé*, etc as common surnames (Bekye 1991). Members of a clan see themselves as a family and easily support one another as such.

To a very large extent, automatic names are default names. For example, among the Dagara a baby boy born on a funeral day is automatically called *Beyuo* (and *Ayuo* if it is a baby girl) and it means a replacement – that is, the baby has come to replace the lost soul and as such, the name is supposed to influence (or at least remind) him/her to stay on earth and either complete or continue with the work of the departed soul; a baby of either sex born after twins is called *Kɔg* (seat for the twins to sit on) and this is a responsibility. Similarly, a certain behaviour is expected of bearers of twin names (*Ziɛm* for the baby that comes out first from the womb and *Naab* for the one that follows, said to be the elder of the two). Another category is reincarnate names such as *Kpantol* (Knoll) (MEDA, 2015) given to incarnate babies irrespective of sex. These are undesirable names meant to shame the ‘troublesome’ child and induce him/her to stay (Odotei, 1989, Bemile 2015). As we will later get to know, Jahoda (1954) is convinced about the strong belief among the

Ashantis (of the Gold Coast) that the day of the week on which a person is born has a lot to do with the character traits and behaviour the person will show throughout life. Automatic names of the categories discussed above then qualify to be called *Suuryee* in terms of the expectations.

Hypocoristic names (Bemile, 1991) or anatomical names (Bekye, 1991) are nicknames that refer to a physical defect of the bearer such as being an albino (*Gbaŋ*) or having a hydro cell (*Deblan*). Another is *Pɔgnyuo* (Woman with an abnormally big navel). They are not always necessarily derogatory as they are said to be used sometimes in familiar, friendly or intimate situations. That is why they are also called pet names and are reflective of small, close-knit communities (McClure, 2013). In a way, they can induce a certain type of behaviour in the bearer.

Occupational names (which appear to be more common in the Western world), are names that designate the trade or profession that a person practises. Among the Dagara, a popular pito (sorghum beer) brewer, for example, may be referred to as *Pɔgdãã* ('woman-pito'/the pito woman). Such a woman would pull heaven and earth to make her drink attractive because of the accolade.

2.1.4 Names, Personality and Behaviour

Over the years and among many communities, there has always been the belief or feeling that somehow, names have an influence over the people who bear them, and by extension, the community at large. Brownstein (2011:1) recalls that the idea that our names are intertwined with our destiny dates back to the book of Genesis when Abram saw his name changed to Abraham which means 'father of multitudes' in Hebrew (Genesis 17:5, Revised Standard Version). This is a position Deluzain (1996b) strongly takes, insisting that Puritan ancestors certainly believed this. As a result, they chose names like Flie-fornication, Steadfast-on-high, and Obedience for their

children in the hope that the children would learn from their names and grow up to be perfect examples of virtue. The author intimates that even in contemporary times, the idea that names can affect the way people behave and how they feel about themselves still lingers on and has even caught the attention of researchers. He reiterates that psychologists and others who study human behaviour have explored the feeling that names influence their bearers, and have discovered some remarkable psychological aspects of names. He gives the example of a certain Tonsillitis Jackson who was later in his life hospitalised for tonsillitis. Another was about one Dinkey Bent who later had his penis bent downwards because of some childhood activities. For him, when such case histories are supplemented with evidence from the numerous experiments in psychology which are more objective and scientific, these naturalistic observations help explain the important effect names can have on the psychological development of individuals, the most important of which is the aspect called self-concept. Even if such discoveries merely talk about feelings, the concept is still worth exploring since human beings behave according to the way they feel.

Siebert (2015:1) warns parents, based on research findings, to beware of the names they give to their children because “baby names have a lasting effect on our behaviour throughout our lives – and influence everything from where we live to what career paths we choose.” In fact, a key research finding she came up with is that the names that babies are given at birth can actually have even more long-term effects on their lives than they may think – from their choice of profession to where they end up in the world. This conclusion is predicated on what she terms ‘implicit egotism’. That is, as people write their names over and over again throughout their lives, the act can lead to a certain kind of obsession with the letters and sounds of their names. This is also known as the name-letter effect which pointed to two interesting revelations: First, the quality of

work of a person who worked with a group of people he/she shared the same initials with rose very high. Second, the name-letter effect (or mere exposure effect) can also influence how people name their businesses and even their babies. This, according to her, explains why there are more Georges in Georgia, more Louises in St. Louis, more Philips in Philadelphia and more Virginias in Virginia. She also perused the U.S. courts judge directory and realised that similar to their own names, there are more Denis/Denises and Denas in the dentistry profession, while more Lawrences, Lawrencias, Lauras and Laurens are found to be lawyers. This is a position that is strongly supported by Brownstein (2011) who states that recent researches in social psychology have connected people's names to decisions they make in whom to marry, what street to live on and what job or profession they take up. This is called Normative Determinism.

It is curious to observe that in Ghana, the name 'Peter' has been more dominant among the Catholic bishops, while it is common knowledge that Johns have ruled Ghana (as elected presidents) in succession since 1992. In recent times, Usain Bolt and Scott Speed have taken the world of athletics by storm. It is not clear if these examples are a sheer coincidence or they point to an effect, of a sort, of the names.

The position of Siebert (2005) on names and behaviour is a confirmation of an earlier view taken by Bryner (2010). She states (Op. Cit: 1) that a growing body of research had suggested that "a name can have a profound impact on a child that reverberates well into adulthood." The author quotes one David Figlio (of North-Western University in Illinois) as saying that: "people's names might influence how they think about themselves and the way in which people might think about them." She gives further insights into Figlio's findings which also showed that where a baby boy

was donned with a girly sounding name such as Cameryn and Shannon, such a boy later tended to have serious behavioural (specifically disciplinary) problems in life, especially from grade six in school. He also found out in a study in 2005 that girls with less feminine names are more likely to choose mathematics and science courses, and that parents who give their children uncommon names because they want their kids to be unique and stand out, will most likely have parenting styles that emphasise uniqueness and standing out. In fact, Barette (2011:1) reports in her research that “teachers have admitted to having unintentional name biases upon first seeing their classroom rosters” which has led to unconscious stereotyping with respect to the children’s academic performance or behaviour. It also came to light that children with unique names such as Tigerlily, Bronx and Apple are more narcissistic than children with more traditional names. This position also corresponds with findings by Bertsche (2015). She analysed the behaviour of 58,000 students in a research from “School Stickers” in 2014 and found that girls named Amy, Georgia and Emma are most likely to be the best behaved. The same holds sway for boys named Jacob, Daniel and Thomas. Conversely, the most likely worst behaved girls are those named Ella, Bethany and Elleanor with their boys counterparts being Joseph, Cameron and William. Of course, this is not to say that the research has proved incontrovertibly that the name-behaviour link is intrinsic.

Deluzain (1996b) also argues that a person's name has an impact on the process of building self-concept because the name (and its degree of desirability) helps determine the types of messages other people send the child. He cites researches by David, Curt and Jeff which established that in the various cultures, certain names are generally desirable and have positive feelings associated with them while others (research by Agatha, Edgar and Francis) are looked upon as undesirable and carry negative associations. He believes that, for example, joking, teasing and ridiculing a

child based on his/her name can, at best, make children self-conscious about their names and reluctant to have any contact with other children out of fear of being ridiculed. At worst, such verbal behaviour can undermine what might otherwise be healthy personalities. The author further reveals that in light of the important link between names and self-concept, investigators have found relationships between names and the tendency toward mental illness such as psychosis and neurosis. His position finds support in Jean Twenge's (San Diego State University) assertion that where people dislike their name and also if other people think it is an odd and unlikeable name, the name-bearers tend not to be well adjusted.

It is clear that many of the studies on personal names are in the fields of religion (Bekye, 1991), philosophy (MEDA, 2015) and sociolinguistics (Akinaso, 1980; Bean, 1980; Badejo, 1986; Bemile, 1991; 2015). By far, the majority are in the field of psychology (Deluzain 1996a, 1996b, 1996c; Siebert 2005; Barette 2011, Bertsche 2015). The view of these psychologists (and psychiatrists), in particular, seems to be that a person's behaviour is a function of his/her self-concept. In other words, personal names (and for that matter *Suuryee*) can have a huge influence on self-concept (Somé, 2009; 2013). Even if this were a mere belief, it would still be worth pursuing. This is because, belief constitutes a body of knowledge and has always been a reality of human existence: People believe in history because they have been told; in many societies, no one questions if the woman said to be their mother is, indeed, the one; in many African societies, the Ancestors are said to be dead but living, and are believed to have a strong influence on the family (Bekye, 1991), and seen to be of phenomenal support, for which reason they are consulted regularly (Malidoma, 1999). It is, therefore, not misplaced to explore even a mere belief that names can have an influence, effect or impact on behaviour. People's behaviours determine very

much their direction and level of development. Given the intrinsic link between names, self-concept and behaviour, it may be argued that the messages the Dagara communicate through *Suuryee* could, in effect, go a long way to influence their development.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The main theory which underpins this study is the Self-fulfilling Prophecy Theory propounded by Jahoda (1954). This theory states that there is a relationship between names and behaviour and maintains that personal names shape the character traits that a person later develops in life. It is a position which finds support in Somé's (2013) insistence that *Suuryee* own their bearers at a certain stage in life and her conviction that there is a strong connection (influence) between *Suuryee* and their bearers. This theory sees the name-influence as a process whereby members of a society set up a situation (by their behaviour upon hearing a name) which forces a given name-bearer to behave the way they think that such bearers are supposed to behave. In effect, the theory states that personal names have an effect on self-concept and character development, a position later supported by Anderson (1979) and corroborated by Deluzain (1996c).

It is an appropriate theory to adopt in this study because the objective of this study is to explore the reality (or otherwise) of *Suuryee* influencing behaviour which may lead to the conclusion that they could be used as a medium to communicate development. This is because, the mindset and behavioural patterns are important determinants of development.

Development is about desirable changes in society and development theory is about how such changes are best achieved. The development theory which informs this work is the theory by

Roodney (2009) that development which is "...a many-sided process", emanates from both the mind and behavioural patterns, and translates into transformation in attitudes, among others. It is participatory in nature and takes a direct opposite view of the Dominant Paradigm which is seen as a top-down approach to development which alienates the people who should be the focus of development. The Participatory Paradigm argues that development should be people-oriented (Schumacher, 1973). It is, therefore, in line with the Participatory theory of communication in which we find new and more direct ways by which people get involved in public life and decision-making – marking a shift from representative democracy to what is called participatory democracy.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the fact that naming is a cultural practice, common in all speech communities and that there are different types of names. A personal name is seen to be identical with the soul, self or personality of the bearer and it is given out of certain desires and beliefs. In the Western World, the concepts of 'implicit egotism' and 'normative determinism' both establish the fact that personal names influence people in different departments of life and at varying levels. Among the Dagara, *Suuryee* are believed to be largely spiritual and are tied to a destiny or purpose. Hence, they shape self-concept and thereby influence both the bearer and society at large. This has implications on the way they (*Suuryee* bearers and members of the society) behave on a daily basis which also has a bearing on the level and direction of their development.

The next chapter discusses details of the methodology that was used to collect the data for subsequent analysis and discussion.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

Chapter One of this study has presented an overview of the research focusing on background issues such as general information on personal names, the Dagara as a people and stating the overall objective of the study which is to find out whether *Suuryee* can influence their bearers and to what extent such names could be used effectively to communicate development. Chapter Two has reviewed some relevant literature in the area of study and also states the theoretical framework on which this work hinges. This current chapter discusses the methodology used to collect the data in a bid to achieve the stated objectives of the study. It outlines the broad principles and philosophical orientation guiding this research, the procedures and techniques used for the data collection, the target population, the sample size and how the data is coded, among others. It also gives a brief account of some ethical issues and challenges that needed to be addressed, and how this was done.

3.1 Research Design

The philosophical orientation underpinning the collection and analysis of data in this study is qualitative. A qualitative research is subjective and interpretative and used where a study focuses, for example, on people's feelings, what they think and why they make certain choices. Bryman (2001:1) contends that the purpose in qualitative research is to have an insight into people's attitudes, beliefs, motivations, perspectives, feelings and behaviours and what lies at the core of their lives so as to explore a problem. The qualitative method is deemed appropriate for this inquiry since the study seeks to investigate the implications of personal names in the Dagara socio-cultural context from the perspective of respondents.

3.2 Population and Sampling

Since the basic aim of this research is to discover the opinions, beliefs, attitudes and feelings of the Dagara regarding *Suuryee* so as to explore the possible influence of these names and the implications for development, the people in the research area constituted the primary population. Population, according to Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen and Wadsworth (2010), consists of all the possible cases (or subjects – be they persons, objects or events) that constitute a known whole which a researcher wants to study. We may talk of a target population (as defined above) or an accessible population; the members or segment that is accessible to the researcher either due to the time and resources at the disposal of the researcher, or the geographical location of some segments of the target population. The target population for this study includes all *Suuryee* (*Putieruyee*) within the Dagara language area (please see map attached in Chapter One). The respondents were selected from the accessible population.

The respondents were either the name-bearers, name-givers or people who superintended over naming ceremonies. They were selected based on their ability (knowledge and willingness) and their availability and accessibility. It is common knowledge that many Dagara take interest in knowing the meaning and history of the *Suuryee* they bear. This explains why I found it useful to use name-bearers as respondents.

Sampling is the process of selecting a group of subjects (from a population) for a study in such a way that the individuals represent the larger group (population) from which they were selected (Gray, 1987). A sample, then, is a portion of a population for a study. Sampling is necessary because the population of interest is usually too large or too scattered geographically to study

directly. The sample used for this study was drawn from the population of all *Suuryee* within the Dagara language area, some of whom reside in Accra and Kumasi. The respondents in Accra and Kumasi come from different parts of Dagara such as Tapumu, Guo, Dodometeng, Ketuo, Domagyee and Bikiyiteng.

Two sampling methods were used in this study. These are purposive sampling and stratified sampling. They were employed to select *Suuryee* 'that prick' (Salifu 2008). They include *Suuryee* that would be relevant for the objectives of this study.

I purposively selected two people who superintended over naming ceremonies. Both of them are married and have children. I also purposively listed forty *Suuryee* from the target population. This method of sampling was used because, as stated earlier, the focus of the study is on *Suuryee* that 'prick', for what they are. All the respondents are married and have children. So, they all qualify both as name-bearers and name-givers. A stratified sampling method was then used as follows: The listed *Suuryee* were arranged in alphabetical order and every third picked. This gave me a total of thirteen *Suuryee* in addition to the two that I picked, whose bearers superintended over name-giving. The minimum age among them is 43 and the maximum is 60. Ten of them are below 50 while three are below 60. They have different levels of education, the least being the Middle School Leaving Certificate (MSLC) and the highest, a first degree. Indeed, only two of them hold the MSLC and three have a Higher National Diploma certificate from the Polytechnic. All others obtained a first degree with one of them currently pursuing a second degree. The fact that I listed so many *Suuryee* could also easily help circumvent a situation where a sampled name-bearer did not have the relevant information on his/her name or was not available to be interviewed.

Table 1 below shows a list of the respondents and their respective designations in this study.

TABLE 1: RESPONDENTS AND THEIR DESIGNATIONS

NAME OF RESPONDENT	DESIGNATION
Ääwaar	Name-bearer; Name-giver
Ääzuozumε	Name-bearer
Bumbie	Name-giver; Superintended over naming
Faabesogle	Name-bearer; Name-giver
Guolidomε	Name-bearer
Kyogrkure	Name-bearer; Name-giver
Nanjküü	Name-bearer; Name-giver
N-maahyen	Name-bearer; Name-giver
Ŋmunfaame	Name-bearer
Ŋmunkaar	Name-bearer
Steŋmun	Name-bearer; Name-giver, Superintended over naming
Tug-üü Dɔŋtɔv	Name-bearer; Name-giver
Vuukaŋ	Name-bearer
Yeleduor	Name-bearer; Name-giver
Yuorküü	Name-bearer; Name-giver

3.2.1 Sample Size

Qualitative studies by their very nature are subjective, and so is the sample size in these types of studies. Sandelowski (1995) argues that the sample size in a qualitative study is a matter of judgement and experience in evaluating the quality of the information collected against the uses to which it will be put. Marshall (1996) seems to support this position in stating that the optimum sample size in a qualitative study depends on the parameters of the phenomenon under study. He further contends that in qualitative studies, the researcher must devote sufficient attention to analysing and reporting in-depth, rich content which calls for small sample sizes. Consequently, they recommend that single case studies should generally contain 15 to 30 interviews, citing studies on top Google performers' highest average impacts to buttress their position. This is because too many interviews can be counterproductive as they can lead to information overload.

A sample of fifteen (15) was used for this study, in line with the recommendations by the two authorities quoted above and is big enough to elicit the needed information to realise the objectives of this study. Also, the researcher is an insider: he grew up in the village (Dahile near Hamile) and developed tremendous interest in matters of tradition and culture. He is literate in his own language and uses it in the line of his work. This helped in his sampling and in his understanding of the issues being discussed.

3.3 Research Instrument and Data Collection

The research instrument (specific method) used to collect the data was a face-to-face interview, with the help of an Interview Guide which appears in Appendix A (Chapter 5). The questions were mostly open-ended. The face-to-face interview is also in line with the view of Picciano (2002) that

in a qualitative study the researcher relies heavily on extensive in-depth interviews which results in the collection of non-numerical data for analysis. He further argues that the researcher in a qualitative research sees, hears, possibly teaches and experiences activities in a natural environment. Indeed, this approach also offered me the opportunity to elicit more detailed information and seek clarifications from the respondent by asking follow-up questions.

3.3.1 Administration (Interviewing Process)

Respondents were interviewed at different times in August and September in Accra, Kumasi and Dahile. They were asked specific questions as they appear in the Interview Guide, with follow-up questions as and when needful. In almost all the cases, the interview was conducted within an exclusive environment where there was no (or very little) distraction. This enabled both the researcher and the respondent to focus on the issues at stake without interruptions. It especially gave the researcher the opportunity to have absolute control over the interviewing process. This approach also helped in my easily getting answers to potentially embarrassing questions such as exact age and educational level of the respondent.

In the case of the respondents who superintended over naming ceremonies, I exclusively used Dagara during the interviews. However, each of the other respondents chose to use either English or Dagara to express himself/herself effectively. A good number of them code-switched between the two languages for maximum effect. . In all scenarios, I did the recording in English, writing out technical terms or difficult concepts in Dagara (and putting loose translations by them) to be rendered more appropriately after the interviews. Given the researcher's appreciable background in languages, language issues and translation skills, and his high literacy level in Dagara, he was

able to render well such concepts (in Dagara) into English bearing in mind that ‘text-based’ translation is the best form of translation.

I used long hand (that is manual recording) during the interviewing process and so had to spend a considerable amount of time taking down every detail. I had set out to audio-record the interviews to be transcribed later. However, some of the respondents did not want to be recorded. I also took a cue from an earlier experience I had had which gave me a strong impression that I could have serious difficulties eliciting information from some respondents if I did not carry out their wishes: While I was still thinking of which names to select, I did an informal kind of pretesting by casually asking a few potential respondents on *Suuryee* “that prick” (Salifu. 2008). To my utter surprise, a school mate with whom I had till then had a very close relationship, was very reluctant to tell me why his family changed their surname which they had used for so many years. He instead referred me to his elder brother, dropped the telephone on me and failed to answer any further calls that I made, including text messages. Such a reaction may be because people are generally very emotive and secretive about their names. I took a cue from this and abandoned the idea of audio-recording the interviews since that could have been an incentive for some respondents to either decline the interview or withhold important information.

3.4 Data handling and Analytical Framework

After every interview session, I made a photocopy of the recordings and kept the two documents at separate places to minimise any possible risk of losing the information. I also quickly made time to type the information on my laptop (and copied it onto a flash drive), and this also helped in my recall of whatever was said during the interview. The manuscript, a photocopy (of the manuscript)

and a printout (of the typed manuscript) are available. In most cases, I did some reverse translation to be sure that the ideas and concepts were well captured. The texts were then given to a colleague with requisite translation skills and linguistic competence in both Dagara and English to validate.

3.4.1 Coding.

The information I gathered pointed to an almost unlimited range of motivations for *Suuryee*. These motivations point to identity concerns, desires and aspirations, belief systems, commemoration of milestones, a deep sense of rancour and a strong taunting and defiance of the enemy, and an appreciation of daily realities. Some of the wishes and desires emanate from the belief that the *Suuryee* engender certain behavioural patterns in the bearers and members of the Dagara community at large. The influence could be either positive or negative. Discussion was, therefore, done along the lines of these themes and the direction of the influences and the details presented in a tabular form. This helped in the analyses and interpretation of the data (see Tables 2 and 3 in Chapter Four).

3.5 Ethical Considerations and other challenges

Ethical issues are central to any research; as such, I was very mindful of such issues throughout the data collection process. Some of these issues include mistrust and lies, influence of respondents (coercion or inducement) or representation of the researcher as a respondent in the course of the research. Others are the confidentiality and anonymity of both the respondents and the information they offer. I specifically told the respondents that both their names and the information they would give would appear in the study. Fortunately, I got the informed consent of all of them and they perfectly understood and accepted my copious explanation that the study was essentially an

academic exercise and that it would be useful in many ways to the Dagara people and the academic world. In fact, they expressed their happiness to be part of such a study. The fact that I used only manual recording may have made them more convinced about my objective for the study and therefore supported it whole-heartedly. This is because people (especially the rural folks) are often more apprehensive that a recording of their voices and faces could easily be used for dubious purposes. Also, for some of the respondents, I was not a total stranger to them since we had previously interacted in one way or the other.

3.5.1 Challenges of the Data Collection Exercise

I was aware that I could possibly miss some vital information being given by the respondent because of the exclusive use of manual recording. I also observed that some respondents (especially the ones with low or no formal education) sometimes jumbled up responses, sounded inconsistent, incoherent, unintelligible or contradictory. To minimise (and possibly eliminate) the effects of this and possible loss of vital information from the respondent, I often asked for clarification or repeat of information in the course of the interview or I recapped the information to his/her hearing. Some were in the form of flashbacks. In the case of the bilingual respondents, I tried recapping what he/she said in the alternative language for him to confirm (or otherwise) what he/she had said in the other language. Naturally, this made the interviews last for quite long periods. However, these are respondents who voluntarily agreed to devote the time at their own convenience. I, therefore, did not have complaints. I also called up any person that the respondent recommended because of that person's competence in terms of giving the relevant information on the sample name.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter set out to use an appropriate research methodology to collect data that would help achieve the objectives of the study. Thus, I have discussed the broad principles and philosophical orientation guiding this research, the procedures and techniques used for the data collection, the target population and the sample size, among others. The chapter has also touched briefly on any ethical issues and other challenges that needed to be addressed, and how this was actually done. The necessary steps were taken which led to the collection of the relevant data for the intended purpose. This data will be presented and analysed in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the methodology that was used in collecting the data. In this chapter, I intend to present and analyse the data collected to help address the problem statement, assess to what extent the findings address the research questions of this study and make some relevant observations.

It can be observed from the data that *Suuryee* give an insight into the socio-cultural world of the Dagara. The insights relate to their history, religious beliefs and practices, belief in mystical powers and evil spirits; human nature and the concept of Death or Kūū (very dominant) which also implies the celebration of life (as seen in the special place accorded a child, and the sacredness of human life).

4.1 Some Socio-cultural Insights from Suuryee

The name Bēkyeŋmaa (“they- should-cut-it-off” -- let them evict the house owners and take over their house) gives a historical account of how the Bumbie family has today settled in different parts of Dagara. Setting off from South Africa, Mr. Bēkyeŋmaa made stops at different places here in Ghana such as Tokuu and Tom where successive generations of the family dispersed to Pataal, Konyugan and, later, Tapumu.

Vuukan, one of the sampled names, is said to have returned with mystical powers after disappearing from home (around age 25) for close to five years. Later, he named one of his sons *Steyir* (the house of a witch/wizard) because having returned with such extraordinary powers, he was seen to be a *Siε* (wizard).

Another *Suuryuor* --*Kyogrkorε* (continue the killings) -- came about because there were too many (and unusual) deaths in the village. Elders of the family used metaphysical means to ascertain that evil people within the community were riding on the back of the numerous deaths to kill their enemies through the use of mystical powers. All these echo the Dagara belief in mystical powers and evil spirits. Indeed, members of one of the clans, the *Kpielle* are believed to have the power and ability both to conjure and stop rains. And a privileged group of members of the Dagara society are said to be able to invoke thunder and lightning on any one who falls out of the accepted norms of behaviour and yet remains adamant in admitting it.

But these mystical powers and spirits are only a pointer to the Dagara strong conviction about a Supreme Being (known in Christian circles as God). This Being is seen to be the controller of everything, including their lives and who should be looked up to at all times. This conviction is seen in a number of our respondents such as *Ŋmunfaame* (God-save-me/ it is God who saved me), *Stεŋmun* (*Siε be ι Naanmun* -- The wizard or witch is not God) and *Ŋmunkaar* (God is watching). *Ŋmunkaar*, for example, is a name arising out of both the name-giver's affirmation of her belief in God and an expression of resentment towards the Enemy. *Zelenon* who stayed in Accra with her husband from the late 1970's went home (to the village) in 1980 and stayed for three months. Not

long after her return, there were signs that she was pregnant. Rumours were rife that she must have been impregnated by a (different) man other than her own husband. Thank God she gave birth without a hitch (since there is the belief that she would have suffered a serious mishap during the delivery if she had cheated on her husband because of the use of the cowrie as part of the bride price). The name (Ŋmunkaar) also seeks to send out a strong message that if there was something related to the pregnancy that she was hiding, a day would come when God would expose her. In short, she had nothing to hide.

Death features prominently in Dagara anthroponymy and as Mr. Yuorküü, one of the respondents puts it: “The fact that so many *Suuryee* connote death shows that we either fear death or recognise its important role in guiding us in the way we should behave.” (Note: This quote and all subsequent ones from my respondents are from personal communication drawn between August 1 and September 30, 2015).

Questions as to the real nature and purpose of Death are a daily preoccupation. For example, is Death a saviour or a foe? Death is certainly both omniscient and omnipotent, but is it an implacable fair judge? Is Death indulgent or intolerant? (MEDA, 2015:7). Such questions constitute a basis for the Dagara to give *Suuryee* that connote Death. Examples of *Suuryee* which make allusion to Death are Kūütɔme (Death is victorious over me), Yuorküü (Death as a result of the search for recognition/good name), Kūügbeε (Legs/Paths of Death), Āãbaŋküü (Who understands Death?), Kūūnaa-ale (If only Death could wait), Wadeküü (Come for Death), Kūüyhaŋsɔ (Death has rendered me a witch/wizard), Kūūsaaleɛsɔ (Death is sharpening a knife), etc.

Name-giving among the Dagara also revolves around human nature. In this case, the names almost always taunt or defy the Enemy. Mr. Putiervbome Bumbiɛ, one of the respondents who also superintended over name-giving, is a man of two religious worlds: Now a Catholic, he had successfully undergone the *Bagr* (the most important traditional religious initiation rite among the Dagara). As a respondent, he doubles as a name-giver and one who superintended over the giving of names. According to him, *Deblv* or *Faŋ* (the pride/joy and absolute freewill to express one's feelings or philosophy) constitutes the basis for giving *Suuryee* (*Pvteriyyee*). He personally gave three *Suuryee* (*Guolidɔmɛ* -Feed and bring up your enemies, *Ãã-i-nir* –Who is a better human being? and *Ããzuozvɛ* - Who is above insults?) to three of his children to express resentment and rancour at human nature and defiance of the Enemy. Other examples of *Suuryuee* which taunt the enemy are *Bɛsɛgni* (Not worthy), *Naazɛɛ* (Should have been begging around) and *Dɔmɛkyaaɛ* (Let the Enemy shout with joy). A *Suuryuor*, then, is often a reflection of the name-giver's philosophy of life and his/her experiences of his/her world. Virtually all the sampled names attest to this.

Naming among the Dagara is not the preserve of any one person though priority is given to the grandparents (especially the head of the family or grandfather) of the child. Mr. Kyogrkvɛ, one of the respondents, shares this view in stating that: “Grandparents, fathers, mothers and any responsible elderly person within the family (or even the neighbourhood) can give a *Suuryuor* to a child.”

Nyɔpɔg, N-maaliyeŋ's paternal grandmother (of the *Kvɛmɔgldɔmɔ*'s family in Zimuopar), gave him the name in support of his mother's (*Ããlɛɛ*) desperate search for a baby girl after giving birth to the third successive boy. The name (N-maaliyeŋ) means “Where/To what oracle should I go to

get my wish for a baby girl fulfilled?” Also, Ms Faabesogle (Bad deeds never go unnoticed), another female respondent, gave the theophoric name *Ŋmunfaame* to a baby girl she gave birth to after the death of her husband. According to her (Ms Faabesogle): “When I was pregnant, my husband died leaving me in serious psychological trauma and in need of many material things.” And to add insult to injury, the late Peter Cardinal Poreküü Dery (one time Catholic Bishop of the Wa Diocese and later Archbishop of the Tamale Archdiocese who was known for his spiritual powers) prophesied to her that she would have to undergo a caesarean section to get her baby. As she puts it:

When he told me this I was scared to the marrow and this heightened my agony. Surprisingly, however, the operation was smoothly done in just an hour and everything was successful. I could not believe it.

To her, then, it was the Lord who saved her, hence she gave the *Suuryuor Ŋmunfaame* (it is God who saved me) to her daughter. Also, Mr. Potierbome Bumbie made it clear that it was Zelenon (his wife) who named her son *Ŋmunkaar*. Again, Mr. Potierbome Bumbie clearly states that: “A name-giver could draw inspiration from a historical event, say, floods or famine such as the severe one which happened in Dagara in 1944 to give the name”.

Bemile (2015:22) cites such other events as drought, colonialism, forced labour or servitude and concludes that the *Suuryuor* is given both to stand against such events and to perpetuate their memory. According to Mr. *Ããwaar* (Who Cometh?) his name draws its source from the slave raid (called *Bɔŋ* in Dagara) carried out by Babatu and Samori (in the late 18th and early 19th centuries). Mr. Joseph *Ããwaar* relates that his great grandfather, *Gyɔder* fled the fighting and settled at his current location. He further explains that Mr. *Gyɔder* gave the name *Ããwaar* (Who dare come here

to my house?) to his next son as if to say that he was then free from the raid, but most importantly to boast that no slave raider would dare come to his house.

The data also points to the fact that one event or experience could give rise to a multiplicity of *Suuryee*: as already noted above, one of the respondents, Mr. Pɔtɛrɔbɔmɛ Bɔmbɛ said he gave *Suuryee* to three of his children, all arising from one experience that he had and a perpetuation of that experience and recounts as follows:

Throughout my life, I have been very generous because I have fed, helped and mentored a lot of people around me. A case in point is a friend who fell afoul of the law in 1972 as a domestic cook in Obuasi and was handed over to the Police. In the end, he lost his job. I got this friend out of the trouble, resettled him in Accra and helped him get a job. Sadly, some of these people, including this friend, grew up hating me and turned out to be my enemies.

He, therefore, gave the name Guolidɔmɛ to underscore the fact that he had unknowingly taken care of his enemies. He adds that years down the line, he realised that there were still myriads of these ingrates around him and: “To emphasise the rancour still simmering in me, I named my next child *Ãã-t-nɪr* (*Ãã-t-nɪr gaɲ mɛ?* -- Who is a better human being than me, Patrick Bɔmbɛ?)”.

Yet things seemed not to have abated in any way and so he apparently throws in the towel by naming his third child (and rather sarcastically) *Ããzuozɔmɛ*. He justifies the name this way:

I thought that since I was doing everything humanly possible to please people and yet this was not appreciated (as people keep criticising), then I (and indeed anybody) am not above being insulted or despised.

Suuryee, like common nouns, are both varied and unlimited, especially as the traditional Dagara believes in having many children: One often hears the expression *Nɪbɛ nɪ a nãã* (Having many children/people translates to riches); and indeed, the desire for many children is one of the reasons

for which polygyny is still both a persistent and widespread practice within the traditional Dagara society. The data also points to the present-day common knowledge that among the Dagara, there is usually the tendency for men to look forward to having baby boys, and women having baby girls. This is supported by respondents N-maalyeŋ (N-maalnyun) and Siɛŋmun (Witch-/Wizard-God - The witch/wizard is not mightier than God). Mr. Yagr (who gave the name Siɛŋmun) had given birth to three baby girls in succession who were all alive. From then on, the next three births of his wife were boys, but they each died a few years after birth. With the arrival of the missionaries, he converted to Catholicism. At his next attempt, his wife gave birth to another baby boy. He boasted that: “Siɛ be ɪ Naaŋmun’ɛ” (Siɛ -- witch/wizard -- is not God) and named the child Siɛŋmun. Ultimately, he believed that the power of God would prevail and the boy would not die. Indeed, the boy lived to give birth to Mr. Philidios Siɛŋmun. Then came another boy whom he named ŋmunsɔr (God’s Way/Path) who also survived before a girl came. His earlier belief in giving the name was that it was Siɛ who was killing (and eating) his baby boys.

The respective desires for the sex of the babies are probably due to the fact that roles (chores) are cut out for the two sexes. But more importantly for the men, their preference is for reasons of perpetuating the family tree and for immortalising the family name (*Suuryuor*) since the girls lose the family name upon marriage. However, it is clear from the data that it is generally the motivation (experience or philosophy), not the sex of the child that determines the *Suuryuor*.

4.2 Suuryee as a Mark of Identification

Respondents expressed varied views on the significance of *Suuryee*, but are unanimous on the fact that they are obviously a tag for identification. For Mr. Pɔtɛrɔbome Bumbɛ for example:

A *Suuryuor* enables a bearer to identify where he/she comes from (if he/she finds himself/herself outside his/her locality) and ultimately his/her *Yiilu* which can facilitate in his/her getting help in times of need.

This explains the need to perpetuate one's (great-) grandfather's *Suuryuor* (that is, if it finds favour with people). He adds that: "A *Suuryuor* is also a unique identity and a sense of pride".

And as has been noted with the Bəkyeŋmaa example above, *Suuryee* have a historical background, especially on migration with its concomitant conquest, indigenisation, integration and splits of people. This is significant in explaining why some families with the same *Suuryuor* are scattered in different parts of Dagara.

Using his name as an example, Mr. Kyogrkvɛ, another respondent, insists that: "*Suuryee* serve as a way of recalling or remembering an event or experience since they often result from such events or experiences". In most cases, such an event/experience is an undesirable one and the *Suuryuor* serves as a warning. *Āāwaar*, for example, is in memory of the Slave Trade (*Bɔŋ*). Also, Mr. Kuurdɔŋ named his son Nanķū because his son died as a result of his inability to find money to take the sick son to the hospital.

Mr. Kyogrkvɛ sees one significance of *Suuryee* as a pointer to the *Yir/Yiilu* which one comes from or to which one belongs. He also sees *Suuryee* as a guide (a code of ethics) in our lives because as he puts it:

They serve as a constant reminder for people to gravitate either towards or away from something (say an intended action) depending on how desirable or undesirable that thing is."

For this reason, he advocates that: “We, the Dagara, should still keep to our naming systems (especially the factors that influence the giving of *Suuryee*), but avoid *Suuryee* that are undesirable”.

The view of Æãwaar is very succinct: “*Suuryee* help us know our history and culture and also perpetuate them.”

This is further elaborated on by another respondent, Mr. Yeleduor (Problems Climbing – that is, sufferer of many problems). He sums it up this way:

Suuryee give substance or add weight to our language and speech; they are like a riddle or puzzle for us to reflect on later to get the meaning and they also give us a lot of historical information and perpetuate our lineage.

This last point is exactly what another respondent, Mr. Yuorküü means when he says that: “*Suuryee* are useful in tracing families or family trees”. This is a position also buttressed by his colleague, Mr. Nanjküü. For the latter also, “Without names, we would all act like cowards yelling out to people: ‘Hei’ in a bit to get their attention.”

Mr. Siɛŋmun is emphatic that *Suuryee* do not just come out of the blue; instead:

They are a product of our belief in God (Supreme Being) and our culture. They have meaning and are useful for purposes of identification and in pointing to where people come from.

They serve as a guide to behaviour (what Bemile, 2015 refers to as a social control mechanism) and make us learn more about our history, culture and tradition, and preserve them.

Mr. Tug-üü Dɔŋtɔur (Dig-Burly-Enemy-Insult), Iɲmunfaame (it is God who saved me) and another respondent, Faabesɔgle (Bad deeds never go unnoticed) all expressed sentiments similar to the views of their colleagues discussed above on the importance of *Suuryee*.

4.3 Suuryee and Influence

All respondents shared the view that names can have influence (play a role) as to whether a bearer will be helped or hurt: In discussing clan names in Chapter Two, I established the fact that it is easy for one to get help from one's clan outside one's vicinity (a view echoed by Mr. Bombie above), and this could apply as well to the bearer of a given *Suuryuor* if there is a desirable history to that name. However, the converse could also be true. One respondent, Yuorküü cites an incident to buttress his conviction that a name can work to the disadvantage of the bearer: A young man called Omane (an Akan) had to flee from a police training depot because of his name. Apparently, the trainer had suffered under the bearer of that name whom the young man happened to be related to. As a result, he took his pound of flesh from the young man until *feverish birds could no longer tremble in silence before their keeper*. Indeed, Bemile (2015:27) intimates that one sometimes "...shivers and gets frightened or annoyed upon hearing certain names." He specifically cites the *Suuryuor* 'Denyuu' as a name that people shudder upon hearing because that is the name of a very wicked chief who collaborated with French colonialists in the then Haute Volta to brutally maltreat his own people. Descendants of such a man could suffer at the hands of others just because they bear that name. In this case, it will clearly be the name that is dictating how the descendants are being treated (since they did not personally visit such atrocities on anybody).

There was only one dissenting view when it came to the link between *Suuryee* and influence or behaviour. Mr. Yeleduor (who hails from Domagye) does not believe that this *Suuryuor* passed onto him has any effect (which should have been negative) on him. He puts it this way:

I concede that I am struggling in life, but I cannot attribute my struggles to my name. This is because I have seen people with very desirable names such as *Maalvola* (Good deed/Do

good) and even a theophoric name such as *Ŋminsɔr* (God's Path) and yet they are also struggling like me.

Therefore, for him, a name and a person's behaviour or status (level of suffering/enjoyment) in life are a sheer coincidence. What is more, the *Suuryuor*-influence debate is an issue about the mindset: he is convinced, for example, that if a person curses another, someone with the ability to harm others could exploit the curse to his advantage giving the impression that it is the curse that has worked. So are *Suuryee*. His conclusion, then, is that: "The central issue about *Suuryee* is the belief and *Suuryee* and behaviour are *yɔkyar* (pure coincidence)".

Incidentally, he shares this name with another family which is from Fielmuo, and not related in any way to his family. For purposes of validation, I "snowballed" and spoke to an elder and influential member of this family who stated categorically that no member of the family is reeling under the burden of this or any other *Suuryuor*. I term speaking to this elderly man as 'snowballing' because he was not one of the listed respondents. Indeed, he re-echoed exactly Mr. Yeleduor's stance on the name-influence debate without knowing that I had spoken to him. This position brings to mind the case of two families called *Tɛtaah* (Support one another) who come from different areas in Dagara. While members of one family exceptionally reach out to one another and other people, the other family looks so disintegrated even to the extent that two brothers do not talk to each other.

The stance of the two Yeleduors stands out as all other respondents cling vehemently onto the belief and even conviction (some cited instances as evidence) that names in general and *Suuryee* in particular can and do influence behaviour. For instance Mr. *Ããwaar* is very definitive on this stance: "*Suuryee* are words and I believe in the power (blessings or curses) of words." In his own

words: “Yee mi tũo na sig ti”. (To wit: Names – *Suuryee*- are able to affect us). He particularly believes in the power of *Nvoryheru* (Word-of-Mouth) and cites a practical case to support his conviction: As a little boy, he was tasked to guide his blind grandfather in his movements. This grandfather was so pleased with Mr. *Ããwaar*’s kindness to him especially buying him his much cherished tobacco that he pronounced words of blessing on him (Mr. *Ããwaar*). He concludes that: “To date, those words are still a blessing to me, seen in whatever I do.” However, he would not give further (and concrete) details to back his assertion.

Mr. *Ããwaar*’s philosophy on the effect of *Nvoryheru* seems to be supported by a real life event in the researcher’s village and which is common knowledge to many of the village dwellers: A man called Mr. Stephen *Dvora* (a native of my village) married a second wife contrary to the teachings of his Catholic faith. His first born (Dennis) was always at loggerheads with his step mother. But before Mr. *Dvora* died he warned Dennis not to ever be the cause of his step mother leaving her matrimonial home, else *a thorn would prick his eye*. In other words, he would suffer an undesirable fate. As fate would have it, however, the woman soon left as a result of bad blood between the two. One day, Dennis went out preparing mud to fix a building. A muscle of the mud flew straight into one of his eyes which consequently went bad till date. Ordinarily, when such mud enters a person’s eye, it is cleaned and life continues. This researcher has had a personal experience with the ‘antagonist’ of this story/event (Mr. Dennis *Dvora*).

Like Mr. *Ããwaar*, Mr. N-maalyeŋ elaborates his position with absolute conviction, but also with a lot of delight and pride. This *Suuryuor*, according to him, has been very beneficial to him. He insists that:

This name is an inspiration in that in times of trials and tribulations, I muster the courage to face them, for, after all, who else can solve my problems for me? It inspires me to persevere and keep exploring to uplift my life.

He believes strongly that generally, names influence our lives either for good or bad. His argument is that, his father had given him the name Tı-yā-ıre-tı (Our-Mind-Doing-Us – It is our mindset that brings us problems) as a result of which he put up a wayward behaviour (he was guilty of petit stealing, disobedience, disrespect, etc) as a child. He then adds:

My father noticed this and quickly changed my name to Tı-yā-maale-tı (Our-Mind-Blessing-Us – Our mindset is a blessing unto us). Consequent to the change in name, I also changed my behaviour effortlessly to one that pleases society.

Though he adds that the name change was accompanied by the performance of some traditional rites, he believes that those rites were only meant to mark the change in name and nothing else. In other words, it was the new name, not the rite, that changed his behaviour. His conviction seems to find support in the narration by another respondent, Mr. Sıeηmın. When Mr. Yagr named his baby boy Sıeηmın, he did not perform any rite, yet the boy survived because the father believed that he would.

However, it is still pertinent to ask whether Mr. N-maalyeη's desirable behaviour was precipitated by just the change in name or the traditional rites, or both, or it was just by pure coincidence. The same question may be asked in respect of Tug-üü Döηtöür (and Kūüsaaleεvö -Death is sharpening its knife again – a family from Dahile, which has the same story as Tug-üü Döηtöür – details discussed below). For, it is known within the culture that generally when a name is given to a child to induce him/her to stay, certain traditional rites are performed. In the case of incarnate children, a physical mark is made on the child.

In his strong belief in a real connection between names and behaviour, Mr. N-maaltyer recommends that we should give only desirable names to our children. For, he has observed that all the members of a certain family called Wononɔ (Be-Enjoying-Forever – Only enjoyment for life) has found life very comfortable especially as their head has been a diplomat. He contrasts that with the family of a man by name Ibnɔmun (What-Is-The-Do – What else can I do?). In his own words: “This man became so bereft of ideas that he could not solve his own problems, resigned to fate and drank himself to death”.

But he further buttresses his conviction by giving other examples: As a police officer who has worked extensively within the Akan community, he has observed that people bearing the name *Osei* always *muddy the waters*; bearers of *Agyeman* litigate a lot (and usually for land) unless they are from the royal family; those who bear *Ogyeabour* cause confusion wherever they go, but people who have the name *Safo* are always in search of prominence and recognition. He, therefore, believes that: “Names can challenge people to behave in a certain way, or work hard”.

He argues that he is not just drawing a naïve conclusion because the connotation of the name comes with certain expectations; hence, the behavioural pattern usually put up by the bearer.

Mr. Amatus Tug-ũ Dɔŋtɔr is another respondent who believes whole-heartedly in a direct link between *Suuryee* and effects, impact or influence, and that is based on the history of his *Suuryuor*. He recounts that his grandfather, Mr. Yeletore, had given birth to several children, but they each died at an early age. However, he never gave up. In Mr. Amatus Tug-ũ Dɔŋtɔr’s own words:

When my father was born, my grandfather (Mr. Yeletore) gave the name Tug-ũ Dɔŋtɔr to express his frustration that once again this child would soon die and he would have to

dig a grave and bury him, and which would be another opportunity for his enemies to insult him and jubilate.

The name was more or less a desperate appeal to the child (or rather the forces behind the deaths of the previous children to spare this one) to stay and much to his relief, this child did not die this time round. He grew up, married and gave birth to other children. And above all, such 'mysterious' and premature deaths within the family ceased. To the family, it was the name that influenced the child (and subsequent children) not to die and that is good grounds for asserting the influence of *Suuryee*. This is exactly the influence that reincarnate names, such as *Kpantol*, are supposed to have on the incarnate children.

Mr. Amatus Tug-üü Dɔŋtɔvɔr further justifies his belief in the influence of *Suuryee* by citing an exhortation that a Catholic priest (the late Rev. Fr. Martin Pelepele) once gave during a sermon. This is an argument that appeals to authority. 'Pelepele' means 'absolutely nothing' or 'empty-handed'. He warned his congregation to be wary of the *Suuryee* that they gave to their children. Obviously convinced about the influence of his *Suuryuor* on him (and family), Fr. Pelepele asked his congregation to compare him to other priests in terms of what material things they had. He cited the fact that he had been condemned to use a motorcycle for so many years while his many colleagues used cars, to underscore the depth of his poverty. And in his fight against this state of affairs which had persisted for many years, he sought and obtained a scholarship from the FIC Brothers, a Catholic religious congregation, to pursue a course in communication studies in Kenya. Unfortunately, he died there. Apparently, he should not have fought so radically to change the destiny which his name had bequeathed to him. It appears, then, that names are a destiny.

Mr Yuorküü interprets his name to mean that he should die for it. That is, he is being exhorted to follow the path of righteousness even at the peril of his life. Due to this conviction, he is largely guided by the name in the way he carries himself on a daily basis. As he puts it: “Look, names can strongly influence our behaviour.” He cites *Naawiekaj* (Will-One-Day-Help/Save-Somebody) to support his stance. *Naawiekaj* is the child of a blind mother from Goziir. He was very wicked and uncaring towards his mother, but very helpful to other people. Mr Yuorküü emphasises that: “He [*Naawiekaj*] has currently settled in the southern sector of the country where he is helping a lot of people, but has continued to neglect his mother”.

Mr Yuorküü observed that ‘Küü’ dominates in *Pvtervye* and thinks (in clear contradiction of the position taken by Bekye (1991), that theophoric names come next, followed by reincarnate names. These concepts give an insight into our socio-cultural and religious beliefs. Another respondent, Faabesogle, believes that the name was having an influence on her because she had observed that wherever she went people did not recognise or acknowledge whatever good she did. Similarly, her younger sister, Maabobra (I-Have-Called-For-It) was neglected by her husband though they stayed under one roof, and was struggling to take care of herself in everything. Conversely, she was convinced that theophoric names such as *Ŋminvɛl* (God is good) and *Ŋmunkpeŋ* (God’s power) particularly have tremendous benefits for the bearer. Faabesogle, therefore, recommended that we should give theophoric names and desist from taboo-names such as *Maasɛgnifaa* (I am worthy of ill luck/evil), *Maasɛgntuo* (I, am worthy of suffering), etc.

Mr. Kyogrkurε rather takes an astride position: He also sees *Suuryee* as a guide (a code of ethics) in our lives and believes that they do influence people either by design or coincidentally, but admits (like Mr. Bombε) that this is difficult to prove. However, he believes in the influence because: “One can sometimes observe that a person’s behaviour and the name dovetail, or he/she acts out his/her name”.

It is clear from this presentation and analysis that beneath the *Suuryuor* lies a pool of information about the socio-cultural world of the Dagara as a people and a strong conviction about its impact on the bearer and possibly other people.

4.4 Discussion of Data

Tables 2 and 3 (below) give concrete and specific details of the discussions in this chapter. While Table 2 shows the major concepts (with concrete figures) that our sample names boarder on, Table 3 delves into the link between *Suuryee* and influence and establishes the bases for the respective respondents’ stance.

TABLE 2: CONCEPTS WHICH ARE ENCAPSULATED IN SUURYEE

Concept	Supernatural (God/Ancestors/ Spirits)		Death		Enemy (Defence/Rancour/ Resentment)		Daily Realities (Human Nature/ Historical events)	
	Name	%	Name	%	Name	%	Name	%
	Bumbɛ	46.7	Kyogrkvɛ	33.3	Ããwaar	60	Ããwaar	60
	Kyogrkvɛ		Nanjküü		Ããzuovmɛ		Ããzuovmɛ	
	N-maalɣɛŋ		Yeleduor		Faabesɔŋlɛ		Faabesɔŋlɛ	
	Ŋmunfaamɛ		Yuorküü		Guolidɔmɛ		Kyogrkvɛ	
	Ŋmunkaar		Tug-ũũ Dɔŋtvɔr		Kyogrkvɛ		Nanjküü	
	Sɛŋmun				Nanjküü		N-maalɣɛŋ	
	Vüükaŋ				Tug-ũũ Dɔŋtvɔr		Yeleduor	
					Ŋmunkaar		Yuorküü	
					Sɛŋmun		Ŋmunkaar	

The history of each of the names in every column points to the name having an element of the corresponding concept. For example, the *Supernatural* is captured in the name N-maalɣɛŋ because an oracle was consulted before the name was given. Yeleduor was given because the eldest of the family had to relocate home to face the family problems because the head of the family had died, hence the concept of *Death*. So the concept may be seen in the surface form of the name (e.g

Naŋkūū - *kūū* designating Death), implied or imbedded in the name owing to the history behind the name.

We can also observe from the table that some *Suuryee* reflect more than one concept. For example, the same name (Naŋkūū) is given as a way of showing resentment, desperation and despair because the name-giver's brother refused to give him money that could have saved the life of his son. Kyogrkuε reflects (or came about because of) all four concepts: the Supernatural, Death, the Enemy and Daily Realities. The Enemy stands tall in the data since as many as 60% of the sample names reflect rancour, resentment or defiance of the Enemy. Though "Daily Realities" also scores the same percentage, it needs to be noted that two concepts (Human Nature and Historical Events) are subsumed under it. While Naŋkūū and Ŋmunkaar cut across three of the concepts, the majority of the sample names convey two of these concepts. These are Āāwaar, Āāzuozvme, Faabesogle, N-maaltyej, Yeleduor, Siεŋmin and Yuorkūū. Only two (Bumbε and Guolidome) have recourse to just one concept each – the Supernatural and the Enemy respectively. However, it needs to be pointed out that these observations may be as a result of the fact that the Purposive Sampling Method was used to pick these names.

In Table 3 respondents overwhelmingly establish a link between *Suuryee* and influence in behaviour, with one deviant case. That is, only one person (Mr. Yeleduor) opposed a *Suuryee*-influence relationship and his explanation or reason has already been discussed above. Those who insisted on a *Suuryee*-influence link were asked to provide evidence.

TABLE 3: NAMES AND INFLUENCE

RESPONSE				EVIDENCE			
Yes	%	No	%	Belief	%	Instances	%
Āāwaar	93.3	Yeleduor	6.7	Āāzuozume	64.28	Āāwaar	35.71
Āāzuozume				Bumbæ		N-maalyeŋ	
Bumbæ				Faabesogle		Siŋmin	
Faabesogle				Guolidome		Tug-ūū Dɔŋtuor	
Guolidome				Kyogrkuere		Yuorkūū	
Kyogrkuere				Nanjkūū			
Nanjkūū				Ŋminfaame			
N-maalyeŋ				Ŋmunkaar			
Ŋminfaame				Vuukaŋ			
Ŋmunkaar							
Siŋmin							
Tug-ūū Dɔŋtuor							
Vuukaŋ							
Yuorkūū							

Though an overwhelming majority (as many as 93.3%) of the respondents insisted that there is a correlation between *Suuryee* and behaviour (i.e *Suuryee* influence behaviour), a good number of them (64.28) base their assertion on a strong belief. A little over half of the same number, (constituting 35.71%) point to an instance or personal experience (see *Ããwaar* and *N-maaliyeŋ*). Clearly, then, their 'evidence' is in the form of either a (strong) belief or conviction (based on a personal experience or what they have seen). They also point to the issue of First Person's Priority (for example, it is philosophically, and even medically wrong to say that I do not have a headache when I insist that I have). What is important, then, is that they behave in ways that are consistent with those beliefs in or convictions about their *Suuryee* having an influence on them. Belief as a body of knowledge, and which philosophers and healers term Positive Thinking, is clearly at work here as it has often worked in tackling many issues in our society. It is also important to observe that out of the fifteen (15) respondents, only one (constituting 6.7%) held a contrary view.

4.4.1 General Motivations for Suuryee

The first research question of this study was about the general motivations (reasons, purposes, etc) for *Suuryee*. The data shows that the motivations are as many as they are varied and are informed by various concepts. Supernatural powers, Death, the Enemy and the daily realities of life feature prominently in the *Dagara* naming system. The *Dagara* hold the view that *Suuryee* serve a variety of purposes and at the heart of it is the strong belief and, indeed, the conviction that they influence the behaviour of not only their bearers, but their givers and hearers as well, which is a direct response to the second research question. The behaviour is essentially either positive or negative. Details of the influence (and its extent) are discussed below (see **4.4.2**).

Indeed there are some cultural underpinnings to *Suuryee* to warrant the belief in their influence: according to one of the respondents who superintended over name-giving, a crucial aspect in determining the *Suuryuor* to be given to a child (usually the first born) is the *kããtuo* rite which is meant to choose the appropriate *sıgra* for the child. *Kããtuo* (taboo shear butter – only a privileged few can use it) is shear butter that the mother or sister of a married woman brings when she (married woman) gives birth for the first time. Only the woman who has given birth and her mother can eat it, hence the name *kããtuo*. It comes with the couch for the baby and some prepared *dawadawa*, a local spice for seasoning soup or stew. Here, a special rite is performed by a privileged group called the *Bagr-nyogrbε* (Bagr graduates) to determine/match the *sıgra* of the child and ultimately the other children that may be born later. The *Sıgra* is a traditional guardian angel for the family. It is believed, for example, that before someone can harm an enemy, he/she must first know the enemy's *sıgra*. Also, when a married woman commits adultery, it is her *sıgra* that is appealed to for propitiation.

Another important cultural revelation from the data is the Dagara concept of death, the need for an appropriate farewell rite (funeral celebration) and their belief in life hereafter, among others. For example, *Vuukanη*, one of *Bekyeηmaa*'s children, disappeared from home (went into the bushes) probably from age 25 years, for close to five years. As his whereabouts were not known for a while, his funeral was celebrated. However, after a number of years he returned, looking very hairy all over his body and carrying gourds full of traditional medicines which depicted some healing and mystical powers. He was identified and a mock funeral performed for him. Thereafter, he was helped to scale over the wall of the courtyard after which he could then remove his clothing. He was later allowed to get married.

Beneath this narrative are other deep-seated cultural issues: In olden days, any time a Dagara 'got lost' from home for a minimum of three years, he/she was assumed to be dead and hence a funeral (which is a final farewell rite) was held for that person. In the event that a person whose funeral had been performed returned, a mock funeral was celebrated to 'undo' the funeral that was held and to 'restore' the person into the family. Again, scaling over the wall of the courtyard is an attempt to prevent any evil machinations (by spirits or other powers) from following the person into the room. In other words, such intrigues/spirits would follow the person into the room (and for life) if he/she were to go through the door into the room. And in like manner, anytime a person suspects that he/she has been hit by a *lobɛ* (metaphysical stone thrown often during a public gathering to cause harm), upon return to the house, he/she scales over the wall of the courtyard. He/she never passes through the main entrance to the house. The wall, then, is seen to have some medicinal value— both preventive and curative.

As has been established by Bemile (2015), *Suuryee* are intended as a social control mechanism, which means that they have an influence of a sort. Examples include *Ããbang-biou* (Who knows tomorrow?), *Ããsoteɲ* (Who owns the Earth/World?), *Numɲabɛka* (There is no righteous person), and *Kũũɹɛ* (Death is a stumbling block). Even honorific names, for example, which are terms of endearment, are meant not only to make people feel good, but also to propel them to live up to the billings of those names. Here, we can talk of *Yirpɛr* (Foundation of house – used metaphorically to mean the bearer should procreate without number), *Mɛyir* (build the house –metaphorically), *Gandaa* (to portray gallantry, bravery, courage or personal exploits) and *Goba* (an exceptionally talented artiste – xylophonist, master drummer or dirge singer).

From the data, the motivations for *Suuryee* are many and varied, given that the name-giver has the absolute freewill (*Faŋ*) at his/her disposal. These names are given out of pride and assertiveness (*Deblu*). The cultural factor in the giving of *Suuryee* is very strong; they are given out of identity concerns and to indicate where one comes from (with respect to locality and the *Yiilu*). For example, the history behind *Vuukaŋ* gives a whole genealogy of the *Bekyeŋaa*'s family. *Suuryee* are also given to commemorate and/or defy natural and historical events: *Ããwaar* was given because of the brutal Slave Trade visited on the people by the notorious slave raiders *Babatu* and *Samori*; *Naŋküü*'s father gave him the name due to the painful death of a cherished son, and especially as he believed that he could have saved the boy's life if he had had money. Also, *Guolidomɛ* was given as a result of the name-giver falling out with close pals.

The information on *Kyogrkvre*, *Yuorküü*, *Ŋmunkaar* and *Faabesɔgle* also shows that *Suuryee* are intended as a social control mechanism; they are supposed to serve as a warning, a guide or code of ethics for people (Bemile, 2015).

4.4.2 Suuryee and Extent of Influence on Behaviour

The views of respondents here provide answers to our second research question. There is unanimity among respondents that a person could be helped or harmed depending on his/her *Suuryuor*. We have established the *Yiilu* (Patriclan or Matriclan) as a strong factor in offering assistance to or receiving same from members. *Yuorküü* cites the example of *Omane* (the police recruit) probably because he spent much of his time in the southern sector of the country; *Tug-üü* *Dɔŋtuur* acclaims the overwhelming influence of reincarnate names, as is also the case with *Sɛŋmɪn*; *N-maaltyeŋ* attributes with conviction his respective opposing behavioural patterns to the

varying directions of desirability of his names. As is also the case with the Maabɔbra example (related by Faabesɔgle) and Faabesɔgle itself, the direction (negative or positive) of the name has a corresponding influence on behaviour – the appealing the *Suuryuor*, the desirable the behaviour and the unappealing the name, the undesirable the behaviour.

Surely, Mr. Yeleduor makes a strong case to refute any *Suuryee*-influence on behaviour and counts on mere coincidence. He cites instances of behaviours that are inversely proportional to the direction/desirability of the names and the idea that a person could exploit a curse on an enemy to harm that enemy and blame it on a *Suuryuor*. There is also not evidence that all bearers of undesirable *Suuryee* put up undesirable behaviours. However, his conclusion that the central issue about *Suuryee* is the belief dovetails what the rest of the respondents have espoused as the basis for insisting on a *Suuryee*-influence on behaviour – belief and conviction. That is, even if *Suuryee* do not necessarily influence behaviour, the belief that the influence exists motivates or actually induces people (at least the bearers) to behave in ways that correlate to the dictates of those *Suuryee*, and this has implications for both communication and development.

4.4.3 Implications of *Suuryee* for Communication and Development

The third research question boarded on whether *Suuryee* have implications for communication and development. The analysis suggests that *Suuryee* could have implications for communication and development. From the discussion of the data, we observe that the types of messages communicated through *Suuryee* elicit a type of behaviour. In this study, the emphasis and interest have been on *Suuryee* that *prick*, operationalised here to mean *Suuryee* that conjure or require a certain feeling and induce (the desire for) an action of a sort. In terms of the action its direction

(positive/progressive or negative/retrogressive) will have a bearing on development. In other cases, the 'action' may actually be an inaction (resignation to fate as in the case of Ibnūmīn).

4.4.3 Conclusion

The central issues in this chapter have revolved around the fact that there are many and different motivations or considerations for *Suuryee* and that they are essentially an issue of culture. There is a strong belief in the influence of *Suuryee* on the way members of the Dagara society, especially how the name-bearers behave. A *Suuryuor* with a negative connotation induces an undesirable behaviour or even an inertia, and vice versa. This state of affairs has implications for communication and development especially as serious and emotional messages are communicated through them. *Suuryee* with negative connotations will invoke a negative self-image and consequently a behaviour that will not promote development. In the same way, *Suuryee* with positive undertones could provoke a feeling of positive self-esteem and produce acts that could promote development.

These discoveries and (other) observations will be summarised and conclusions drawn in the next (and concluding) chapter. A number of suggestions and recommendations will also be made.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This study set out with the overall objective to find out whether or not *Suuryee* (also known as *Pvtervyee*) influence their bearers and the Dagara society at large, and if they can be used to communicate development. It hinged on the thesis: Communicating development through the category of Dagara anthroponyms called *Suuryee*. It is an important research area because naming system (nomenclature) is a defining characteristic of every speech community.

Chapter One gave a background to the work, recapped here as follows: Specific names given to people are called personal names. Personal names are not just a tag for identification; they are also a matter of identity and give useful information on the socio-cultural world view of the speech community. They are said to often come with a range of motivations which could include reasons or purposes such as commemorating a milestone or defying the enemy. They also often portray the people's beliefs, desires and aspirations.

The Dagara, an ethnic group astride northern-western Ghana, south-western Burkina Faso and north-eastern La Côte d'Ivoire, are one speech community among whom personal names play an important role in the lives of the people. I referred specifically to the category of personal names called *Suuryee* noted to be the freewill types of names that come with serious emotions and convey very critical and emotive messages. They can, therefore, be said to be an open diary that contains

deep insights into the mindset, desires and aspirations of the individual or family on one hand, and the history, philosophy, culture, tradition and the spirituality of the people on the other hand.

There has been the contention among the Dagara that *Suuryee* influence the behaviour of their bearers (and even the givers and hearers). This is a contention that could have implications for communication and development. Consequently, this study set out with a mission to investigate both the reality and extent of this influence and explore whether they can be used as a medium of communication for development. It also became necessary to dig into the general motivations for *Suuryee*, with particular attention on *Suuryee* 'that prick', for a broader understanding of issues surrounding these names.

Chapter Two discussed the theoretical framework that informs this study. The Self-fulfilling Prophecy Theory propounded by Jahoda (1954) constituted the main theoretical framework. The theory insists on the influence of personal names on their bearers. The Participatory theory of communication which takes the view that communication should encourage active participation of all stakeholders, stressing the socio-cultural factors of the target community, was used as the main communication theory. The study also leaned on Roodney's (2009) concept that development emanates from both the mindset and behavioural patterns and calls for a transformation of attitudes and institutions. It also drew inspiration from the position taken by Freiberg and Herne (1985) that there is no universal path to development and as such, each society must find its own strategy for development.

In Chapter Three, I discussed the philosophical orientation that guided the collection of the data. A qualitative method, specifically a face-to-face interview with the help of an interview guide, was used to gather data from the respondents. I used a qualitative method because the study deals with the belief systems, attitudes, moods, etc. of the people. Fifteen respondents were picked, in line with recommendations by experts in the field, using a combination of purposive and stratified sampling methods. The findings which turned out to be very intriguing, have been discussed in Chapter Four. It came out that many socio-cultural underpinnings and a wide range of motivations informed the giving of *Suuryee*. The data established a strong link between *Suuryee* and the behaviour of their bearers, even the givers and hearers; in short, the Dagara community. This constituted a basis to conclude that *Suuryee* have implications for communication and development. In this concluding chapter, we have a summary of the key issues and a conclusion based on the findings.

5.1 Summary and Conclusion

This section summarises the key issues and draws some conclusions emanating from the findings and the discussion done so far. The data showed that all *Suuryee* have meanings which translates into an importance such as teaching people lessons. They give an insight into the socio-cultural world of the Dagara. These socio-cultural concerns relate to their history (historical events), religious beliefs and practices (communing with a Supreme Being, mystical powers and spirits), human nature and daily realities (the environment); in short, cultural considerations or the dominant values of the community. A person could, for example, give the name Tangvɛl (Mountain is good) to a child in appreciation of a favour received from a spirit that dwells in a particular mountain.

There is a concrete revelation that *Suuryee* are meant to do a number of things summed up in the fact that they influence people. They are meant to ward off evil spirits (Somé, 2013). They also reflect the destiny of their bearer (*Ibid*), which appears to feed into the narrations on Bergyre, Steve Jobs, Scott Speed and Usain Bolt. They are again meant to help address the problems of other people and are a quest for the wellbeing of the child (MEDA, 2015). From the data, we observe that *Suuryee* determine how their bearers feel and how people feel about them. The type of *Suuryee/Suuryuor* also determines or informs parenting styles.

The data also showed that the concept of Death features prominently in Dagara anthroponymy (either from the history of the *Suuryuor* or *kũũ* being affixed to it). But Enmity (Bɛnɔn) and the Enemy (Dɔmɛ/ Dɔdɔmɛ) come up forcefully (see Table 2). That is, *Suuryee* ubiquitously depict enmity and portray a strong attempt to taunt or defy the Enemy (one respondent, Mr Pɔtɛrɔbome Bɔmbɛ demonstrates this by giving three of his children *Suuryee* that ridicule the enemy). The information further points to the fact that name-giving among the Dagara is not the preserve of any one person and that *Dɛblɔ* or *Faŋ* constitutes the basis for giving *Suuryee*. Also, a *Suuryuor* is often a reflection of the name-giver's philosophy of life and his/her experiences of his/her world. A name-giver could draw inspiration from a historical event such as death, flood, drought, famine, colonisation, forced labour or servitude to give the name. The *Suuryuor* is given either to stand against such events or in commemoration of the event or both (personal communication with a respondent, Mr Pɔtɛrɔbome Bɔmbɛ). One event or experience could give rise to a multiplicity of *Suuryee*. *Suuryee* are both varied and unlimited. There is usually the tendency for men to look forward to having baby boys, and women, baby girls. Worthy of note is the fact that the motivation

(reason, purpose, experience, desires, aspirations or philosophy), not the sex of the child, determines the *Suuryuor*.

5.2 Conclusion

At the core of these motivations is the belief that these names do influence the behaviour of their bearers, and other constituencies of the Dagara. More than 90% of the respondents insisted on a *Suuryee*-influence link, some citing personal experiences. For them, the direction of the influence corresponds with how positive or negative the name is. The passion with which responses were given in this regard gave a clear indication that for the average Dagara, a *Suuryuor* is not merely a tag for identification, but a reflection of his/her aspirations, desires and wishes, etc. and a medium to project his/her socio-cultural values as well as a cultural identity for the people. Above all, it is seen as a unique platform to elicit desired behavioural patterns from the child and the Dagara society at large because of the conviction that the *Suuryuor* will exude some influence on these people. This brings to the fore (and the need to reiterate) the assertion by a Dagara spiritualist and traditional healer, Somé (2013:1) that: “in the Dagara tradition you own your name up until the age of five. After the age of five, your name owns you. Your name is an energy; your name has a life force. It creates an umbrella under which you live.” For her, then, a person is totally and irrevocably under the influence of his/her *Suuryuor*, which means that influence could be negative or positive, but never neutral.

The argument is not that other factors such as genetics and socialisation (the environment) cannot or do not influence a person’s behaviour. The thrust is that *Suuryee* can and do influence people’s behavioural patterns. For, the study showed that people behave in a certain way because of their/a

name. In other words the study has established the conviction of the average Dagara about the influence of *Suuryee* on behaviour, especially when it comes to the name-bearers. It appears to be a cultural issue and in most cases, the conviction about the positive or negative effect of names translates into a corresponding action or inaction. Names can be a reason for a bearer to be helped or hurt (see the Denyuu example). This means that in one respect, a *Suuryuor* can influence how someone behaves towards another (See the Naawiekang example). In another respect, it can inspire a person to persevere and surmount difficulties (as in the case of Yuorküü and N-maalyeŋ), or dampen his/her spirit (see Ibnuŋmɪn). Therefore, the (level of) desirability of the name determines the (extent and) direction of the influence and the behaviour (positive or negative).

The significance of these findings reflects the fact that some Dagara change their *Suuryee* à la mode de Abraham in the Bible. Such a move must be for reasons other than mere aesthetics. As stated earlier, the *Äãpɛŋnɪvɔ* (Who Borrows/Lends Enjoyment?) family was once called *Ŋmɛyhaŋ* (Curse). Mr. Mɔgl (Patter/Be soft) formerly bore *Kyaakpɛr* (Still Stay – progressive), a name he used for well over forty years. These bearers may not reveal the exact cause(s) or reason(s) for the change, but it must have been done for good reasons (possibly for desirable effects). These convictions about the influences of *Suuryee* over people cut across the Dagara time and space: They have persisted for ages (and apparently will endure for eternity), and within the four corners of Dagara. Therefore, it may not be far-fetched to say that the *Suuryee*-influence link transcends sheer coincidence.

Unlike in the western world where there is indubitable evidence that people choose certain professions, life-long partners and where to dwell just because of a name, this study does not

establish definitively this concept of ‘Normative Determinism’. However, the study has ascertained that the *Suuryee*-influence relationship is real among the Dagara and that it reflects in their day-to-day activities.

Consequently, the Dagara communicate serious and important messages through *Suuryee*, which are seen as a self-defence and social control mechanism. These two variables are important elements of social capital which is a necessary ingredient for development. Communication, it has been established, often, if not always, has the aim of influencing behavioural changes in the destination or receiver. In our study, the destination is both the name-bearer and the name-hearer, even the name-giver. In effect, it is the Dagara society as a whole. People’s behaviours largely determine their direction and level of development. *Suuryee* convey cultural values and boarder on identity concerns; they carry serious emotional messages, last for generations and are transported by their bearers wherever they go. As a result, they can be used as an effective medium to communicate development.

The point has also been made that *Kũũ* (Death) proliferates in *Suuryee*. Another is Religion (or the belief in and worship of a Supreme Being or deities). The proliferation (of these two concepts) is due to the quest to use *Suuryee* as a social control mechanism and to encourage modesty or restraint in people’s way of life. For example, the concept of death, which characteristically is uncertain and sometimes cruel, evokes fear of the unknown, now and in the hereafter, and this should be a strong incentive for people to live morally upright and socially acceptable lives.

The prominence of *Bɛnɔn* and *Dɔmɛ/Dɔdɔmɛ* (which very often implies an element of *Nyuur* – Jealousy) in *Suuryee* has also been raised. Indeed, the two concepts (*Bɛnɔn* and *Dɔmɛ/ Dɔdɔmɛ*) are so pervasive among the Dagara that they also feature generously in messages coming from virtually all the Dagara traditional modes of communication: *Dalhara/Kvɔr* (Drum), *Gyil* (Xylophone), *Suolu* (Folktale) and *Layni* (Dirge). But the Dagara seem to recognise that by far, *Suuryee* are the most potent (effective) medium through which these concepts can be communicated. This is because, these other means of communication are only occasion-specific; for example, serious dirges are sung mostly during funerals, and the folktales (which seem to be dying out fast) are narrated only during moonlights. On the contrary *Suuryee* are called virtually all the time, they are perpetuated from one generation to the other and the bearers carry them from one place to the other, thus increasing their popularity, fame and impact.

I have also made the point that taunting the Enemy is not necessarily negative, retrogressive or anti-developmental. The underlying aim is to warn or ‘force’ the Enemy to mind his/her own business and give a free hand to the one who taunts to live his/her own life. For example, many a Dagara (especially those who bear *Suuryee* that tantalise or ridicule the enemy) often boast that their determination to succeed in life is partly attributable to their *Suuryuor/Suuryee*. For, in most cases, it is a determination not to fail in life so as not to give the Enemy the opportunity to rejoice and tease them. This is a clear instance of localizing strategies for development in line with Freiberg and Herne’s (1985) call for every society must find its own strategy for development.

Given the intrinsic link between names, self-concept and behaviour, and the favourable characteristics of *Suuryee* as enumerated above, it may be argued that the messages the Dagara

communicate through them could, in effect, go a long way to influence their development and that, indeed, *Suuryee* can be used as an effective medium of communication. The ultimate will be to change the mindset of their bearers and the totality of the way of life of the Dagara to exploit their environment to enhance their living standards.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

Although the research has largely achieved its objective, it cannot be without any limitations, which is normal in any such research. Some of the findings in this study could be as a result of the methodology used in gathering the data. I combined the purposive and stratified sampling methods which gave me a particular set of respondents' views representing the population. Perhaps, the views could have been different with a different sampling technique.

I have stressed the importance of the history behind a *Suuryuor* for its proper meaning and subsequent influence. All the primary data I collected was by word of mouth passed down from (great) grandfathers to grandchildren. However, it is common knowledge that messages passed down through the oral tradition method stand the risk of being distorted or even mutilated. For this reason, there is the possibility that some aspects of the historical information to some of the sample names could be inaccurate.

These limitations notwithstanding, the credibility of the findings are not in doubt: the sampling technique used is an appropriate sampling method and the combination of the two methods makes the findings even more credible. Moreover, a number of other steps were taken to ensure the validity of the results: I picked respondents from different locations of the population area, bearing

in mind their demographics and competence; I also sampled from three different categories of people who matter in the business of *Suuryee*. In addition, I called up any person who was recommended by the respondent for further details and also solicited the expertise of a competent colleague to validate my translations.

5.3 Suggestions and Recommendations for Further Research

One characteristic of *Suuryee* is their lexical economy; they do not necessarily always appear in their full linguistic forms but rather are very often expressed in terse language (because some could actually come in full and long sentences) but loaded with meaning. This gives room for ambiguity and deception as regard their meaning. It is therefore important for researchers into *Suuryee* to always get the full linguistic representation of (and possibly the history behind) a *Suuryuor* in order to understand its intended or proper meaning and this should also engage the attention of researchers in the field of *Suuryee*.

Given that *Suuryee* are a template or a basis for people to behave in a certain way (they have an influence on people), they can be used to communicate development. There is therefore the need to explore further ways in which this can be done to help in its actualization. For example, people can delve into more *Suuryee*, other categories of Dagara anthroponyms and personal names of other ethnic groups around to further explore the development angle.

Suuryee convey crucial messages for serious purposes and effects. And as the data has established, the desirability or otherwise of the *Suuryuor* determines the direction of the behaviour and the level of desirability or undesirability dictates the magnitude of the behaviour. More research can

explore the *Suuryee*-influence based on which there can be more advocacy for the Dagara to consciously and deliberately give *Suuryee* that are generally desirable and give a positive face.

Again, the data point to rancour, resentment and defiance of the Enemy featuring prominently in Dagara anthroponyms with a high propensity to become exponential. This distrust, mutual suspicion, petit jealousy and ill-feeling towards the other (Benon and *Nyuur*) can adversely affect social capital and social cohesion and, ultimately, development since development is a shared responsibility and a concerted effort. Indeed, Benon finds expression in other spheres of the Dagara life such as in folktales, traditional songs, xylophone messages and dirges (performed at funerals). These are areas worth researching into to help address the scourge of rancour. For, if rancour is reduced within the Dagara society, they people could give more desirable names which could help induce a more positive attitude towards the other and help in social cohesion, which can then be harnessed for development.

A move to use *Suuryee* for development could also mean naming children, streets and other monuments after great achievers as a way of inspiring name-bearers and name-hearers to do what will enhance their lot and ultimately that of society. Finally, since some *Suuryee* commemorate and defy historical (both natural and man-made) events, there should be a lot of effort at encouraging more studies in (such) *Suuryee* since history (experience) can offer useful lessons for development.

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APPENDICES

A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. FOR PEOPLE WHO SUPERINTEND OVER NAMING CEREMONIES

I. Demographic information of Respondent: Age, Sex, Marital Status, Education.

II. General motivations for *Suuryee*:

i. What is the importance of naming in general?

ii. Why do we give (i.e the importance of) *Suuryee*? (Reasons, Purpose, etc.)

NOTE: Reason – Informed by an incident/event or an experience.

Purpose – to achieve/aspire to something, expression of philosophy, desire, etc)

iii. What informs (i.e basis or criteria for) the giving of *Suuryee*?

iv. Who gives *Suuryee*?

v. How do the Dagara generally perceive/conceive *Suuryee*?

vi. Why is naming done in public? (i.e why wouldn't the name-giver just simply pronounce a name for the child to be so called?)

vii. What impact (negative/positive) does the Dagara naming system have on the development of the Dagara society?

III. Whether Respondent believes that names do influence/affect people's behaviour

i. Can/Do *Suuryee* influence people's behaviour? (If **YES**: Name the category of people; In what way? Any evidence/concrete examples? If **NO**: Why do you say so?)

- ii. Should the Dagara naming system be maintained, altered or changed? Why?
- iii. How can *Suuryee* be used (or the naming system enhanced) as an appropriate medium of development?
- iv. Any other comments.....

2. FOR NAME-GIVERS AND NAME-BEARERS

I. Demographic information of Respondent: Age, Sex, Marital Status, Educational level.

II. General motivations for *Suuryee*:

- i. Why is (personal) naming important (since it is found in every society)?
- ii. Who gives *Suuryee*?
- iii. What is the meaning of your *Suuryuor*?

III. Brief History/Motivation for sample *Suuryuor*.

- i. Who gave you this name and why was it given to you? (Reasons/Purpose)

NOTE: Reason – Informed by an incident/event or an experience.

Purpose – to achieve/aspire to something, expression of philosophy, desire, etc)

- ii. How do the Dagara generally perceive/conceive *Suuryee*?
- iii. What impact does the Dagara naming system have on the development of the Dagara society?

IV. Whether Respondent believes that names do influence/affect people's behaviour.

- i. What are the specific importance of *Suuryee*? (i.e what do they mean to you? What do they communicate to you?)
- ii. Can/Do *Suuryee* influence people's behaviour?

-If **YES**: Name the category of people; In what way? Any evidence/concrete examples, e.g have you been affected or benefitted personally from your name or any other name?

-If **NO**: Why do you say so?)

- iii. Should the Dagara naming system be maintained, altered or changed? Why?
- iv. How can *Suuryee* be used or the naming system enhanced as an appropriate medium of development?
- v. Any other comments.....