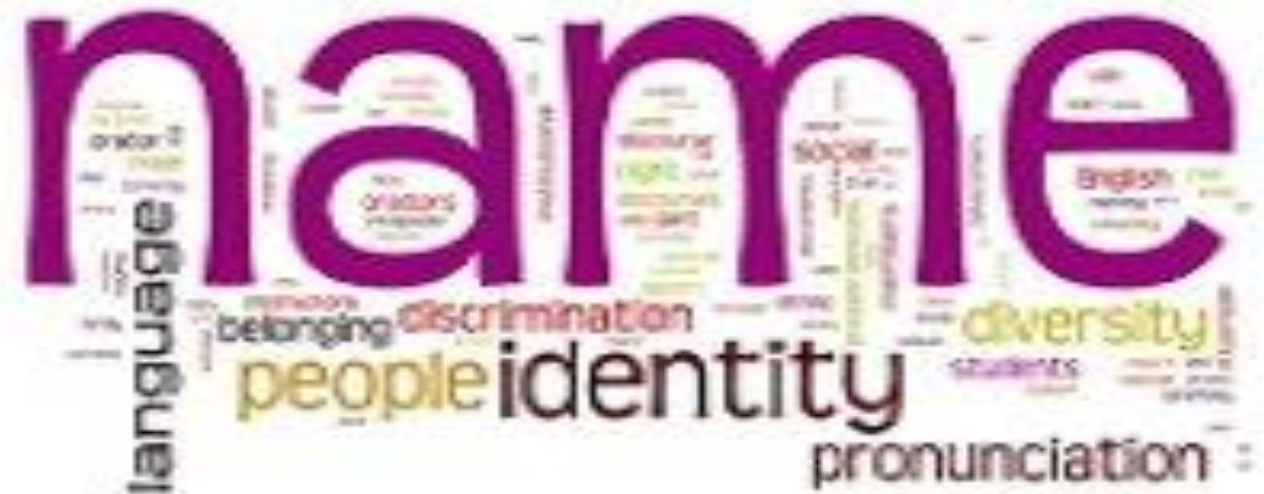


Sociocultural Perspective to Individual Name Change and (Re)construction of Identity in Lagos

Bisoye Eleshin

18/10/2023

A word cloud where the word "name" is the largest and most prominent, written in a dark purple font. Other words are scattered around it in various sizes and colors, including yellow, green, and black. Some of the visible words include "language", "identity", "people", "discrimination", "belonging", "diversity", "pronunciation", "students", "English", "social", "origins", and "multicultural".

Naming: Intro

- Africans take naming very seriously in their cosmology
- In precolonial Africa, naming is a communal engagement
- Kikuyu, Bukusu(luhya), Hausa, Yoruba, Tiv
- Family name/Compound name (Luo group)

- Colonialism and Religion changed a whole lot in African naming pattern
- Surname and (married name)
middle name
- Biblical names – (Igbos and Kalenji)
- Arabic names/Iranian names
- Disruption in native naming dynamics – kehinde, Ige, Taiye as surnames

Identify Yourself, Please



- Naming as a badge of identity
- Names represent the past, present and future individuals
- They carry deep personal, cultural, familial, and historical connections
- Naming and gender relations in Africa

- Naming speaks to several praxes of the society
- Many African group believe that children could embody namesakes
- while others give children names of great men just for status recognition

Obama,

Tom Mboya,

Clinton, etc.

- The GENz world
 - Name modification, loss of identity
 - Yewande – Wendy
 - Oghenerukewe – Rukky
 - Oghenetejiri – Teejay
 - Temiloluwa
 - Temilade
 - Temitope
- } Temmy

Extremism

The Esu debate

No thanks to early bible translators
(Ajayi Crother & co)

Eṣugbayi, Eṣufunke, Eṣugbenro

Èṣù 'Láàlú (Ọláílú)

Onílé oríta

Èlẹ́kún n̄ sunkún,

Láaróyè n̄ sun èjẹ̀

- Eṣu is also known as Orisha Ilu
(the defender of the town)



[ESHU = Aflan-Kunte - Chief Yagbe Awolowo Onilu](#)

Extremism

- After the early Bible translators erroneously translated Satan to Eṣu, Yoruba converts extended this concept to other deities
- Jettisoning of basic indigenous knowledge about the African worldview and belief system
- Construction of indigenous Christianity
- Identity mutilation through anthroponymy

S/N	Original Name	Modification
1.	Faleke	Oluwaleke
2.	Ọjẹrinde	Olurinde
3.	Ṣangotoḷa	Jesutoḷa
4.	Oguntoyinbo	Jesutoyinbo
5.	Babatunde	Oluwatunde
6.	Ọlojẹde	Oluwafunmi
7.	Megbayelo	Obadiah
8.	Oduguwa	Oluwatosin

Indigenous Conceptions

- *Tí kò bá nídií, obìnrin kì í jẹ́ 'Kúmólú*
(If there is no reason, a female does not bear Kúmólú)
- Orúkọ ọmọ niìjánu ọmọ
(A child's name is their bridle)
- Orúkọ ìsọ ọmọ ní mọ ọmọ lára
(The name given to a child sticks to them)
- Ilé làá wò ká tó s'ọmọ lórúkọ
(We consider events of the home before naming a child)

Indigenous Conceptions

Ojú tó ríṣẹ̀ẹ́ k'ó má barajẹ́, kó tọ́jú orúkọ rere

(The eyes that witnesses poverty should not fret, but the name should be kept)

- Orúkọ ọba ni wọn fi ń bẹ̀ ìrókò

(It is the name of the Oba (king) that is used to fell the Iroko tree)

- Orúkọ t'ó wuni là á jẹ́ l'ẹ̀yìn-odi

(We bear any name that we like when we are abroad)

- Ìjà 'ò d'ọ̀là; orúkọ ló ń sọ́nì

(Being quarrelsome does not lead to anything but change in name/identity)

Naming in Lagos

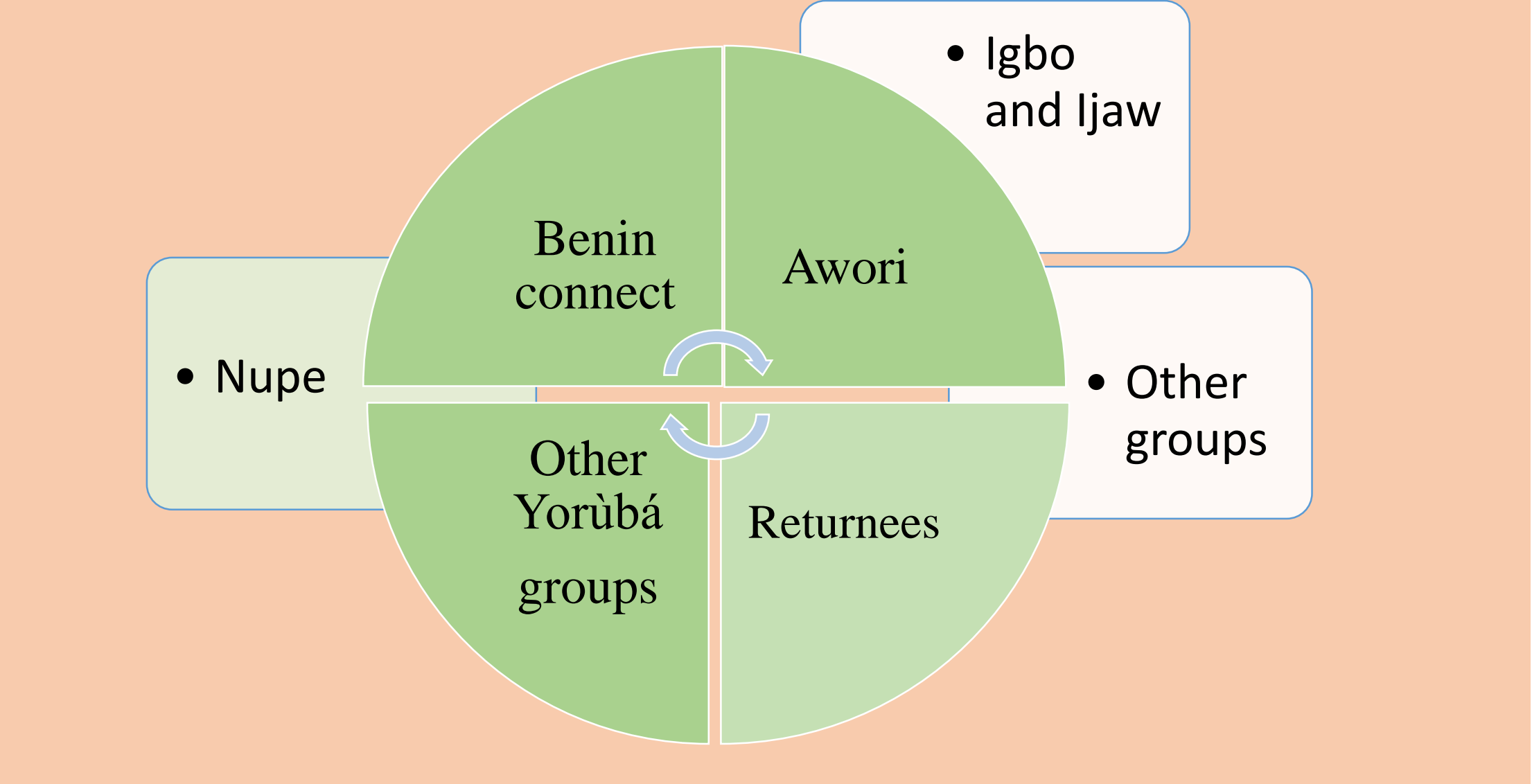
- Demographic Composition of Lagos
- Greater Lagos and other “Lagosese”
- Lagos Island (Lagos Proper)
- Ikorodu – Remo/Ijebu stock
- Ikeja – Awori
- Epe – Lagos Island/Ijebu
- Badagry – Awori/*Ogu (Egun)

AFP via Getty Images



AFP via Getty Images

Demography



Name Change and Identity

- Continuum of Biracial Identity Model (Rockquemore and Laszloffy, 2005)
- Acknowledges continuum in identity categorization of individuals when they seek to be associated with an identified group.
 - i. Some people may choose to identify singularly with one of their identities;
 - ii. Some may blend with a primary emphasis on one identity and a secondary emphasis on the other
 - iii. Some may blend two (or more) identities with equal emphasis

Introduction

- Naming and name-change dynamics – towards assimilation of settlers in Lagos
- Awori, with a nebulous historical account, had no serious issues with Yorubatisation of names
- Benin groups – record of earliest settlers on the Island of Lagos
Benin names were phono-morphologically modified

Bazuaye	—	Bajulaiye
Bazua	-	Bashua
Bazunu	-	Bajulu
Olotu	-	Eletu...
*Egua	-	Iga
*		

Name Change in Lagos

As Lagos continued to develop, more settlers trooped in from all over

- Two categories of settlers worth mentioning include

Labourers

working for European merchants

labourers picked up their boss' names

Buraimoh Davies (aka Buraimoh Okola)

Sogunro Davies

Slaves

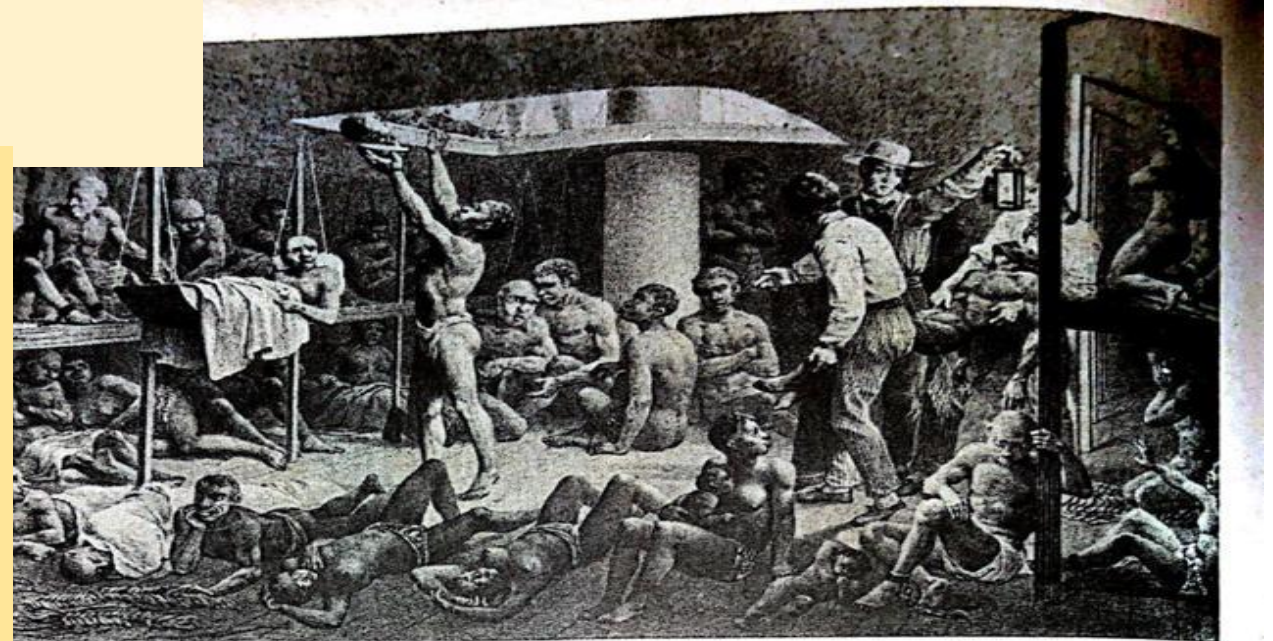
Arota, Ibiga...Asaforiji

When documentation (black & white) commenced in Lagos, they picked up their owners name.

Owners are mostly chiefs and prominent Lagosians

The Returnees

- Abolition of Slave trade and the Freetown experience
- Aku group in Freetown, exposure to Western education and change of name for ease of pronunciation
- Series of return to Lagos
 - Salvador de Bahia
 - Nago group of Yoruba extraction
 - Male Revolt (1835)



Negroes at the bottom of the hold. Lithograph by J. M. Rugendas, 1835.

The Great Return



The Great Return

- They were given separate space on Lagos Island



Name of Returnees in Lagos

Saros in Lagos

1903

Alder Emanuel A., *Trader of Ita Pasi*
Allen Elkanah, *Carpenter of Okepopo Street*
Allen Richard, *Sawyer of Chapel Street*
Anderson Robert, *Goldsmith of Akani Street*
Ashley Daniel Josephus, *Clerk of Bankole Street*
Barber William George, *Butcher of Broad Street*
Beckley Joseph, *Clerk to J. K. Coker; of Broad Street*
Benjamin Joshua Blackall, *Printer of Breadfruit Street*
Blaize Richard Beale, *Merchant of Marina*
Bright John A., *Clerk of Taiwo Lane*
Bucknor William A. S., *Clerk of Broad Street*
Bishop J. M., *Shoemaker of Okepopo*
Campbell Theo. J., *Photographer of Massey Square*
Carew Alfred, *Photographer of Broad Street*
Coker Daniel Towry Miles, *Tailor of Lafiaji*
Coker Nathaniel C., *Carpenter of Bamgbose*
Cole Ajanaku, *Baker of Lafiaji*
Cole Isaac A., *Carpenter of Breadfruit*
Cole Isaac John, *Mechanic of Faji Lane*
Cole Samuel Adeshina, *Shoemaker of Balogun Street*
Davies James, *Bricklayer of Odunlami Street*
Davies Samuel Sogunro, *Trader of Breadfruit Lane*
FitzJames Thomas A., *Trader of Okepopo*
Garber Samuel Benjamin, *Trader of Offin Road*
George Thomas Ige, *Trader of Ereko*
Gilpin Edmund, *Shoemaker of Victoria Road*
Gooding Peter Obadiah, *Carpenter of Balogun Street*
Goyea Edward Thomas, *Carpenter of Lake Street*
Green John, *Carpenter of Kakawa Street*
Haastrup Ademuyiwa, *Auctioneer of Broad Street*
Haffner C. S., *Clerk of Marina*
Haffner J. N., *Trader of Faji*
Holloway John Benjamin, *Trader of Broad Street*
Holm Neils Walwin, *Photographer of Broad Street*
John Joseph Nathan, *Trader of Alakoro Street*
Johnson Thomas, *Bricklayer of Lafiaji*
Johnson Joshua, *Clerk to Daniel Conrad Taiwo; of Faji Market*
Jones Henry Adolphus, *Mechanic of Ereko Road*
King Ebenezer, *Photographer of Broad Street*
King H. T., *Blacksmith of Olowogbowo*
Langley John T., *Mechanic of Lafiaji*
Leigh Jacob Samuel, *Merchant of Broad Street*
Lumpkin S. W., *Tailor of Breadfruit Street*
Macaulay Herbert S. H., *Civil Engineer of Odunlami Street*
Macarthy Robert Adolphus, *Cabinet-maker of Bamgbose Street*
Marsh Nathan E. A., *Clerk to J. C. Vaughan; of Bamgbose Street*
Mason V. P. Chris, *Journalist of Breadfruit Lane*
Randle William Samuel, *Shipwright of Tokunboh Street*
Roberts John, *Butcher of Kosseh Street*
Savage Josiah Alfred, *Trader of Apongbon Street*
Taylor Henry Augustus, *Broker of Oke Olowogbowo*
Thomas Moses B., *Cabinet-maker of Tinubu Square*
Vaughan James Wilson, *Trader of Bamgbose Street*
Vaughan Burrel Carter, *Clerk of Bamgbose Street*
Wey Moses, *Mechanic of Broad Street*
Williams Isaac Benjamin, *Merchant of Balogun Square*
Williams Phillip Henryson, *Clerk of Hausa (Houssa) Quarter*
Willoughby Owen, *Trader of Oke Olowogbowo*
Wilson John Bright, *Trader of Broad Street*
Wilson M. N. B., *Clerk of Broad Street*
Wright Rufus Alexander, *Trader of Chapel Street*



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Afro-Brazilians in Lagos

1903

Antonio Macolino Jose, *Sawyer of Tinubu Square*
Aruno Jose Martin, *Bricklayer of Oil Mill Street*
Anjos Antonia M. dos, *Carpenter of Igboere Street*
Alcantra Julio, *Clerk of Tokunboh Street*
Britto Benedicto Antonio, *Carpenter of Tokunboh Street*
Baptista Joaquim J., *Shoemaker of Tokunboh Street*
Branco Joaquim Francisco, *Trader of Kakawa Street*
Campos Joan Angelo, *Trader of Campos Square*
Cruz Marcus Vera, *Goldsmith of Bamgbose Street*
Cabreira Toribio B., *Bricklayer of Faji*
Coimbra Alexander S., *Bricklayer of Epetedo*
Costa, Felisberto George da, *Carpenter of Igboere Street*
Costa George Salako Antonio da, *Photographer of Broad Street*
Cardoso Lourenzo Antonio, *Trader of Bamgbose Street*
Cruz Cyrillo M. da, *Cabinet-maker of Taiwo Street*
Carvalho Militao Borges da, *Carpenter of Tokunboh Street*
Delphonso S. E., *Tailor of Ebute Alakoro*
Gansalo Cæsario Jose, *Carpenter of Igboere Street*
Gomes Quirino Felix F., *Clerk of Bamgbose Street*
Gregorio Jose, *Shoemaker of Salvador Street*
Larceda Domingo, *Carpenter of Bamgbose Street*
Lino Caesar A., *Tailor of Massey Street*
Louis Alexandre Onofre, *Fisherman of Oke Popo*
Machado Vita, *Cabinet-maker of Bamgbose Street*
Mendes Augustinho F., *Trader of Massey Street*
Moreira Manoel Bonifacio, *Barber of Broad Street*
Nogueira Manoel, *Carpenter of Bamgbose Street*
Nobre Francisco Tito, *Bricklayer of Oke Popo*
Pacheco Miguel, *Carpenter of Oke Popo*
Pereira Thomas Benedicto, *Bricklayer of Campbell Street*
Pomphilio Thomas, *Butcher of Odunlami Street*
Pedro D. Salino, *Baker of Massey Lane*
Ramos Louis F., *Clerk of Campbell Street*
Ramos Joao F., *Carpenter of Campbell Street*
Reis Manoel Joachim dos, *Trader of Bamgbose Street*
Reis B. J., *Cabinet-maker of Tinubu Square*
Rocha Candido J. da, *Trader of Kakawa Street*
Sagrone Pedro, *Cabinet-maker of Bamgbose Street*
Sant Anna Pedro M., *Clerk of Tolo*
Santos Verissimmo J. dos, *Carpenter of Massey Square*
Santos Tito Augustinho, *Bricklayer of Balogun Street*
Semao Victorino E., *Tailor of Oshodi Street*
Siffre Walter Paulo, *Trader of Bamgbose Street*
Silva Irrhacco Daniel da, *Tinker of Massey Lane*
Silva Lázaro Borges da, *Trader of Tokunboh Street*
Silva Luciano Crispino de, *Bricklayer of Massey Street*



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The Returns

- The two sets of returnees arrived Freetown & Bahia bearing English and Portuguese names
- Profiling of returnees by the natives as a different stock
- Identities of the returnees appear intolerable to the natives

Names After Slavery

- The returnees were of mixed Yoruba extractions (Egba, Ijebu, Ekiti, Ijesha, Nupe)
- They returned with peculiar identities (Kopytoff, 1965; Cole, 1974)
- New identities:
 - Religion, Language, Dressing,
 - Architectural designs, Naming,
 - Family structure, Food, etc.
- Dealing with Africanisation in exile – belief system
- Many of the Brazilian returnees maintained their family belief system – Egungun

Name Change Dynamics

- The former family name before slavery (for those that could remember)
- Compounding (Sapara Williams, leigh-Sodipe)
- Naming format: first, middle and last name

Name Change Dynamics

- Name change was one of integrationist approaches for returnees

Name change strategy

- Complete name change

Placido Assumpaco – Adeyemo Alakija



Sir Adeyemo Alakija

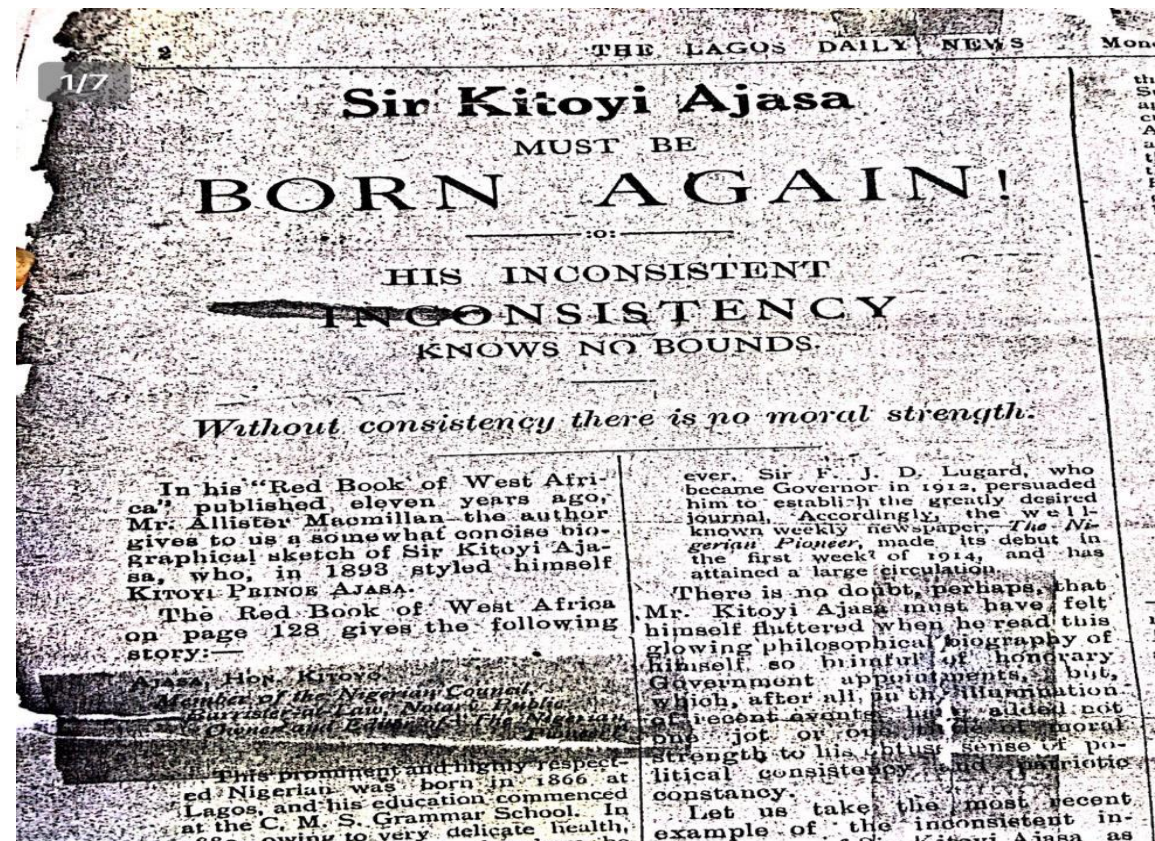
Name Change Dynamics



Sir Kitoyi Ajasa

Complete Name Change

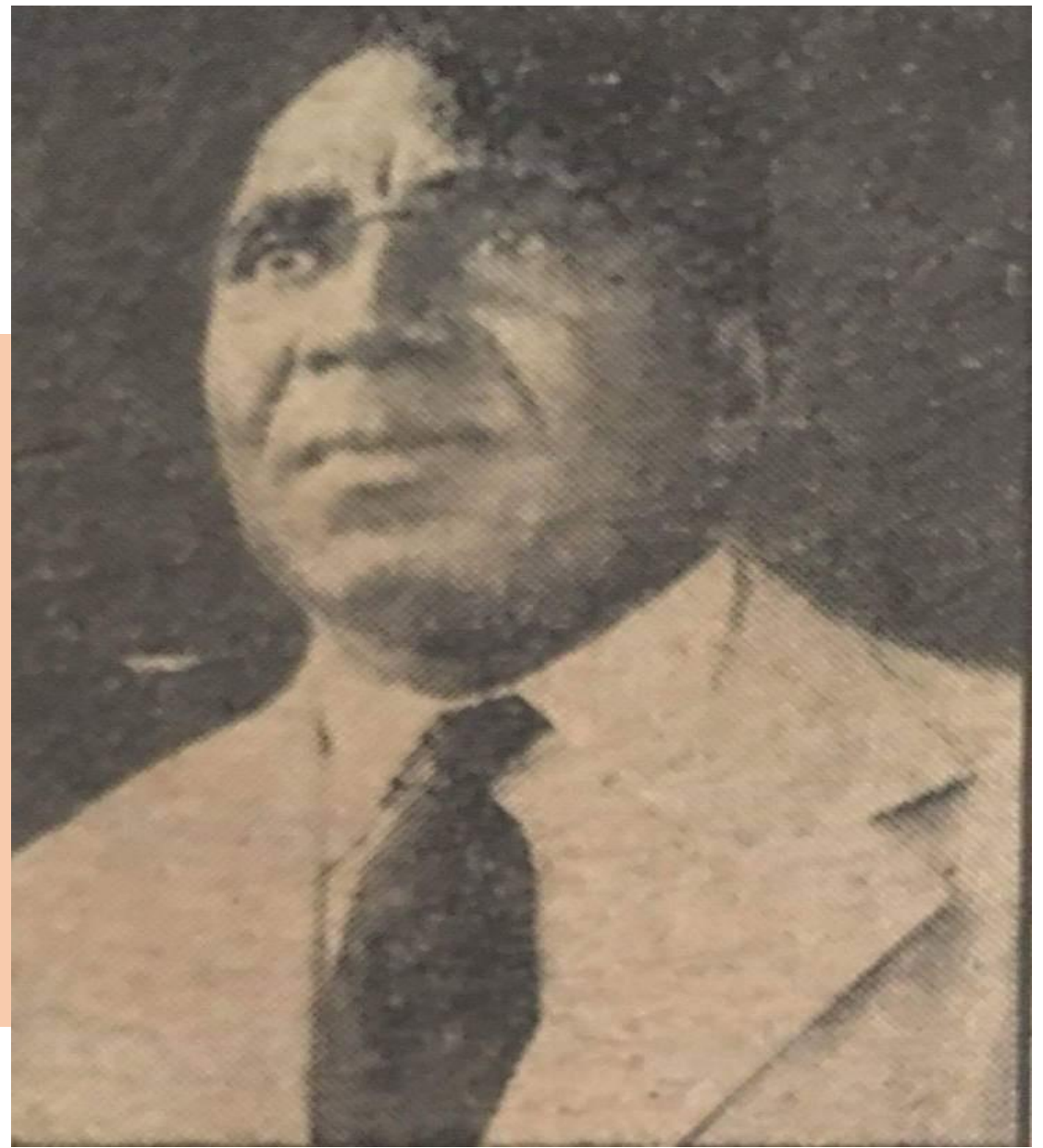
- Edmundson Hepworth Macaulay Kitoyi Prince Ajasa



Name Change Dynamics

Saro descent

- Akinola Pearce – Akinola Maja
- The Edinburgh Experince, 1918)
-
- From father's middle name - Adaramaja Pearce



Wikipedia

Dr. Akinola Maja

Name Change Dynamics

- Name modification for Identity tracking among returnees in Lagos
- Some prominent Lagos personalities that changed modified their names

Maxwell Porphyrio Assumpcao-Alakija

• Salako-Andre

Domingo-Amidu
(Amidu, Islamic influence)

Christopher Alexander Sapara-Williams

Bamgbose-Martins
(Bamgbose, Yoruba name before slavery)

• Hilario Babs-Akerele
Oyo extraction

Lawal-Pedro
(Lawal, Islamic influence)

Name Change Dynamics

- Mobolaji Akinsemoyin (1909)
- Samuel Victor Lino Davies - Mobolaji Adeyemi Akinsemoyin

The following notice appeared in the Lagos Weekly Record of February 19 & 26, titled "CHANGE OF NAME - I, Mobolaji Adeyemi Akinsemoyin, ^{heretofore} therefore called and known by the name of Samuel Victor Lino Davies of Akinsemoyin Cottage, Breadfruit Lane, Lagos, student at Law of Lincoln's Inn, London, hereby give public notice that by a deed-poll dated 31st December 1909 duly executed and attested, I formerly (sic) and absolutely renounced and abandoned the said name of Samuel Victor Lino Davies and declared that I had assumed and adopted and intended henceforth upon all occasions whatsoever to use and subscribe the name Mobolaji Adeyemi Akinsemoyin instead of Samuel Victor Lino Davies..." He was called to Bar in 1910 and returned to Nigeria where he had a

- Kuti Dynasty



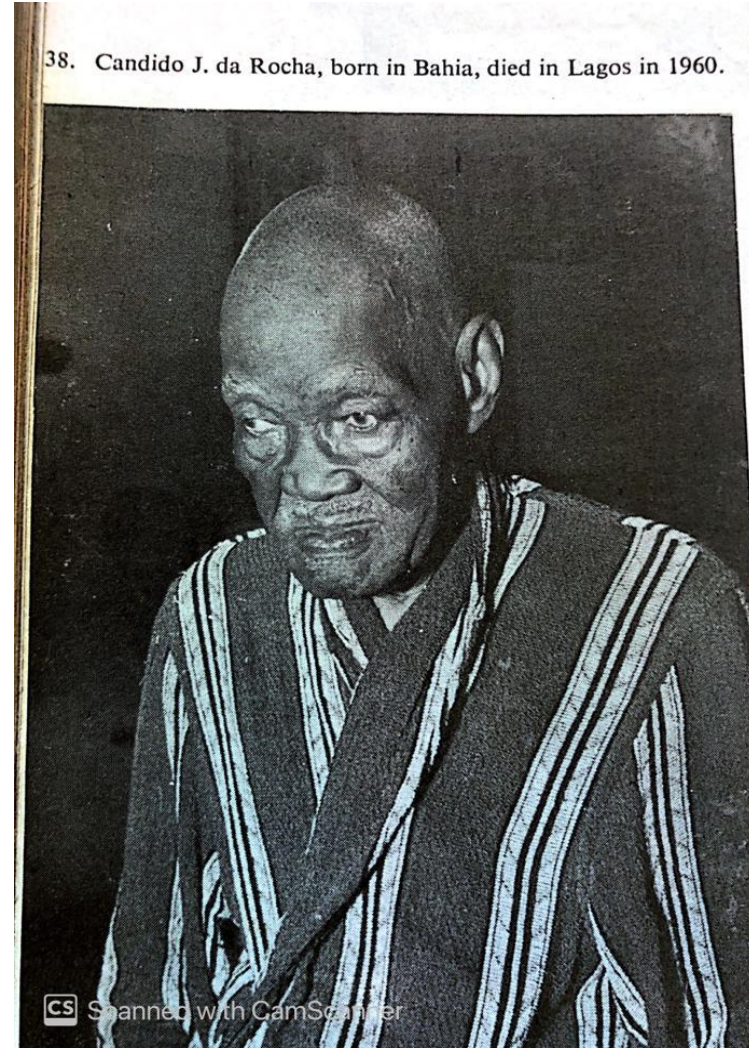
Josiah Jesse Likoye
Ransome-Kuti

Israel Oludotun
Ransome-Kuti

Fela Anikulapo-Kuti

Name Change Dynamics

- There are others who do not care to change their names back to Yoruba
 - Candido Da Rocha (Esan)
 - Crowther
 - Vera Cruz
 - Ferreira
 - Pereira
 - Da Silva



Name Change and Chieftaincy in Lagos

- Chieftaincy in Lagos is well structured and very prominent
- Chiefs in Lagos are respected individuals in the Lagos Society
- Categories of traditional chiefs in Lagos:
 - Akarigbere
 - Idejo
 - Ogalade
 - Abagbon
- Some of the Idejo chiefs have been elevated to Obaship:
- Elegushi, Oniru, Onikoyi, Ojora, Olofo, Onisiwo, etc.

Name Change and Chieftaincy in Lagos

- Tussles within different chieftaincy families
- There are various vacant chieftaincy stools at the moment
- Members of the chieftaincy families employ various means to achieve recognition from the Oba and government.
- Title adoption as surname is one of the ways to attain legitimacy
Obanikoro (Ogalade Chieftaincy, with four branches)
Ojora, Aromire, Oluwa, Saba, Oshodi, etc.

Name Change and Chieftaincy in Lagos

- Reaction to this trend – Adeoye (1982) noted this as one of the six abnormalities about naming dynamics among the Yoruba people.
- This also negates the philosophy of the Yoruba people:
Orúkọ ní ọ́ájú kí oyè tó tẹ́lẹ̀ e.
[trnsl: name is considered before chieftaincy is given]
- Name precedes recognition
- This has been modified, recognition is now sought before building a name

Name Change in Lagos

- Aliases - observation from the society can also effect name change
- Such names in Lagos include:
 - Daddy Alaja (Brown) – From Daddy that has a dog
 - Taiwo Olowo - The Taiwo that is very wealthy
 - Eleshin (mejo...)- The family that has (eight) horses
- Name change could also evolve from family tradition – Paramole family – name is actually an Egungun of a prominent family on Luther Street in Lagos.

Observation

Quest for integration and belongingness

- Royalty and Chieftaincy
- Religion
- Traditional cults – Osugbo, Ogboni, Elegbara, etc.



Conclusion

- Decolonisation through naming dynamics started in Lagos during the colonial, extending to the post-colonial period
- Naming in Lagos is a potpourri of intra and international cultural ideologies and this speaks to fluidity in the composition of identity in Lagos
- Identity tracking and identity modification through name change is a common occurrence in Lagos

Outro



Kofo John – Kofo Abayomi

Nairaland Forum

Thank you very much