

# ÌLÀJẸ NAMES: AN APPRAISAL OF YORÙBÁ CULTURE

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**Abstract:** Naming is an intrinsic aspect of the Yorùbá culture. Beyond identification tags, it also serves as an anchorage to project culture, didactics and the destiny of a name-bearer, particularly in Ìlàjẹ communities of Oñdó State, Nigeria. Notwithstanding, critics of Yorùbá names have overlooked the deep historicity and culture preservation entrenched into Ìlàjẹ names. This study, therefore, examines Ìlàjẹ names based on their linguistic and religious significance to consolidate the need for culture retention among the Yorùbá. The study employs traditional criticism as a theoretical construct to analyze the primary data, which were indigenous names collected through oral interviews from indigenes of Ìlàjẹ communities. The secondary data comprised of books, journals, internet articles on names. Findings reveal that despite modern civilization and western religion, Ìlàjẹ communities maintain indigenous names which bother on profound Yorùbá culture manifested in the names of their children and their ornate consequence within the broader spectrum of the Yorùbá culture. Ìlàjẹ names were categorized based on association with prominent Yorùbá concepts like destiny, death, religion, metaphysics, morality, children, kinship, social relations and wealth. The study though a contribution to existing knowledge on Yorùbá names is a unique interdisciplinary blend of culture and linguistics of Ìlàjẹ communities.

**Key words:** personal names, Ìlàjẹ communities, identity, moral, indigenes

## 1. Introduction

Naming as an integral part of Yorùbá society and culture is beyond identity tags; it influences moral conducts, social interactions and aspiration of individuals/groups within the Yorùbá milieu. Owing to the

peculiarity and deep significance of names, the indigenous Yorùbá families do all they can to preserve their household names integrity (Daramola & Jeje 1976). A famous Yorùbá adage affirms: *Oríkọ rere sàń ju wúrà àti fàdákà lọ* ‘A good name is better than silver and gold’. Thus, Yorùbá believe that a name given to a child could positively or negatively has impact on the child/individuals prospect (Ogunwale 1966). At times, some indigenous Yorùbá families reflect their aspiration by issuing names to their children directly linked to heroes and heroines achievements with the belief that their children would be successful and famous just like those heroes and heroines. Examples are Mòremí, Awólówò and Tinúbú. Among the Yorùbá, a name is used to preserve cultural heritage and perpetuate indigenous philosophies and knowledge systems.

Unfortunately, the advent of Western and Islamic religions and civilization has brought modification or change to some Yorùbá names, mainly religious names that reflect the sentiments of adherents (Ajiboye 2009), as exemplified in (1).

- (1)a. *Oríjáyàjẹmí* ‘Head did not allow me to suffer.’  
is replaced by *Olúwajáyàjẹmí* ‘God did not allow me to suffer.’
- b. *Oríjàjoodgùn* ‘Head is more effective than charms.’  
is replaced by *Àdúràjàjoodgùn* ‘Prayer is more effective than charms.’
- c. *Ọ̀sámúyìwá* ‘God brought honour.’  
is replaced by *Olúwamúyìwá* ‘The Lord brought honour.’
- d. *Ayéyẹmí* ‘The world suits me.’  
is replaced by *Olúwayẹmí* ‘The Lord suits me.’

A cursory look at the above names shows that certain Yorùbá cultural concepts have been adjusted to fit contemporary usage. The reason for the adjustment is due to the erosion caused by the influence of Christian and Islamic religions and modern civilization in some Yorùbá communities. Notwithstanding, some Yorùbá communities, especially the Ìlájẹ communities in Oòdó State retained their indigenous

names to preserve their cultural heritage. This study, therefore, appraises concepts entrenched in the Yorùbá culture within the Ìlájẹ naming context. Although, some of these concepts are generic to the Yorùbá communities, they are more prominent in Ìlájẹ names. This is the motivation for this paper.

The paper is divided into four sections. §1 is the introductory part. §2 consists of literature review. §3 focuses on the research methodology. §4 consists of an investigation into Ìlájẹ names.

## 2. Literature review

A plethora of reviews have been written by Yorùbá critics of names/naming studies, but to the exclusion of Ìlájẹ communities in Southwest Nigeria. For instance, Ogunwale (1966), Daramola & Jeje (1976) explain that naming is fundamental to the Yorùbá culture and it is often accompanied with extravagant ceremonies. Adeoye (1972) posits that Yorùbá consider some key factors before issuing names to their children. They are namely: the circumstances at a child's birth, its family occupation/s, ancestral/deity worship, family/social events, status, placement among other children and its posture at conception. Akinnaso (1980) & Abiodun (1997) argue that conditions within the home influence the Yorùbá personal names, and names with negative social implications are avoided because they could hamper the name bearers development and prospect. Ekundayo (1977), Babalola & Alaba (2003) expand Adeoye's (1972) categorization of Yorùbá indigenous personal names under the following sub-headings: *orúko àmútòrunwá* 'names brought from heaven' like *Dàda*, *Òjó* and *Àjàyí*; *orúko òrìṣà* 'names associated with Yorùbá deities' like *Ṣàngótólá* and *Ògúnlúṣì*; *orúko oyè* 'chieftaincy names' such as *Baṣòrun* and *Balógun*; names that project Yorùbá belief about reincarnation such as *Yétúndé* 'Mother has come back again' and *Babájídé* 'Father has come back again'; names denoting the family occupation/s such as *Odéyemí* 'Hunter fit me' and *Àgbèdẹ* 'Blacksmith'; *àbíkú* names (names associated with children recurrent death) like *Ìgbẹkòyí* 'Bush rejects this' and *Àkísàtán* 'Rags

have finished' and *orúkọ orúkì* 'panegyric names' like *Àmòó* and *Àyìnlá*. These are names given to the child by either the grandmother or grandfather.

In contrast to Ekundayo's (1977), Babalola & Alaba's (2003) submission, Ajiboye (2009) expounds on the consequences attached to name change and modification. He considers the Yorùbá indigenous names as profound and a product of insightful thought. The critic considers name-alteration as an aberration and anti-cultural, especially when the name issued is a family heritage.

On the one hand, Ikotun & Aladesanmi (2012) postulate that name modification or name change is not a contemporary phenomenon and has no apparent negative consequence/s as it appears there are quite several individuals in the Holy Bible who had to alter their former names and there was no divine punishment. They consider name modification to be a personal decision especially, if the names are appellations or alliances. Ikotun (2013) thinks that name modification or name change is unavoidable when there is acculturation. Ikotun (2014) sees the introduction of Western or European address form in Yorùbá whereby the use of surnames is emphasized as a blessing to Yorùbá; because tradition-based surnames are full of reminiscences of the religious activities of Yorùbá people before the advent of Christianity in Yorùbáland. Akintoye & Ojo (2020) express concern for the implications of name modification and name avoidance on Yorùbá true identity. They call attention to the possibility of Yorùbá personal names going into extinction in the nearest future owing to the arbitrary modification of Yorùbá surnames and avoidance of some names regarded as archaic.

Although, name is a mark of national identity according to Ikotun (2014) and Akintoye (2015), Akintoye (2015) mentions other functions that name performs. For instance, a name can be used to recognize the community in which a person is from. This shows that each community has names that are peculiar to it.

A critical study of the previous works on names in Yorùbá reveals that although many research works have been carried out on many

aspects of names, attention has not been paid to the fact that Yorùbá culture is manifested in Yorùbá names which is the focus of this paper.

### **3. Research methodology**

This study was carried out by interviewing and collecting many Ìlàjẹ names from the selected thirty informants who are indigenes of Ìlàjẹ communities. The informants were randomly selected from the youths and adults. The youth ages ranged between 27 and 39, and the adults are between 65 and 70. The youths were deliberately selected to detect if there is any modification of Ìlàjẹ names among them. The informants live in Ìlàjẹ communities and they are familiar with Ìlàjẹ culture. Some of them are typical farmers and artisans. Although they have other names, they also adopted Ìlàjẹ tradition-based names. This makes the information collected from them to be reliable. The outcome of the interview reveals that ten of the informants confessed that Ìlàjẹ indigenes cherish their tradition-based names and it is not common to see any Ìlàjẹ person that would not adopt the names. Eight of them remarked that although some are either Christians or Muslims, modern religions cannot make them to abandon their traditions. The remaining twelve said that Ìlàjẹ people are always proud of their names and they easily recognize one another outside their communities through the names. Text materials and journals on Yorùbá names were also consulted so that the research work could be robust.

The theoretical framework adopted for this paper is traditionalist Criticism, according to Adeyemi (2006: 25), which is an apt construct to appraise the security of an individual's / a group's culture and tradition. Therefore, it is imperative to know the culture and traditions of the society. Abimbola (1982: 78) says:

Therefore, in order to evolve an acceptable format for the appreciation of oral literature, we must blend our knowledge of the most up-to-date techniques of literary criticism and stylistics with a thorough understanding of Yorùbá culture. Without this, any critical work is bound to be sterile.

A critical look at Abimbolas (1982) submission shows that culture is critical in the society. A researcher adopting the theory must know the society's traditions and present them to promote their culture. He should explain how useful culture is to society and how it can bring progress to society. Culture should not be conventional, once it is obsolete or irrelevant to people in society, it should be modified.

This theory is relevant to this paper because naming is an aspect of Yorùbá culture. Although culture is conventional which has made some religious adherents to modify their names to suit their religious belief and avoid some names they consider archaic, some communities still maintain their tradition-based names to preserve their culture despite modern religion and civilization.

## **4. Overview of Ìlàjẹ names**

Ìlàjẹ is a Local Government area in Oñdó State, Nigeria. It has its headquarters in the town of Ìgbékòdá. The Ìlàjẹs are distinct migratory coastal Linguistic group of Yorùbá people who are located the coastal belts of Oñdó, Ògùn, Lagos and the Delta States, and originally made up of four geo-political namely: Òde-Ugbò, Òde-Mahin, Òde-Ètikàn and Àhèrì. The concern of this section is data presentation and analysis. They shall be examined in two ways; the derivational analysis of Ìlàjẹ names and the Yorùbá culture manifested in Ìlàjẹ names.

### **4.1. Derivational analysis of Ìlàjẹ names**

Ìlàjẹ names are derived by three processes, namely morphological, phonological and syntactic processes. Each one of them will be discussed below.

#### **4.1.1. Morphological processes**

According to Aronoff (2008), morphology is a branch of linguistics that deals with the study of lexis, structure, morphology. Words are formed by joining bound morphemes to fixed morphemes (Awobuluyi

2008; Oye 2011). Fixed morphemes are morphemes that have independent meanings, while bound morphemes do not have independent meanings. They are annexed to the fixed morphemes before they can make meaning. There are three ways of using bound morphemes to derive new words in Yorùbá: prefixation, infixation and compounding. In particular, prefixation and compounding are used to derive personal names.

PREFIXATION is a process of adding bound morphemes to fixed morphemes at the word initial position as shown in (2).

- (2) a. *ì-* + *tò* ‘to urinate’ → *ìtò* ‘urine’  
 b. *ẹ̀-* + *tẹ̀* ‘to be disgraced’ → *ẹ̀tẹ̀* ‘disgracefulness’  
 c. *ẹ̀-* + *rò* ‘to think’ → *ẹ̀rò* ‘thought’  
 d. *à-* + *bọ̀* ‘to return’ → *àbọ̀* ‘arrival’  
 e. *ọ-* + *gbón* ‘to be wise’ → *ogbón* ‘wisdom’  
 f. *ò-* + *bí* ‘to give birth’ → *òbí* ‘parent’

Ìlàṣẹ̀ names, like other Yorùbá names, are derived by prefixation; the prefix is added to verb phrases at the initial position as exemplified in (3).

- (3) a. *à-* + *gbé ojú lé* ‘depend on’  
 → *Àgbójúlé* ‘He that is dependable.’  
 b. *a-* + *bí ní ogun* ‘give birth to during war’  
 → *Abílógun* ‘He that was given birth to during war.’  
 c. *à-* + *pè mí rí ayé* ‘call me to see the world’  
 → *Àpèmíráyé* ‘He that called me to see the world.’  
 d. *a-* + *dé piti* ‘come to be rich’  
 → *Adépiti* ‘He that came to make wealth.’

COMPOUNDING is used with names that are derived in Ìlàṣẹ̀ by conjoining two fixed morphemes, as shown in (4).

- (4) a. *okùn* + *oma* → *Okùnoma* ‘Child is wealth.’  
 rope child
- b. *ẹmun* + *onẹn* → *Ẹmunonẹn* ‘Human beings are palmwine.’  
 palm\_wine person

#### 4.1.2. Phonological processes

Like other South-east Yoruba, the consonant sound /gh/ is attested in Ìlàjẹ dialect and it is used instead of /w/ as it is exemplified in the names: *Amùsẹghon* ‘We know their attitude’ and *Mégbontóghon* ‘I am not wiser like them’. Negative markers take the forms *è*, *é*, *má* and *mé* with high and low tones respectively in Ìlàjẹ dialect as shown below.

- (5) a. *Égbónjùmí* (NEG wise more 1SG) ‘He is not wiser than me.’
- b. *Ébékúnlowó* (NEG cause weeping is money)  
 ‘Money does not require tear.’
- c. *Mébínúonẹn* (1SG NEG angry person)  
 ‘I do not think ill of anybody.’
- d. *Mégbontóghon* (1SG NEG wise than 3PL)  
 ‘I am not as wise as they are.’
- e. *Márokúròmí* (NEG think death think 1SG)  
 ‘Do not think of death concerning me.’
- f. *Máfikúyòmi* (NEG use death scorn 1SG)  
 ‘Do not scorn me with death.’

It is possible to delete the negative markers and spare the tones. The stranded tones will move to the adjacent vowels. Assimilation can also take place such that a vowel assimilates the feature of the adjacent vowel in poly-syllabic words as demonstrated below.

- (6) a. *Olówó* *è* *fóyè* *kù*  
 rich\_man NEG miss chieftain\_title  
 ‘A rich man does not miss chieftain title.’  
 → *Olówòd fáyè kù* → *Olówòdófáyèkù*

- b. *Orí è búyà kú*  
 head NEG be\_suffering die  
 ‘The head did not die with suffering.’  
 → *Orû búyà kú* → *Orûbúyàkú*
- c. *Eni kú è mẹ̀ yìn*  
 person die NEG know back  
 ‘He that dies does not know what happens behind him.’  
 → *Eni kúù mẹ̀yìn* → *Eníkúùmẹ̀yìn*
- d. *Èrù ikú è bà mí*  
 fear death NEG grip 1SG  
 ‘I am not afraid of death.’  
 → *Èrùkúù bà mí* → *Èrùkúùbà mí*
- e. *Òrò é dú ìgbàgbé*  
 word NEG be forget  
 ‘Word is not easily forgotten.’  
 → *Òrò é dúù gbàgbé* → *Òròdúùgbàgbé*
- f. *Orìsà é bínú ọ̀nẹ̀n*  
 God NEG angry human\_being  
 ‘God is not angry with anybody.’  
 → *Orìsà é bínú ọ̀nẹ̀n* → *Orìsábínọ̀nẹ̀n*

The symbol *é* in examples (6e–f) above indicates deletion and the tone on it stands for the stranded tone. The negative marker *è* assimilates the features of the adjacent vowels in examples (5a–d). In contrast, the negative marker *e* is deleted but its high tone is stranded, and the stranded high tone moves to the adjacent vowels in examples (5e–f).

#### 4.1.3. Syntactic processes

Ìlájẹ names are verb Phrasal and sentential names like other Yorùbá names. They are derived by reducing verb phrases and sentences into names. Faleti (1999: 27) says: “Yorùbá names are made up of two, three or more components, if you can break down these components and add them together, you will get at the root, and consequently, the meaning”. There are three types of sentences that are conspicuous in

Ìlàjẹ dialect from which Ìlàjẹ names are derived like the standard dialect and other dialects of Yorùbá; simple sentence, complex sentence and compound sentence (Awobuluyi 1978; Bamgbose 1990) as itemized below.

(7) Verb Phrases

- a. V AdvP

*şikó şá* → *Şikóşá*

keep quiet

‘Remain quiet.’

- b. V NP V

*mú oyè bí* → *Móyèbí*

take chieftaincy bear

‘born to claim chieftaincy’

(8) Simple sentences

Subjects Verb Phrases

NP V NP PP

- a. *Orí pé ní ayé* → *Orípénáyé*

head long in world

‘The head lives longer on earth.’

- b. *Ojú rí* → *Ojúrí*

eye see

‘The eyes have seen a lot.’

- c. *Ìyà oma ní èrè* → *Ìyàomaléré*

suffering\_child has gain

‘Suffering for one’s children sake is gainful.’

- d. *Ènìyàn şòro* → *Ènìyànşòro*

human\_being difficult

‘Human beings are difficult.’

- e. *Ọlá şí mí ojú* → *Ọláşimojú*

wealth open 1SG eye

‘Wealth opens my eyes.’

- f. *Okùn tó adé* → *Okùntádé*

rope equal crown

‘Wealth is equal to crown.’

- g. *Ará ní ẹnẹn* → *Aráńẹn*  
body has people  
'The body has relatives.'
- h. *Ọmá jù ní owó* → *Ọmájùnówó*  
child old has money  
'Child is more significant than riches.'
- (9) Complex sentences
- a. CP NP VP  
*Ti ọma mo wò* → *Tọmamoghò*  
COM child 1SG look  
'I consider the children.'
- b. Negative sentences  
Neg PP NP VP NP  
*É hí ùwà yǐ ju ọma* → *Ésuwàyíjọma*  
NEG PREP habit DET more child  
'Bearing children is profitable than simple modesty.'
- c. Neg VP VP NP PP  
*É gbón jù mí* → *Égbónjùmí*  
2SG.NEG wise old 1SG  
'He is not wiser than me.'
- d. *Mé gbón tó ghon* → *Mégbóntóghon*  
1SG.NEG wise equal 3PL  
'I am not as wise as they are.'
- e. *Me dá ayé ẹ* → *Médáyẹse*  
1SG.NEG creat world do  
'I cannot live in the world alone.'
- f. NP VP Neg VP AdvP  
*Eni kú è ma ẹyin* → *Eníkúmẹyin*  
one die not know back  
'He that dies does not know what happens behind him.'
- g. NP Neg VP NP  
*Èrù ikú é bà mí* → *Èrùkúbà mí*  
fear death not be 1SG  
'I am not afraid of death.'

## (10) Compound sentences

- |    |   |              |             |           |                       |   |
|----|---|--------------|-------------|-----------|-----------------------|---|
|    | NP  | VP           | NP          | VP        | NP                    |   |
| a. | <i>È</i>                                  | <i>bí</i>    | <i>wọ̀n</i> | <i>jù</i> | <i>mí</i>             | ( <i>bí ~ jù</i> ) → <i>Èbíwọ̀njùmí</i> |
|    | 2PL                                       | bear         | 3PL         | old       | 1SG                   |   |
|    | ‘You gave birth to them greater than me.’ |              |             |           |                       |   |
| b. | <i>Orí</i>                                | <i>bá</i>    | <i>ìyà</i>  | <i>kú</i> | ( <i>bá ~ kú</i> )    | → <i>Oríbúyàkú</i>                      |
|    | head                                      | be           | suffering   | die       |                       |   |
|    | ‘The head did not die with suffering.’    |              |             |           |                       |   |
| c. | <i>Èbí</i>                                | <i>ṣe</i>    | <i>mí</i>   | <i>jù</i> | ( <i>ṣe ~ jù</i> )    | → <i>Èbíṣemíjù</i>                      |
|    | family                                    | do           | 1SG         | old       |                       |   |
|    | ‘Family took good care of me.’            |              |             |           |                       |   |
| d. | <i>Ikú</i>                                | <i>gbọ̀n</i> | <i>mí</i>   | <i>rè</i> | ( <i>gbọ̀n ~ rè</i> ) | → <i>Ikúgbọ̀nmírè</i>                   |
|    | death                                     | leave        | 1SG         | alone     |                       |   |
|    | ‘Death left me alone.’                    |              |             |           |                       |   |

The outputs in examples (7)–(10) above are realized in a fast speech.

#### 4.2. Yorùbá culture in Ìlàṣẹ names

According to Oladipo (2007: 2),

Yorùbá culture is Yorùbá attitudes or views to some concepts of life which guide their life-styles and conducts. Yorùbá culture is more than an idea or human experience; it is a system of values and attitudes to concepts of life which are exhibited in their social practices.

The concepts include death, world, child, wealth/riches, kinship, destiny, moral and retribution, social relation and belief in their deities. Their views about these concepts reflect in the names they adopt as manifested in Ìlàṣẹ names. In this paper, Ìlàṣẹ names shall be arranged according to these concepts.

#### (11) *ikú* ‘death’

*Márokúròmí* (NEG think death think 1SG) ‘Do not think of death towards me.’

*Máfikúyọ̀mí* (NEG use death scorn 1SG) ‘Do not scorn me with death.’

*Ìkújíminónen* (death NEG make 1SG have people) ‘Death did not allow me to have people (relatives).’

*Èrùkúbà mí* (fear death NEG grip 1SG) ‘I am not afraid of death.’

*Ìkúòmòla* (death NEG know tomorrow) ‘Death does not know tomorrow.’

*Ènikúòmèyì* (person die NEG know back) ‘He that dies does not know what happens behind him.’

*Èmunónen* (palm wine is person) ‘Palmwine is human beings.’

*Ìkúgbònmírè* (death leave 1SG alone) ‘Death left me alone.’

(12) **ayé** ‘world’

*Ayéjìn* (world deep) ‘The world is deep.’

*Àpèmúráyé* (he call 1SG see world) ‘He that called me to come and see the world.’

*Ayénúbèrù* (world has fear) ‘The world is frightening.’

*Ayéjùsílẹ̀* (world drop PREP ground) ‘The world is temporal.’

*Ayéyẹ* (world fit) ‘The world is suitable.’

*Ayé dàtiwá* (world become PREP come) ‘The world becomes coming back again (reincarnation).’

(13) **omọ** ‘child’

*Ìyàòmálérè* (suffering child has gain) ‘Suffering for ones children sake is gainful.’

*Ìwájọma* (habit NEG than child) ‘Good character is not more valuable than having children.’

*Ọmajùlówó* (child than have rich) ‘Child is more significant than riches.’

*Tomamorò* (COMP child 1SG think) ‘I consider the children.’

*Okùnọma* (rope child) ‘Child is wealth.’

*Èhúwàyíjọma* (NEG habit DET than child) ‘Bearing children is more profitable than simple modesty.’

(14) **ẹbí** ‘kinship’

*Èbíwọnjùmí* (NEG bear 3PL than 1SG) ‘You gave birth to them greater than me.’

*Èbíétómíyẹ* (family NEG than relative) ‘Family is not greater than relatives.’

*Èbǎjǔmí* (family wake 1SG) ‘Family woke me up.’  
*Èbíésúnwá* (family NEG bore 1PL) ‘We are not bore of the family.’  
*Èbíṣemǐjù* (family do 1SG more) ‘Family took good care of me.’  
*Araléni* (body has person) ‘The body has relatives.’

(15) **orò / owó ‘wealth / riches’**

*Oláṣímiojú* (wealth open 1SG eye) ‘Wealth opens my eyes.’  
*Okùfeyíwá* (rope bring DET come) ‘Wealth brought this.’  
*Olówófóyèkù* (rich man NEG miss chieftaincy) ‘The rich who tops his status with chieftaincy.’  
*Móyèbí* (take chieftaincy bear) ‘born to claim chieftaincy’  
*Ojájuni* (market older one) ‘Market is greater than one.’  
*Adépití* (he come rich) ‘He that came to amass wealth.’  
*Èbékúnlowó* (NEG be weeping is money) ‘Money does not require tear.’

(16) **ìwà / èsan ‘moral / retribution’**

*Ṣíkóṣá* (keep quiet) ‘Remain quiet.’  
*Ìwàlúwà* (habit is habit) ‘It is good to have good behaviour.’  
*Èsanmore* (retribution recognise gratitude) ‘Retribution knows gratitude.’  
*Èyìnṁàsan* (back is better) ‘The consequence is the best.’

(17) **àyànmó ‘destiny’**

*Orípénáyé* (head longer PREP world) ‘The head lives longer on earth.’  
*Oríbúyàkú* (head be suffering die) ‘The head did not die with suffering.’  
*Máròmípin* (NEG think 1SG final) ‘Never think that I cannot make it.’

(18) **ìbágbéṣò àwùjò ‘social relationship’**

*Mébinúṣeṣe* (1SG NEG angry person) ‘I do not think ill of anybody.’  
*Mégbóntóghon* (NEG wise than 3PL) ‘I am not as wise as they are.’  
*Ènìyànsòro* (human being do difficult) ‘Human beings are difficult.’  
*Mébáwòndiúú* (1SG NEG be 3PL struggle) ‘I am not contesting it with then.’  
*Àgbójúlé* (he put eye upon) ‘He that is very dependable.’  
*Ojúrí* (eye see) ‘The eyes have seen a lot.’ (having experienced lots of difficulties)

*Òródíúùgbàgbé* (word NEG forget) ‘Issues are not easily forgotten.’  
*Ègbónjùmí* (NEG wise than 1SG) ‘He is not wiser than me.’  
*Èmúpenẹn* (NEG take call one) ‘He does not mind anybody.’

(19) *òrìṣà* ‘deity’

*Òrìṣàbínúọnẹn* ‘God does not think ill of anybody.’  
*Òrìṣàbàmíérù* ‘God does not frighten me.’

Ìlájẹ names are peculiar among Yorùbá in the sense that no other Yorùbá communities adopt the pattern of their names. The peculiarity of Ìlájẹ names also lies in the fact that they showcase Yorùbá philosophy more than other Yorùbá communities as highlighted above. These concepts shall be discussed extensively.

4.2.1. *ikú* ‘death’

Yorùbá hold different views about death. They believe that death is a crucial part of human temporality, and it is a final destiny that is inescapable for everybody, both young and old (Oladipo 2007: 2, 4). Therefore, it is unreasonable for anybody to be afraid of death as it reflects in Ìlájẹ name *Èrùkúbàní* ‘I am not afraid of death’. Since death is a common phenomenon, there is no point of scorning a dead person or be happy at the death of anybody as shown in *Mafikúyòmí* ‘Do not scorn me with death’. In the same vein, since death is a common thing, it is needless to have evil thought that your neighbour should die as manifested in *Márokúròmí* ‘Do not think of death towards me’. Death is unpredictable; it comes at its own will, and if one dies, one cannot know what happens behind one as shown in *Ikúòmòla* ‘Death does not know tomorrow’ and *Èníkúòmẹyìn* ‘He that dies does not know what happens behind him’. Yorùbá view death to be evil personified. It is given different bad names in their literature: *Aláínítijú* ‘Shameless’, *Alápó-ikà* ‘A person with a wicked track’, *Òboṣòkòtòdenuẹkọlẹ* ‘He that wore trousers upside down’. It can destroy a whole family out of share wickedness as reflected in this Ìlájẹ name: *Ikújíminọnẹn* ‘Death does not allow me to have people

(relatives)’. Yorùbá believe that it is possible to escape death at times, this can happen when one is sick and the family member have given up, having tried all they could, but suddenly, the person recovers. This Ìlàṣẹ name is borne out of this: *Ikúgbònmírè* ‘Death left me alone’.

#### 4.2.2. *ayé* ‘world’

Yorùbá have divergent views about *Ayé* ‘world’. Literarily, *ayé* ‘world’ can mean the universe where people live to carry out their daily activities. The human existence is temporal in the physical realm; however, based on Yorùbá philosophy that there is a spiritual cycle that triggers reincarnation as evident in this Ìlàṣẹ name *Ayédàtiwá* denoting ‘The world becomes coming back again (reincarnation)’. *Ayé* world alternatively takes a different significance in the context of whining and dinnning as Yorùbá used to say: *Ọmọ jayéjayé ni é, máa gbádùn arà rẹ* ‘You are a social person, continue enjoying yourself’; *Áá jayé òní o, n kò mètìn òlá* ‘Let me enjoy today, I am unconcerned about what tomorrow promises for me’. The following Ìlàṣẹ names are borne out of this: *Ayéyé* ‘The world is suitable’, *Apèmíráyé* ‘He that called me to come and see the world (enjoy life)’. *Ayé* ‘world’ can also be personified as the personalities that are very secretive *awo* or have mystical powers such as *àjé* ‘witches’, *Babalawo* ‘herbalists (Ògboni cult)’ (Daramola & Jeje 1976). People are afraid of them because they believe that they are very terrible and they can harm whoever crosses their ways. According to Hallen & Sodipo (1985: 5–7), “The popular stereotype of *àjé* is that it is *èniyàn búburú* “a malicious, extremely secretive person whose aim is to harass or do serious injury to usually innocent victims”. These Ìlàṣẹ names are borne out of their impression about *ayé* ‘world’: *Ayéjìn* ‘The world is deep (unpredictable)’ and *Ayéńúbèrù* ‘The world is frightening’.

#### 4.2.3. *omọ* ‘child’

*Omọ* ‘child’ occupies a vital position in the families in Yorùbá society. One of the main reasons for marriage among the indigenous Yorùbá

setting is procreation (Ogunbowale 1966: 1). Meanwhile, there is stereotypes and misconceptions attached to be being sterile. Thus, generally, people within such a cultural milieu go to any extent to fulfil the societal expectation. As evident in these Ìlàṅ names: *Okùnṣoma* ‘Child is wealth’, *Ọmajùlówó* ‘Child is more significant than riches. Yorùbá believe that if one dies, one will leave ones properties with ones children’. They usually say: *Iná kú, ó feérú bojú, ọ̀gèdẹ̀ kú, ó fọmọ rẹ̀ rọ̀pò, bí ẹ̀ni bá kú, ọmọ ẹ̀ni níí delé deni* ‘Fire died, it replaced itself with ashes, plantain tree died, it replaced itself with its children, if one dies, ones children will take care ones house’. By implication, there is nothing as prestigious as having a child as inferred in the following Ìlàṅ names: *Éhúwàyíjoma* ‘Bearing children is profitable than simple modesty’ and *Ìwàjọmá* ‘Good character is not more valuable than having children’. Generally, some Yorùbá women endure abusive and oppressive relationships in their homes because of their children as exemplified in these names: *Ìyàṣomaléré* ‘Suffering for ones children sake is gainful’, *Tomameghò* ‘I consider child’.

#### 4.2.4. *ẹbí* ‘kinship’

*Ẹbí* ‘kinship’ in the Yorùbá culture extends beyond the nuclear family. It includes distant relatives; neighbours in ones ancestral compound and extending to individual beyond ones paternal and maternal bond (Daramola & Jeje 1976). Olomola (1999: 20) describes *ẹbí* ‘family’ as “membership of lineages conferred certain rights privileges on the individual. They bear certain mutual responsibilities for one another, enjoy innumerable rights and facilities and shield one another against undue isolation and preventable anguish”. Yorùbá value their families such that they involve them in social activities and do all they could do to keep them in unity. The indispensability of families in Yorùbá setting is confirmed in the following Ìlàṅ names: *Aráléni* ‘The body has people (relatives)’, *Ẹbísemíjù* ‘Family takes good care of me’, *Ẹbíésúnwa* ‘We are not bore of family’. The implication of this is that Yorùbá do not underrate their family; they hold them in high esteem.

At times, relatives are rated higher than family as shown in *Ebíétómiye* ‘Family is not greater than relative’.

#### 4.2.5. *ọ̀rọ̀ / owó* ‘wealth / riches’

The Yorùbá, like other any other group of people, believe in earning wages/salaries as a reward for hard work. Thus, they engage in diverse occupations to amass wealth or riches. They believe that riches does not come by self-sympathy as shown in this Ìlajẹ name: *Ébẹ̀kúnnowó* ‘Money does not require tears’. Through the wealth or riches they acquired by hard work, they are able to achieve many things as exemplified in *Adẹ̀piti* ‘He that came to amass wealth’ and *Okùnḡẹ̀yíwá* ‘Wealth brought this’. It is noteworthy in this paper that *Okùn* ‘Rope denotes wealth’ in Yorùbá setting, and has nothing to do with *Olókun* ‘The goddess of the sea’ as exemplified in the names like *Fámókùndé* ‘Divination brought wealth’, *Ọ̀mọ̀lokùn* ‘Child is wealth’, *Okùnlọ́lá* ‘Wealth is riches’ and *Olúsanmókùn* ‘The Lord favoured me with wealth’. A cursory look at the tones on the two words: *Okùn* and *Òkun* indicates that they are different.

In the Yorùbá cultural milieu, money is held in esteem, and much more, there are panegyrics, songs and especially, names dedicated to its subject, for instance, the chieftaincy name *Olówófóyèkù* denotes ‘the rich who tops his status with chieftaincy’ and *Móyèbí* ‘born to claim chieftaincy’.

#### 4.2.6. *àyànmọ̀* ‘destiny’

According to Olajide (2012: 136), “*Àyànmọ̀* otherwise, destiny is the very essence/immaterial part of human beings as assigned from heaven and it remains unchangeable till death”. The Yorùbá honour and adorn more the physical head, because it is the representative of *orí-inú* ‘inner-head’ which influences and directs a persons chosen destiny (Olajide 2012: 138). Abiodun (1986: 16) explains that *orí-inú* ‘inner-head’ as assumed is central to humans totality and it is so crucial to individual success and accomplishment in life. Thus, as an entity, there

are popular rituals to propitiate it frequently, especially in new undertakings; its support and guidance are sought. More so, the Yorùbá consider *orí-inú* ‘inner-head’ as more potent than charms as reflected in the following Yorùbá proverbs: *orí jà ju oògùn* ‘The head is more effective than charms’, *Oògùn ló lojọ kan ipọnjú, orí ló lojọ gbogbo* ‘The potency of charms and life challenges are momentous’, but the consequence of ones head lingers throughout ones lifetime. By implication, charm effectiveness is momentary, but the (spiritual) head can sustain one till death. Due to its importance, the Yorùbá attach immense significance to their *orí-inú* ‘inner-head’, they appease and pray to it to intervene on their behalf to rid them off evils and help them to overcome life challenges. Yorùbá also believe that *orí-inú* ‘inner-head’ determines the possibility of one to live longer on earth as manifested in Ìlàjẹ name *Orípenáye* ‘The head lives longer on earth’, and that whatever ones presently suffering, in as much one is still alive, one cannot die in it as a result of the assistance from ones head as shown in *Oríbúyàkú* ‘Head does not die with suffering’.

#### 4.2.7. *ibágbépo àwùjo* ‘social relation’

Though there are diverse complications associated with human relationships (Ogunsina 2006: 5), initially, human beings were created to share relationships and not isolate, the strong bond that exists among social groups is appreciated in the below Ìlàjẹ name: *Médáyése* ‘Do not live life lonely’. Human relationships, however, could be either negative or positive. Humans experience manifests in the names they adopt. For instance, the following Ìlàjẹ names are borne out of the unpleasant experience by some individuals: *Èniyànsòro* ‘Human beings are difficult’, *Ojúrí* ‘The eyes have seen a lots (having experienced a lot of difficulties)’, *Mégbóntóghon* ‘I am not as wise as they are’. The latter name is a kind of warning for one so as to know how to take caution in ones relation with fellow human beings. Other names are: *Oródúùgbàgbé* ‘Issues are not easily forgotten’. This means that if one has a bitter experience, such may remain indelibly in one forever. There are also other names like *Mébawòndiùù* ‘I am not contesting it

with them' and *Mébinúṣen* 'I do not have ill thought about anybody'. This ìlàḗ name is borne out of strife: *Égborjùmí* 'He is not wiser than me'. As earlier noted, experience may be positive at times as shown in *Àgbójúlé* 'He that is very dependable'.

#### 4.2.8. *ìwà* / *èsan* 'moral / retribution'

*Èsan* (vengeance) and *Ìwà* (moral) touch on attributes exemplified the by man in his daily interaction with fellow human beings. Since man does not live in isolation, he relates socially with other human beings to create a lively environment. The following ìlàḗ names were borne out of the conducts manifested through interaction: *Şikóşa* 'Remain quiet', *Ìwàlúwà* 'It is good to have good behaviour'. Yorùbá also believe that there is retribution or pay-back for all acts in the society as manifested in the following names: *Èsanmore* 'Retribution knows gratitude', *Èyìnمایشan* 'The consequence is the best' and *Ééláşenù* 'There is nothing without reward'.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper examines some peculiar Yorùbá concepts and their implications in ìlàḗ names. These concepts are the beauty of Yorùbá culture which must not be allowed to go into extinction. Although some religious adherents have modified their tradition-based names owing to the influence of civilization and Western and Islamic religions, it is revealed in this paper that in spite of civilization and Western and Islamic religions, ìlàḗ communities still maintain their tradition-based names to preserve their cultural heritage.

### Abbreviations

NP – noun phrase	Neg, NEG – negative marker
VP – verb phrase	CP – complement phrase
V – verb	COM – complementizer
PP – prepositional phrase	1SG – first person singular

AdvP – adverbial phrase	2SG – second person singular
2PL – second person plural	3PL – third person plural
DET – determiner	

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